Character Education in Islam: An Analysis of Imam Ghazali's Thought

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ABSTRACT

Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education have had a significant impact on Islamic tradition, particularly in the formation of noble character. In the face of increasingly complex moral and ethical challenges in the era of globalization and digitalization, the relevance of Al-Ghazali's ideas has become even more critical. This study aims to analyze Al-Ghazali's concept of character education and assess its relevance in contemporary contexts. The research employs a qualitative approach with a library research method. The primary data sources are Al-Ghazali's works, especially Ihya' Ulum al-Din, along with related literature that discusses his thoughts and contributions to character education. The findings indicate that Al-Ghazali offers a holistic approach to character education, integrating spiritual, moral, and social aspects. Worship education, exemplary behavior, self-control, and sincere intentions are the main methods he proposes for developing balanced and integrative character. This approach remains relevant in addressing contemporary moral challenges and can be applied in various modern educational contexts. Research Implications/Limitations: This study enriches the discussion on character education in Islam by highlighting the relevance and applicability of Al-Ghazali's thought in today's context. However, this research is limited to textual analysis of Al-Ghazali's works without involving empirical field studies, so its implications require further verification through field research. This study contributes to the field of character education in Islam by offering a new perspective on how Al-Ghazali's ideas can be applied to address moral and ethical challenges in the contemporary era. This approach provides a unique value for developing a more holistic education system grounded in strong spiritual values.

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Introduction

Character education in Islam remains a relevant and crucial topic, especially in the modern context where moral and ethical values are often neglected. Islam places character education as an essential element in the formation of individuals with noble character and a sense of responsibility. One of the great scholars who has made a significant contribution to this thought is Imam Al-Ghazali. Through his works, Al-Ghazali offers a profound perspective on how good character can be developed and sustained through an integrated spiritual and intellectual approach (Al-Ghazali, 2022).

Amid the rapid advancement of technology and information, the world faces various moral and ethical challenges. Phenomena such as increasing cases of fraud, corruption, dishonesty, and other ethical violations reflect the moral decline in society. Children and adolescents, who represent the next generation, are often exposed to negative content through social media and the internet. This highlights a lack of effective character education that can guide them in distinguishing between right and wrong (Hendayani, 2019).

Technological development also presents challenges in upholding values such as honesty, justice, and empathy. For instance, easy access to inappropriate information and content can damage the morals of individuals, especially children and adolescents who are not yet mature in critical thinking. Moreover, the rampant culture of materialism and consumerism often replaces spiritual and ethical values, which are the essence of a meaningful life (Rahma et al., 2021). In this situation, Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the importance of character education are highly relevant to addressing the current moral problems.

Imam Al-Ghazali is known for his holistic view of character education, which encompasses spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions. In his work "Ihya Ulum al-Din," Al-Ghazali explains that education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but also includes the formation of the soul and character. According to him, knowledge must be directed towards bringing individuals closer to God and improving human character (Al-Ghazali, 2021). Al-Ghazali also emphasizes the importance of self-control and spiritual knowledge as key elements in shaping individuals with strong character (Al-Ghazali, 2023).

In the era of globalization and digitalization, character education becomes

increasingly important. The influence of easily accessible technology and information can pose challenges in maintaining moral values. Al-Ghazali's thoughts remain relevant because they offer practical and philosophical guidance for maintaining moral integrity amid the changes of the times (Al-Ghazali, 2019). Al-Ghazali advocates for character development through spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and remembrance of God (dhikr), which can help individuals stay focused on higher life goals (Al-Ghazali, 2022).

This research aims to explore the concept of character education in Islam based on Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts. By understanding Al-Ghazali's views, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a character education model that aligns with Islamic values, as well as offering solutions to the moral challenges in modern society (Al-Ghazali, 2021).

Methods

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a focus on library research. A qualitative approach is chosen as it is well-suited for exploring an in-depth understanding of the concept of character education from an Islamic perspective, particularly as taught by Imam Al-Ghazali. The library research method allows the researcher to access a wide range of literature relevant to the research topic, including both classical works by Al-Ghazali and contemporary studies that analyze his thoughts.

The data sources used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include key original works by Al-Ghazali, such as Ihya Ulum ad-Din, The Forty Principles of the Religion, On Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires, and The Marvels of the Heart (Al-Ghazali, 2022). These works are selected because they provide direct insight into Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and other materials that discuss Al-Ghazali's ideas and character education in Islam. Secondary sources also include contemporary research that examines the relevance and application of Al-Ghazali's thoughts in modern contexts (Ekhlas & Ali Kadhem, 2022; Mulang & Putra, 2023).

Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review process, which included three stages: Identification, Collection, and Evaluation. In the first stage, relevant works by Al-Ghazali and additional literature discussing

character education in Islam were identified. This included classical books as well as recent academic research. In the second stage, data was collected from the identified sources, both in digital and print formats. This data included original texts, translations, and interpretations of Al-Ghazali's works. In the third stage, a critical evaluation of the collected literature was conducted to determine the relevance and accuracy of the information presented.

The data analysis technique employed is content analysis, which involves several steps: First, Data Categorization: Data is categorized based on the main themes that emerge from Al-Ghazali's works, such as concepts of education, morality, spirituality, and practical application in daily life. Second, Data Interpretation: The categorized data is interpreted by connecting it with the context of character education in Islam. This interpretation is conducted considering the historical background and social context of Al-Ghazali. Third, Synthesis of Findings: The findings from various sources are integrated to compile a coherent and comprehensive picture of character education in Islam according to Al-Ghazali.

Result and Discussion

1. Concept of Character Education

Character education is a planned effort to shape and develop moral and ethical aspects within individuals. It focuses not only on academic achievement but also on developing attitudes, values, and good behavior. The concept of character education encompasses various dimensions and approaches that have evolved over time and within different cultural contexts.

Character education can be defined as the process of forming moral and ethical values in individuals, aiming to produce good and responsible behavior. According to Lickona (1991), character education is an effort to help students understand, feel, and act based on true moral values. Lickona emphasizes that character education must include three main aspects: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

Meanwhile, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) define character education as education aimed at helping students develop moral goodness and habits necessary for living a good life. They argue that character education is not just about teaching ethics or values but also about instilling good habits that become a stable and reliable

character.

Character education consists of various interconnected components. The main components of character education include Moral Values, Moral Knowledge, Moral Feelings, and Moral Actions. Moral values are principles or standards considered good and right by society, including honesty, justice, care, and responsibility (Lickona, 1991). Moral Knowledge encompasses understanding moral concepts, ethical issues, and the ability to make wise moral decisions. It also includes understanding universal values recognized by various cultures and religions. Moral Feelings involve emotions related to moral actions, such as empathy, sympathy, and guilt. Moral feelings play a crucial role in motivating individuals to act according to their values. Moral Actions refer to actual behaviors that align with moral values. Moral actions are the result of a combination of moral knowledge and moral feelings possessed by an individual (Lickona, 1991).

Several approaches to character education can be applied, including: Direct Instruction Approach: This approach involves teaching moral values explicitly through the curriculum and learning activities. Teachers play a crucial role in imparting these values through lectures, discussions, and case studies (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Character Development Approach: This approach emphasizes the overall development of students' personalities and characters. The focus is on forming good habits through practice and real-life experiences, involving students in activities that promote cooperation, responsibility, and leadership.

Reflective Approach: This approach encourages students to reflect on moral and ethical values through dialogue and personal reflection. It can be implemented through classroom discussions, reflective journals, and meditation, aiming to develop self-awareness and a deep understanding of moral values (Kirschenbaum, 1995).

Environment-Based Approach: A positive and supportive school environment plays a significant role in character education. An environment that reflects moral and ethical values helps students understand and internalize these values, including the school's culture, discipline policies, and the relationships between teachers and students.

In the modern context, character education becomes increasingly relevant

given the moral challenges faced by society today. Phenomena such as increasing unethical behavior, moral degradation, and a crisis of values highlight the importance of character education. Character education is essential not only in schools but also within families and the broader community. Its application can be achieved through integrating moral values into the school curriculum, extracurricular activities, and self-development programs. Schools can provide a conducive environment for teaching values such as honesty, tolerance, and empathy. Furthermore, collaboration between schools, families, and communities is crucial in shaping the characters of children and teenagers.

2. Concept of Thought

The concept of thought is a significant topic in various disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, sociology, and cognitive science. The study of thought involves exploring how humans understand the world, process information, and make decisions. Understanding the concept of thought not only aids in comprehending individual behavior but also in designing effective educational systems, technologies, and social policies.

Thought can be defined as a mental process involving the manipulation of information to produce internal representations, decisions, or solutions to specific problems. According to Smith and Kosslyn (2007), thought is a series of cognitive processes that include perception, memory, reasoning, and problem-solving. It can also be considered a mental activity that occurs when someone tries to understand, analyze, or make decisions about a situation or information.

Several theories of thought have developed throughout human history. The dual-process theory posits that human thinking consists of two systems: System 1 (fast and intuitive thinking) and System 2 (slow and analytical thinking). In his book "Thinking, Fast and Slow," Kahneman (2011) explains that System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no conscious effort. Conversely, System 2 is slower, more deliberate, and requires conscious effort. These systems interact in decision-making and problem-solving processes.

Schema theory emphasizes the importance of knowledge structures in information processing. Bartlett (1932) first introduced this concept, describing schemas as mental frameworks that help individuals organize and interpret information. Schemas allow individuals to fill in information gaps and expedite the

understanding process through previously stored knowledge.

According to constructivist theory, thought is an active process where individuals construct their own understanding and knowledge based on experiences and interactions with their environment. Piaget (1952) is a key figure in this theory, proposing that cognitive development occurs through a series of stages involving changes in thought structure. Vygotsky (1978) also contributed by emphasizing the role of social interaction in cognitive development.

Additionally, the Information Processing Theory views thinking as a series of mental operations similar to how a computer processes information. According to Newell and Simon (1972), thinking involves information input, information processing (computation), and output generation. This approach highlights the importance of understanding the internal processes involved in problem-solving and decision-making.

Thought is a complex and multifaceted mental process involving various cognitive aspects such as perception, memory, and reasoning. Numerous theories and approaches have been developed to understand how thinking works, from dual-process theories to constructivist theories. Research on thought continues to evolve, employing various methods to explore this phenomenon. Understanding the concept of thought is important not only in an academic context but also has wide practical applications in everyday life.

3. Concept of Educational Thought

Educational thought encompasses theoretical and practical studies concerning the various concepts, philosophies, and practices underlying educational systems. It includes views and ideas about the aims of education, teaching methods, curriculum, and the roles of educators and learners. Examining the concept of educational thought helps understand how educational theories are applied in real-world contexts and how they influence the overall development of educational systems. This chapter will outline the main concepts in educational thought, the theories underpinning them, and their applications in educational practice.

Educational thought is a mental and theoretical process involving the analysis, reflection, and development of concepts related to education. According to Dewey (1916), education is a continuous and ongoing process where learners develop skills and knowledge through experience. Educational thought includes an

analysis of what should be taught, how teaching should be conducted, and what goals should be achieved through the educational process.

Theories of Educational Thought have also evolved in the educational world, including the following. Perennialism Theory, Perennialism is an educational philosophy focusing on teaching principles and knowledge considered eternal and universal. According to this theory, the primary aim of education is to develop the intellect through the study of great works in literature, philosophy, and science. Hutchins (1936) and Adler (1982) are significant figures in this theory, arguing that education should prepare individuals for rational and ethical life. Essentialism Theory, Essentialism emphasizes the importance of teaching the core of knowledge and basic skills necessary to be productive members of society. Bagley (1938) suggested that the curriculum should consist of fundamental subjects like mathematics, science, history, and language, taught through systematic and disciplined teaching methods. Essentialism underscores the importance of order, teacher authority, and mastery of content.

Progressivism Theory, Progressivism, influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism, emphasizes the importance of experience and experimentation in the learning process. John Dewey (1938) is a leading figure in this theory, arguing that education should be student-centered and focus on developing critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and social cooperation. Progressivism rejects rigid teaching approaches and encourages a flexible curriculum relevant to students' lives. Constructivism Theory, Constructivism stresses that learning is an active construction process in which learners build their knowledge based on experiences and interactions with their environment. Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978) are key figures in this theory. Piaget emphasized cognitive development through specific stages, while Vygotsky highlighted the role of social interaction and language in learning. Humanism Theory, Humanism in education emphasizes the full potential development of individuals, including emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. Carl Rogers (1969) and Abraham Maslow (1970) are major figures in this theory, arguing that education should focus on individuals' needs and aspirations, developing self-confidence, autonomy, and self-actualization.

Educational thought is a rich and diverse field encompassing various theories and approaches that seek to explain and improve the educational process. From

traditional to contemporary and critical approaches, each theory offers a unique perspective on the aims and methods of education. Understanding the concept of educational thought is crucial for educators, policymakers, and researchers to create effective and meaningful educational systems. In a constantly changing global context, educational thought continues to evolve and adapt to meet the challenges and needs of the times.

4. Biography of Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Al-Ghazali, whose full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali, is one of the most influential figures in the history of Islamic thought. He is known as a theologian, philosopher, and mystic whose contributions span various fields, including theology, philosophy, Islamic law, and Sufism. Al-Ghazali's biography not only provides insight into his life journey but also the historical and intellectual context that shaped his works.

Imam Al-Ghazali was born in 1058 CE (450 AH) in Tus, a city in the Khorasan region of Persia (now Iran). The name "Al-Ghazali" is believed to be derived from his father's profession as a wool weaver (ghazzal). Some also suggest that the name refers to his place of origin, Ghazaleh (Makdisi, 1991). His father, who had a deep interest in religious knowledge, passed away when Al-Ghazali was still young. He was then raised by a Sufi who was his father's friend and who guided his early education (Fazlur Rahman, 1979).

Al-Ghazali's education began in his hometown of Tus and continued in Jurjan and Nishapur. In Nishapur, he studied under Imam Al-Juwayni, a renowned scholar also known as "Imam al-Haramayn." Under Al-Juwayni's tutelage, Al-Ghazali delved into various disciplines, including jurisprudence, principles of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy (D. B. Macdonald, 1901). After Al-Juwayni's death in 1085, Al-Ghazali moved to Baghdad and joined the Nizamiyah madrasa, a prominent center of Islamic education at that time. There, he taught and wrote and established connections with other intellectual figures.

Al-Ghazali was a prolific writer, and his works covered a wide range of topics. Some of his most famous major works include. Ihya' Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences): This monumental work is an encyclopedia of Islamic ethics and spirituality that addresses essential aspects of a Muslim's life. It comprises four volumes that cover topics such as worship, daily habits, and morality (Al-Ghazali,

2007). Tahafut al-Falasifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers): In this work, Al-Ghazali critiques Muslim philosophers influenced by Greek thought, particularly Aristotelian philosophy. He argues that some philosophical concepts are incompatible with Islamic teachings, even declaring some philosophers heretical due to their views conflicting with Islamic beliefs (Al-Ghazali, 1958).

Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal (Deliverance from Error): This is an autobiographical work in which Al-Ghazali describes the spiritual crisis he experienced and how he ultimately found peace in Sufism. This work provides important insights into Al-Ghazali's intellectual and spiritual journey (Al-Ghazali, 1999).

Al-Ghazali's influence is extensive, both within the Islamic world and beyond. In Islamic theology, he is recognized as a mujaddid (renewer) who harmonized various schools of thought and integrated Sufism with Shariah. His works on Sufism, such as Ihya' Ulum al-Din, have been primary references for Sufis and scholars throughout history (Smith, 1944). Al-Ghazali also made significant contributions in critiquing and curtailing the influence of Greek philosophy in Islamic thought, which played a role in preserving the purity of Islamic creed. In the Western world, Al-Ghazali is known as a philosophical critic whose works influenced European philosophers like Thomas Aquinas. His views on the relationship between reason and revelation and his critiques of Aristotelian metaphysics have been subjects of study and discussion among Western intellectuals (Griffel, 2009).

5. Concept of Character Education According to Imam Al-Ghazali

This research focuses on an in-depth analysis of Al-Ghazali's works, particularly Ihya' Ulum al-Din, to explore his views on the purpose of education, methods of character development, and their relevance in the contemporary context. In his thought, character education is the core of Islamic education, aiming to form individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also possess noble character.

Imam Al-Ghazali views education as a means to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. According to him, true education does not merely focus on the transfer of knowledge but also on character formation. In Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Al-Ghazali explains that the primary goal of education is "tazkiyah al-nafs" (purification of the soul) and "tahdzib al-akhlaq" (refinement of character). Character education is considered essential for achieving true happiness, which involves a balance

between spiritual and moral aspects (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

Al-Ghazali emphasizes that good character is not merely the result of theoretical teaching but also of repeated practice and experience. He believes that good character is the result of habituating oneself to perform good deeds. Therefore, character education according to Al-Ghazali includes the development of inner qualities such as sincerity, honesty, patience, and humility (Makdisi, 1991).

Al-Ghazali identifies four main components of good character: hikmah (wisdom), 'iffah (purity), syaja'ah (courage), and 'adl (justice). Hikmah refers to wisdom in action and decision-making, based on deep knowledge and understanding of religion and life. 'Iffah relates to personal purity, including self-control and safeguarding oneself from immoral behavior. Syaja'ah is moral courage, including the ability to uphold truth and justice even when facing challenges. 'Adl is justice, which encompasses being fair and balanced in interactions with others (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

These four components are considered vital pillars in character education, which must be taught and internalized by every individual. Al-Ghazali believes that developing good character requires self-awareness and continuous effort to improve oneself. He also emphasizes the importance of avoiding negative traits such as arrogance, envy, and greed, which can damage one's character (Fazlur Rahman, 1979).

6. Methods of Character Development According to Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Al-Ghazali's methods of character development are a significant aspect of Islamic education. Through a holistic approach, Al-Ghazali offers various methods that are not only theoretical but also practical in shaping noble character. This research analyzes these methods based on Al-Ghazali's major works, especially Ihya' Ulum al-Din. The main findings highlight worship education, role modeling, and self-control as means to achieve the goals of character education.

Worship Education is one of the primary methods proposed by Al-Ghazali for character development. He argues that worship is not just a series of rituals but also a tool for cleansing the heart and drawing closer to God. Conscious and meaningful worship can shape good character. For instance, prayer is not only a religious obligation but also a discipline and self-control exercise. Praying with devotion can teach tranquility, concentration, and discipline (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

Fasting, on the other hand, teaches self-control and patience. By abstaining from food, drink, and negative behaviors during Ramadan, a Muslim learns to control their desires and impulses. It also serves as a practice to foster empathy towards those who are less fortunate. Zakat and charity are acts of worship that teach generosity and social responsibility. Through these practices, Al-Ghazali emphasizes that worship education shapes individuals who are devoted to God and care for others (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

Role Modeling is also a central focus in character education according to Al-Ghazali. He stresses the importance of good examples in shaping character, whether from teachers, parents, or the surrounding community. He believes that concrete actions are more effective than mere verbal teaching in shaping noble character. Teachers and parents should serve as role models in all aspects of life, including behavior, speech, and actions. Al-Ghazali argues that children tend to imitate the behavior of adults around them, making good role modeling crucial in character education (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

Al-Ghazali also emphasizes the importance of a supportive social environment in character development. A good environment can reinforce the character education received at home and school. Thus, creating a positive environment where moral and ethical values are respected and practiced is essential. This includes choosing good friends, avoiding negative environments, and participating in beneficial social activities (Fazlur Rahman, 1979).

Self-control is another crucial aspect of Al-Ghazali's character development method. He underscores that controlling one's desires and emotions is key to achieving good character. Al-Ghazali identifies various forms of desires, such as greed, anger, and arrogance, which can damage one's character if not controlled. Therefore, he emphasizes the importance of discipline and self-control as part of character education (Makdisi, 1991).

Additionally, Al-Ghazali stresses the importance of sincere intentions in every action. Intent is the essence of every deed, and a good intention can turn an ordinary action into an act of worship. For example, working to earn a living can be considered worship if done with the right intention to fulfill one's obligations to family and society. Thus, Al-Ghazali highlights the importance of refining intentions as part of character education (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

The character development methods proposed by Al-Ghazali hold significant relevance in the context of contemporary education. In the digital era and globalization, the challenges to character education are increasingly complex. The rapid and easy spread of information through digital media can influence the character and moral values of the younger generation. Therefore, it is crucial to teach and practice self-control and ethical and responsible use of media (Smith, 1944). Worship education, role modeling, and self-control remain relevant as methods to shape good character in modern situations. Values such as discipline, honesty, generosity, and empathy taught through these methods are still essential in facing the challenges of the times. These methods also offer a holistic approach to character education, focusing on moral and spiritual aspects (Griffel, 2009).

7. The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts in the Contemporary Context

Imam Al-Ghazali is one of the greatest scholars and philosophers in Islamic history, whose thoughts have significantly influenced various fields of knowledge, including education, theology, and ethics. His works, such as Ihya' Ulum al-Din, have made substantial contributions to the development of the concept of character education in Islam. In the contemporary context, Al-Ghazali's thoughts remain relevant, particularly in facing the moral and ethical challenges that arise from technological advancements and globalization. This chapter discusses the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education, identifying how his principles can be applied in the modern world.

The contemporary era is marked by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and swift social changes. While these developments offer many benefits, they also present complex moral and ethical challenges. For example, the internet and social media enable the quick dissemination of information but also serve as platforms for spreading hoaxes, hate speech, and pornography. Additionally, materialism and hedonism are increasingly rampant, causing many people to pursue material satisfaction without regard for moral and spiritual values (Bauman, 2000).

In this situation, society often faces ethical dilemmas that require strong moral guidance. Many traditional values are questioned or ignored, creating an urgent need for character education that can instill solid moral values. Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education offer a holistic and profound approach to

addressing these challenges, emphasizing the importance of balancing spiritual and moral aspects in daily life (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

Worship Education, one of the character development methods proposed by Al-Ghazali, is significantly relevant in the contemporary context. In an increasingly secular world, worship education can serve as a reminder of the importance of spiritual aspects in life. Worship practices such as prayer, fasting, and zakat can help individuals develop self-discipline, patience, and generosity. In the digital context, worship can also be a tool to teach self-control and ethical use of technology. For instance, fasting from social media or certain technologies can be a way to increase self-awareness and avoid excessive dependency on technology (Smith, 1944).

Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of role modeling as a character development method, highly relevant in the modern context, where public figures and influencers have a significant impact. Good examples from leaders, teachers, parents, and public figures can help shape positive values among society. In education, teachers who demonstrate good morals teach knowledge and instill moral values in students. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali highlights the importance of a supportive social environment, which in the contemporary context can include both online and offline communities (Fazlur Rahman, 1979). Role modeling is also relevant in addressing social issues such as corruption, discrimination, and injustice. In this regard, leaders and public figures who act fairly and honestly can be positive examples for the broader community. Al-Ghazali believes that good role modeling can be an effective tool in improving the overall morality of society (Griffel, 2009).

Self-control is another crucial aspect of Al-Ghazali's thoughts that remains relevant in the modern context. In the digital era, where the temptation to access inappropriate content or engage in unethical behavior is easily found, the ability to control oneself becomes increasingly important. Al-Ghazali teaches the importance of avoiding negative traits such as greed, envy, and anger, which can damage one's character. Self-control is also relevant in technology use, where individuals must manage their time wisely and avoid excessive dependence on gadgets and social media (Makdisi, 1991).

Moreover, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of sincere intentions in every action. A good intention can give spiritual meaning to every activity, even the worldly ones. In the workplace, for instance, a person can perform their job

intending to benefit others rather than merely for personal gain. This can serve as a strong moral guide in facing ethical dilemmas in the workplace (Al-Ghazali, 2007).

8.   Discussion

Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education are often compared to those of other scholars and philosophers such as Ibn Miskawayh, who is also renowned for his work on ethics, Tahdhib al-Akhlaq. Ibn Miskawayh emphasized the importance of good habits in character formation, aligning with Al-Ghazali's view that good character is developed through the practice and repetition of virtuous actions. However, Al-Ghazali placed a greater emphasis on the spiritual aspects and the relationship with God as the primary foundation for character formation, while Ibn Miskawayh focused more on rational and psychological aspects (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968).

In Western tradition, Al-Ghazali's views on character education can be compared to Aristotle's, who also stressed the importance of habits in character building. Aristotle, in his Nicomachean Ethics, discussed the concept of areté (virtue) achieved through the practice of virtues in daily life. Although there is a similarity in the emphasis on habit, a fundamental difference lies in Al-Ghazali's spiritual foundation, which links character to the ultimate human goal of achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter, while Aristotle focused more on happiness as the result of a moral life (Aristotle, 2004).

This research finds that Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education remain highly relevant in the context of modern education. The educational methods he proposed, such as worship education and role modeling, offer a holistic and integrative approach capable of addressing moral and ethical challenges in the contemporary era. Previous studies, like those conducted by Makdisi (1991), have found Al-Ghazali's approach more effective in shaping comprehensive character compared to approaches that focus solely on cognitive or moral aspects.

Some studies also indicate that Islamic character education based on Al-Ghazali's thoughts can be applied universally, transcending cultural and religious boundaries. This is supported by research examining the application of Islamic moral values in non-Muslim schools, which shows that principles such as honesty, discipline, and generosity have universal appeal (Nasr, 2006). This demonstrates that although Al-Ghazali originates from the Islamic tradition, his thoughts have

broader relevance in the context of global education.

This research confirms findings from previous studies that a holistic approach, combining spiritual, moral, and social aspects in character education, is highly effective in shaping balanced individuals. Research by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1993), emphasizing the importance of adab (ethics) in Islamic education, aligns with Al-Ghazali's view that education should encompass more than just the transfer of knowledge but also the development of morals and spirituality.

Furthermore, this research strengthens the argument proposed by Fazlur Rahman (1979), stating that character education in Islam cannot be separated from the concept of tawhid (the oneness of God), which forms the basis of all Islamic teachings. Al-Ghazali clearly links character education with tawhid, emphasizing that the ultimate goal of education is to achieve the pleasure of God and happiness in the hereafter. This perspective provides a strong foundation for character education based on Islamic values.

This shows that Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education offer a unique and integrative approach, combining spiritual, moral, and social aspects. His thoughts are not only relevant in the traditional Islamic context but also contribute significantly to the global understanding of character education. Through comparisons with the thoughts of other figures and previous research, this study asserts that the holistic approach proposed by Al-Ghazali remains an effective and relevant guide for addressing moral challenges in the modern era. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the balance between knowledge and morals can serve as a robust foundation for developing a sustainable and inclusive character education system worldwide.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the concept of character education from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali and its relevance in a contemporary context. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education offer a holistic and comprehensive approach, integrating spiritual, moral, and social aspects in shaping an individual's character. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of worship education, exemplary behavior, self-control, and sincere intentions as the main methods for developing a well-balanced and good character.

In the contemporary context, where moral and ethical challenges have become increasingly complex due to technological advancements and globalization, Al-Ghazali's thoughts remain relevant. The methods he proposed are not only effective in shaping good character but also provide strong guidance for navigating modern ethical dilemmas. Thus, Al-Ghazali's thoughts can be widely applied, both in the context of Islamic education and general education, as a foundation for the development of a character with integrity.

Character education based on strong spiritual and moral values, as proposed by Imam Al-Ghazali, is essential to be implemented in today's education system. By adopting this approach, it is hoped that a generation will emerge that is not only intellectually smart but also possesses strong moral integrity and is capable of facing the challenges of the times with wisdom.

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