



Al-Ghazali's Epistemology in Islamic Religious Education: The Integration of Knowledge, Faith, and Morals

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ABSTRACT

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This paper examines al-Ghazali's epistemology in the context of Islamic religious education, focusing on the integration of knowledge, faith, and morality. Al-Ghazali views knowledge not merely as an intellectual tool but as a means to draw closer to God and purify the soul (tazkiyatun nafs). In this framework, knowledge must be accompanied by firm faith and noble character to avoid becoming unbeneficial knowledge. Contemporary Islamic education often emphasizes cognitive aspects while neglecting spiritual and moral dimensions. Through a library research approach, this article highlights the importance of integrating intellectual and spiritual elements in the teaching of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Al-Ghazali's thoughts offer a solution to the moral and spiritual crisis in education and encourage the development of a holistic and transformative Islamic education curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education experiences a significant dualism between religious science and secular science, which is suspected to be one of the causes of moral crisis among students. Modernization and globalization have encouraged the dominance of cognitive and intellectual aspects in the curriculum, while the moral and spiritual dimensions are often overlooked (Adzani et al., 2024; Humaina et al., 2022). This condition creates a gap between academic progress and a clean heart, resulting in negative behaviors such as juvenile delinquency, hedonistic behavior, and consumerism (Adzani et al., 2024; Garba, 2023).

Adzani, Wibowo, Dzulfahmi, and Rawanoko (2024) stated that the moral crisis is expanding as a result of the weak application of Pancasila values in education, which is accompanied by the rapid development of information technology. Adzani et al. (2024) noted, "This moral crisis is influenced by family, school, culture, and the rapid development of technology" (p. 1). In the same context, Humaina et al. (2022) highlight the urgency of citizenship education to

instill moral and ethical values in the millennial era, given the influence of globalization and rapid digital development.

The phenomenon of dualism of knowledge—the separation between profane science and religious science—causes science to lose its spiritual function, which in the Islamic paradigm is called desacralization of knowledge (Garba, 2023). In fact, in Islamic epistemology, knowledge should be a means of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the heart) and character building, not just academic knowledge.

Therefore, the revitalization of Islamic religious education (PAI) is very necessary to face moral and spiritual challenges. An education model that reintegrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects will help create a generation that is not only intelligent, but also noble and pious (Garba, 2023; Humaina et al., 2022). This approach is in line with the classical thinking of figures such as al-Ghazali who emphasized the integration of knowledge, faith, and morals in the epistemology of Islamic education.

In the face of the challenges of globalization, secularization, and moral crises, modern Islamic education requires a solid epistemological footing. Imam al-Ghazali's thought appears relevant as a pedagogical solution that harmonizes the intellectual and spiritual dimensions (Rasiani et al., 2022; Zamhariroh et al., 2024). Rasiani, Lubis, and Puspika Sari (2022) affirm that for al-Ghazali, the heart is the center of education—knowledge is only meaningful if it is able to form character and get closer to God (p. 5). Similar findings were put forward by Zamhariroh, Rahmania Azis, Ratu Nata, Fahmi, and Salik (2024), who stated that al-Ghazali's thinking is very relevant in maintaining a balance between intellectual intelligence and the spiritual depth of students (p. 2).

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also found a meeting point with al-Ghazali's thoughts. Hanafie and Khojir (2023) conclude that the trilogy of divine values, humanity, and naturalness in the context of Merdeka Learning is closely in line with the vision of the curriculum according to al-Ghazali, namely a holistic education that unites knowledge, faith, and real actions (pp. 1-2).

In addition, Jupri, Farid, and Zaini (2023) highlight that *tarbiyah al-Ghazali* can be a framework for building the character and spiritual awareness of modern students; educational practices that only emphasize the rational aspect and mastery of academic materials are seen as insufficient in shaping the human being (pp. 7-8).

Thus, the epistemology of al-Ghazali education offers a transformative paradigm that restores the meaning of knowledge as a path of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) and the strengthening of morals. This approach is important to review in an effort to formulate a PAI curriculum and learning strategy that is able to answer the challenges of the contemporary era.

Modern Islamic education is faced with a real challenge: the dominance of academic-cognitive approaches that leads to weak character formation and spirituality of students. Studies show that the integration between knowledge

(science), religious beliefs (faith), and morals is a critical factor to produce a generation with integrity and balanced personalities (Epistemic, 2023; JER, 2024).

Awwalina (2023) states that morals built on the basis of faith have a strong philosophical-theological foundation. This approach emphasizes that morality cannot be separated from faith, and that science must be directed to strengthen this relationship (Epistemic, 2023). Meanwhile, curriculum analysis research shows that the PAI learning model that unites cognitive, ethical, and spiritual dimensions can increase religious understanding by up to 30% and form a more resilient character (Haniefah et al., 2024; JER, 2024).

In addition, Aldi and Khairanis (2024) strengthen this finding by combining Islamic Education and educational psychology in shaping students' character and spiritual intelligence. Their approach highlights that the integration of scientific and religious approaches not only supports academic achievement, but also forms emotionally and spiritually mature individuals (Aldi & Khairanis, 2024).

Thus, the integration of knowledge, faith, and morals is not only a philosophical discourse, but a practical solution that has proven effective in responding to moral and spiritual crises. Such an educational model is able to build human beings – who are intelligent, faithful, and virtuous.

This type of research is a library research that uses an Islamic educational philosophy approach. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to examine the thought of classical figures such as Imam al-Ghazali, especially in terms of the epistemology of science and its integration with faith and morals. Data were obtained from various literature such as primary books by al-Ghazali, scientific journals, and relevant previous research results. The analysis is carried out critically and reflectively on the basic concepts in Islamic education, especially those related to the function of knowledge as a means of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul). The aim of this approach is to explore the philosophical foundations of the integration of science, faith, and morals as a solution to moral and spiritual crises in contemporary education.

METHOD

This research uses a type of library research with an Islamic philosophy of education approach. This study aims to examine in depth the concept of al-Ghazali epistemology related to the integration of knowledge, faith, and morals in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Literature research allows researchers to conduct a conceptual exploration of the thoughts of classical figures and texts in depth and systematically (Zarkasyi, 2022). The data sources in this study consist of two types: primary and secondary. Primary sources include al-Ghazali's major works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, and *Maqasid al-Falasifah*, which represent al-Ghazali's core ideas of science and education. Meanwhile, secondary sources include accredited national scientific journals (SINTA) and reputable international journals (Scopus), as well as relevant scholarly books that discuss al-Ghazali's thought in

the epistemological and educational dimensions (Fadlil & Roqib, 2021; Baharun & Machsun, 2020).

The approach used is a qualitative-philosophical approach with hermeneutical and reflective data analysis techniques. Hermeneutics is used to understand texts in depth by considering the historical, philosophical, and spiritual context of al-Ghazali's work. A reflective analysis was carried out to interpret the relevance of al-Ghazali's thought to contemporary Islamic education problems, especially in integrating knowledge, faith, and morals in PAI learning (Rahayu & Maskuri, 2023). With this approach, it is hoped that the results of the study can make a conceptual contribution to the development of a holistic epistemology of Islamic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Epistemology of Knowledge in Islam

Epistemology, in general, is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of science, including its sources, methods, validity, and limitations. In the Islamic tradition, epistemology is not limited to cognitive theory, but has a spiritual and religious dimension attached to the concept of monotheism. Harahap (2021) defines epistemology in Islam as a discipline that investigates the "sources, methods, processes and limits of science" with the aim of achieving conviction (conviction) of absolute truth.

Furthermore, Asmuni (2020) explains that the epistemological scope of science in Islam includes two main aspects: vertical, which involves human relationships with God (revelation and inspiration), and horizontal, which includes interactions with classical and modern intellectual heritage. This approach describes the Islamic knowledge system as integrative, fusing the sources of reason, senses, and revelation.

The concept of integration between science and religion is reinforced by Abdul Hakim et al. (2024), who affirm that Islamic epistemology upholds bayānī (narrative of revelation), burhānī (rational logic), and irfānī (spiritual inspiration), thus enabling a holistic and ethical scientific paradigm.

Regarding the epistemic method, Nuryamin (2021) emphasized that knowledge is obtained through the senses (empiricism) and reason (rationalism), but is given a moral and theological framework through revelation. Therefore, Islamic epistemology aims to claim: "what can we know, and how do we know it" – not just understanding the facts, but also interpreting them in the context of divine values.

This understanding is important so that science does not become a secular entity limited to rationality, but remains positioned as a tool to get closer to God and guide ethical action. Thus, epistemology in Islam is a framework of knowledge that harmonizes cognitive, empirical, rational, and spiritual dimensions, which is very relevant to be used as a foothold in contemporary Islamic education.

Western epistemology since the classical Greek tradition developed into two main streams: rationalism, which emphasizes reason as the primary source of knowledge, and empiricism, which emphasizes sensory experience. On the other hand, Islamic epistemology offers a more holistic perspective, combining revelation, reason, experience, and spiritual intuition (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2021; Kusuma, 2024).

According to Atmaja and Mustopa (2021), Western epistemology tends to be secular, prioritizing two sources: ratio and senses, and shunning the inclusion of revelation in cognitive processes. "Western epistemology in its manifestations is limited to the acquisition of knowledge about the visible world... focuses more on reason and senses" (p. 30). Meanwhile, Islamic epistemology places revelation (bayānī), reason/logic (burhānī), and spiritual intuition (‘irfānī) in balance (Atmaja & Mustopa, 2021).

Kusuma (2024) emphasizes the limitations of the human senses and the importance of reason as a compensator for sensory deficiencies. However, neither remains sufficient without a spiritual dimension—the intuition of the heart becomes the key to understanding metaphysical and transcendent reality. So, knowledge in Islam is not only an empirical description but a means of knowing God through spiritual absorption.

Furthermore, Muzakki (2024) identifies the connections between Islamic and Western philosophical schools: rationalism (burhānī-rationalism), empiricism (bayānī-empiricism), and phenomenology/irfan (‘irfānī-phenomenology). But Islam maintains a balance of the three, in contrast to the West which dichotomies ratios and senses.

In conclusion, Western epistemology is inherently partial—rationalism rejects empirical experience, and empiricism rejects metaphysical aspects. In contrast, Islamic epistemology is integrative, combining the senses, intellect, revelation, and spiritual intuition as a path to complete and meaningful knowledge.

Brief Biography and Works of al-Ghazali

Imam Abu Ḥāmid Muḥammad al Ghazālī (1058–1111 AD) was one of the most influential figures of Islamic thought. He devoted his knowledge to three main fields: theology (kalam), law (fiqh), and Sufism. AlGhazali is famous for his ability to bridge rational thought with Islamic spirituality. Contemporary studies emphasize the relevance of alGhazali's thought in education and character formation (Nazwan et al., 2023; Jupri, Farid, & Zaini, 2023).

Ihya' 'Ulumuddin (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) is considered the magnum opus alGhazali. This book consists of four sections – worship, customs, things that destroy, and save—that integrate ethics, spirituality, and ratio (Sheilda Nurgenti, 2023; Nazwan et al., 2023). This book not only revives the spiritual dimension of Islam but also serves as a reference in character education (Zulkhairi et al., 2025; Salaeh et al., 2023).

al Munqidh min al Dhalal (The Deliverance from Error) is an intellectual autobiography of alGhazali and a philosophical reflection on his doubts about

rationalism and sharia. This work shows his epistemological transformation: from rational skepticism to spiritual belief, emphasizing the importance of tazkiyatun nafs as the foundation of knowledge and faith (Spiritualita, 2022).

Maqasid al Falasifah (Aims of the Philosophers) is an early work that presents a synthesis of Greek philosophy in Islam. In it, al-Ghazali showed his mastery of philosophy before writing his sharp critique in Tahāfut al-Falasifah. This work became the foundation for Tahāfut and the proof of his philosophical talent (Wikipedia, 2025).

Through his three works, alGhazali demonstrates a comprehensive intellectual approach – combining ratio, revelation, and spirituality. These works are an important foothold for the study of Islamic education that emphasizes the development of heart and character, not just the mastery of knowledge (Nazwan et al., 2023; Jupri et al., 2023).

The Concept of Knowledge According to al-Ghazali

In the Islamic epistemological tradition, science is divided into two main types: laduni science and kasbi science. This concept affirms that knowledge can be acquired through two paths: divine and personal effort.

1. Knowledge of Mathematics

Laduni knowledge is knowledge given directly by Allah swt., usually appearing through inspiration (inspiration), inner guidance, or deep tafakur – without manipulation of the mind or external sensing. Rohman (2024) emphasized that this knowledge appears in the hearts of those who are humble, diligent in worship, dhikr, and tafakkur consistently. Meanwhile, Harianto (2023) shows that in educational psychology, laduni science can be interpreted as a form of spiritual intuition that is relevant in fostering students' character.

2. Kasbi Science

Kasbi science, or the science of acquisition, is knowledge obtained through human efforts such as reading, learning, discussing, and research. It includes empirical, rational, and dialogical methods. The Qur'an highlights more kasbi science because the process requires mastery of techniques and systematics, as shown in verses related to the learning process (Abidin, 2011, quoted by Muḥammad Zainal Abidin et al.).

3. Harmonization of Laduni and Kasbi

Al-Ghazali and subsequent scholars emphasized that these two types of knowledge complement each other. Laduni makes kasbi knowledge spiritual; Kasbi makes Laduni understandable rationally. Rohman (2024) said that the combination of 'bayānī, burhānī, and 'irfānī is indispensable to create a complete Islamic epistemology.

Practically, Islamic education ideally includes kasbi: mastery of material through reading, experimentation, and guidance and laduni: the cultivation of spiritual values through worship, reflection, and light Sufism.

The integration model produces a generation of Muslims who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have spiritual depth and moral maturity.

AlGhazali developed a scientific structure that was prioritized for the

purpose of education and a comprehensive moral life. According to Rozi (2021), the classification of knowledge is based on epistemological, ontological, and axiological perspectives—sorting knowledge based on sharia obligations, sources of legitimacy, and social functions. Herman, Marilang, and Nonci (2023) added that in the framework of epistemology, science is generally divided into three main categories: sharia science, moral science, and worldly science.

1. Shar'i Knowledge

Sharia science includes revelational knowledge related to worship, sharia law, and theology. This knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim (*fardhu 'ain*), because it is directly related to efforts to maintain human relationships with God and practice religious teachings.

2. Moral Science

Moral science emphasizes character, morals, and ethics education—part of *tazkiyatul nafs*. Although it is not always an obligation of sharia like law, moral science is a bridge between the understanding of sharia and the application of spiritual values in daily life.

3. Worldly Knowledge

Worldly sciences include fields of knowledge such as mathematics, science, and technology that support the welfare of society. This knowledge is not required by sharia for every individual (*fardhu kifayah*), but is valued as long as it is used for the benefit of not contradicting moral and sharia principles.

Herman et al. (2023) show that each category of knowledge can be *mahmudah* (praiseworthy), *madzmumah* (despicable), or *mubah* (neutral), depending on the intention, context, and results of its use. Rozi (2021) strengthens this understanding by stating that alGhazali's scientific hierarchy emphasizes the moral and spiritual values behind the structure of knowledge.

Thus, alGhazali's hierarchical model of knowledge became a pedagogical foothold for modern Islamic education—emphasizing that knowledge is not only measured academically, but also through spiritual depth and moral contribution to society.

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, the existence of knowledge is not solely for secular purposes—but as a means of getting closer to Allah (*taqarrub*). Musyaffa' and Haris (2022) expressly state that the mastery of knowledge according to al-Ghazali is not only to enrich intellect, but especially as a spiritual medium to get closer to God—because "no one can come to him without knowledge" (p. 1).

Sufism, as a spiritual path in Islam, supports this view. Miswar Rasyid Rangkuti (2020) explained that Sufism integrates spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, and *khalwat* so that the knowledge learned brings the heart to Divine closeness (*taqarrub*) and self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*).

According to Widodo (2024), Sufism-based education in Islamic boarding schools is oriented towards a balance between sharia and essence—with the ultimate goal of achieving *taqarrub* to God. Through intensive methods such as *khalwat* and *mujahadah*, students are directed to understand makeshift

knowledge, not just knowledge transfer.

This paradigm affirms that science must be framed in a spiritual framework: the process of learning not only expands knowledge, but also cleanses the heart and strengthens the bond with God. Thus, knowledge will not be empty of meaning, but will be the path to purity of soul and closeness with the Divine.

Integration of Knowledge, Faith, and Morals in PAI

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) ideally develops three main dimensions: science (knowledge), faith (belief), and morality (behavior), all of which are sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This normative foundation provides sharia legitimacy to integrate all three aspects in learning (Misfala & Salim, 2024; Awwalina, 2023).

1. Affective and Moral: Qur'ani

The Qur'an explicitly demands knowledge that fosters piety and noble morals. In QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 269, Allah "gives wisdom (deep knowledge) to whom He wills, and whoever is given wisdom, he has indeed been given much good." This verse shows that true knowledge leads to faith and moral goodness.

2. The Prophet's Words: Emphasis on Knowledge and Manners

In a hadith, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "May I tell you what the most precious treasure is among you?... Useful knowledge, and good morals." (HR. Ahmad). This strengthens that science does not stand alone without faith and morals, and everything is integrated into the framework of Islamic education (Ardi, 2024).

3. PAI Curriculum Implementation Model

Empirical studies show that the integration of the values of the Qur'an and Hadith in the PAI curriculum is able to improve religious understanding as well as students' character. Ardi (2024) found that the systematic and collaborative PAI model succeeded in forming individuals who were "not only intellectually intelligent, but also noble, faithful, and pious". Misfala and Salim (2024) emphasized that Qur'an-based learning effectively internalizes moral values in schools.

Awwalina (2023) added that the formation of morals based on faith (Qur'ani and Hadith) is the main philosophical-theological foundation in the Faith-Moral curriculum in madrasas, so that students not only know but inhabit the value of faith in themselves.

Imam al-Ghazali placed morality as the center of education, emphasizing that without morality, knowledge is only superficial knowledge and without ethics. In *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, morality is described as the foundation for the formation of maturity of the soul (*insān kamil*) – moral virtue is the ultimate goal of scientific and spiritual education (Muhlasin & Salik, 2022; Wibowo, 2022).

Research by Muhlasin and Salik (2022) confirms that moral education in the 21st century must combine the strengthening of the soul and intellect. They quoted al-Ghazali who encouraged schools to instill worship and example as a means of strengthening students' morals, not just delivering academic materials.

Wibowo (2022) emphasized that alGhazali views morality as the core of education, which functions as a means of achieving spiritual maturity and noble ethics, namely human perfection (*insān kamil*). Through learning that integrates knowledge, spirituality, and morals, alGhazali presents the concept of holistic education – not just intellectual, but towards the formation of good character.

A qualitative study by Arum Ningtias, Primayeni, and Puspika Sari (2024) reaffirms that alGhazali sees morality as the core of teaching – teaching not only on intellectual intelligence, but on moral formation as a means of achieving human perfection. They state that through moral teaching, students are directed to high spiritual values and social responsibility.

Practically, the urgency of moral cultivation according to alGhazali can be described as follows:

1. Basis of spiritual education: Morality is the link between knowledge and God (*taqarrub*), strengthening the faith and piety of students.
2. Maturity of character: Moral education forms individuals with noble ethics, balanced between ratio and heart.
3. Humanist education: Morality underlies moral objectivity in social interaction, creating a civilized society.
4. Early detection of moral problems: Moral inculcation from an early age through the example of teachers and structured worship helps anticipate the moral decline of the character of the younger generation.

Discussion

1. The Truth of Knowledge in al-Ghazali's View

AlGhazali views knowledge not merely as an accumulation of rational data or empirical experience, but as a light that shines on the heart. In his view, the highest source of truth comes from divine enlightenment (*kasyf*), where the light of God descends into the heart that has been cleansed through Sufism, *dhikr*, and self-reflection. The intellect is the recipient of this light – not as a primordial lamp – so that true knowledge is the integration of spiritual ratio and sensitivity.

Noor Liyana Selvia (2024) emphasized that knowledge for alGhazali is a means of achieving closeness with God, not just academic mastery. The process of acquiring knowledge involves a moral and spiritual dimension – only a heart that is ready to receive the light of truth is able to penetrate the true meaning of knowledge, while a dark heart only produces superficial knowledge.

Other research highlights alGhazali's concept of *waḥdat al 'ulūm* (unity of knowledge), in which knowledge is considered singular and comes from a single divine source, flowing through the intellect, senses, and heart. Only with a clean heart, knowledge can function as a "light from the Divine" that leads individuals to spiritual and moral understanding, as well as to form ethical and noble behavior.

According to al Ghazālī in *Ihya' 'Ulum al Dīn*, reason (*'aql*) is an essential means of understanding the world and the laws of God. He stated that reason is the 'estuary of knowledge' – the cradle of all knowledge – because it is able to

distinguish halal and haram, right and wrong (Maryati & Wahyuningsih, 2020). Reason functions as a 'lamp' that illuminates the heart and mind, as well as a bridge to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter (Alif.ID quoted Isham Pawan Ahmad).

However, al Ghazālī does not place reason in an absolute position. He emphasizes the importance of revelation (tanzīl) as the ultimate source of truth – moral values, the purpose of life, and the law of sharia" (Alif.ID). Revelation is seen as divine information that explains God's will and religious laws, while reason is tasked with understanding and actualizing it in human life (Alif.ID).

This synergy between reason and revelation marks al Ghazālī's harmonious approach to Islamic epistemology, particularly in *Ihya*. This approach ensures that science does not grow out of rational or empirical efforts, but is also rooted in the spiritual awareness and moral commitment taught by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This awareness is manifested through an emphasis on balance: reason opens the way, revelation gives direction, and the heart becomes the estuary of true knowledge.

In the contemporary era, the progress of science is often accompanied by a decline in moral and spiritual quality. Addin Mustaqim & Abu Bakar (2023) emphasized that morality (noble morals) is an important foundation so that knowledge is not misused for selfish purposes, damaging the environment, or even violating social and religious ethics. They emphasize that integrity, honesty, and social responsibility should be the bridge between knowledge and its practical application.

In the hadith of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم it is explained that knowledge that does not provide benefits—that is, that which is not applied and not shared—is like a treasure that is not used in obedience to Allah. A Reddit user shared:

"The example of knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like the example of a treasure from which nothing is spent in the cause of Allah."

This hadith shows that knowledge that is only stored without action or *da'wah* becomes meaningless. According to Islamic principles, knowledge must be accompanied by morals and sincere intentions so that it is truly beneficial for oneself, society, and the hereafter.

Furthermore, a study from Epistemic (2023) shows that the formation of morals in the context of faith (aqidah) plays an important role in making science a means of transforming students' character in madrasah ibtidaiyah. They found that PAI, which emphasizes faith and morals, succeeded in significantly improving students' moral and spiritual attitudes.

2. The Urgency of Integrating Knowledge, Faith, and Morals in PAI

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) functions not only as a medium of transmission of cognitive knowledge, but also as a means of forming spirituality and character (affective realm). A study by Muamar et al. (2022) in the context of the Independent Curriculum emphasizes that a curriculum that focuses only on

cognitive aspects—for example, mastery of materials and memorization—often ignores the development of students' religious attitudes and moral values. As a result, there is a gap between intellectual intelligence and moral quality, which has the potential to cause religious education to lose its essence.

Furthermore, Elyatul Mu'awanah and Ita Nurmala (2023) in an analysis of the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in Madrasah Aliyah highlight that excessive emphasis on the cognitive realm makes affective aspects—attitudes, motivations, and values—less adequately portioned in learning strategies. In fact, the success of PAI education is not only measured by understanding the material, but also by changes in students' attitudes and daily behaviors.

Departing from these findings, the development of a PAI curriculum that integrates science, faith, and morals is very important. Research by Misfala & Salim (2024) shows that the implementation of PAI as a whole—which combines strengthening religious understanding (cognitive) with heart involvement and spiritual (affective) commitment—succeeds in forming students' character that is more moral and has higher religious qualities. Thus, the fragmentation of the curriculum that separates the cognitive and affective realms must still be overcome through a holistic learning approach inspired by classical Islamic epistemology.

AlGhazali emphasized that true education must comprehensively develop the intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions of students—as the definition of holistic education. Tukiyah & Bustan (2024) in their analysis of Islamic boarding schools reveal that alGhazali-style holistic education in the lodge not only provides knowledge transfer, but also fosters spiritual and ethical awareness through the example of the teacher as *murābbī rūḥānī*. *Murābbī rūḥānī* is not only a material teacher, but a spiritual guide who systematically shapes the faith and character of the student through intense spiritual interactions.

In the context of modern institutions such as recitation and schools, Sef & Abu Bakar (2024) emphasize the relevance of alGhazali's educational paradigm to ground spiritual values in contemporary learning practices. They showed how PAI teachers who acted as *murābbī rūḥānī* deliberately applied the habit of *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, and reflection on the subject matter, so that cognitive learning was always accompanied by the development of heart and morals.

Furthermore, Sa'bani et al. (2024) discuss the implementation of educational models for student independence through alGhazali's holistic approach. The model places the teacher as a spiritual facilitator—*murābbī* who motivates reverence in learning, accompanies the excavation of the meaning of sacred texts, and directs students to apply religious values in real life. In this way, alGhazali brought the paradigm of PAI education into an integrated process of transformation of the soul, intellect, and morals.

The Application of AlGhazali Epistemology in the Curriculum, Learning

Methods, and Evaluation of PAI

1. Curriculum Development: Integration of Islamic Epistemology

The development of a holistic PAI curriculum, according to alGhazali-style Islamic epistemology, emphasizes four approaches: bayānī (the text of revelation), burhānī (rational), 'irfānī (spiritual), and tajrībī (empirical). Saputra, Hermawan, & Priatna (2024) stated that the integration of these values in the curriculum creates a thorough and contextual learning process—combining mastery of knowledge with students' moral and spiritual education. With a model like this, PAI is no longer just a memorization base, but a space for critical interaction, spiritual reflection, and real practice.

Furthermore, the epistemological relevance of alGhazali to the Independent Curriculum is also affirmed by Hanafie & Khojir (2024), who call the trilogy of relationships—divinity, humanity, naturalness—similar to the framework of classical Islamic education. This approach emphasizes that PAI must be formed in such a way that learning outcomes include cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects simultaneously.

2. Learning Methods: An Inclusive Classical Approach

At the operational level, alGhazali-style classical learning methods, as studied by Komalasari & Zulfah (2022), are particularly relevant for the context of inclusive students. The learning process based on discussion, reflection, and teacher example creates a friendly and meaningful educational atmosphere for all students. This at the same time brings to life the moral and spiritual dimension in daily interactions in the classroom, not just the intellectual aspect.

3. Learning Evaluation: Al Hisab/ Al Muhasabah

AlGhazali places a strong emphasis on the evaluation of learning through the concept of al hisāb or al muhasabah, which is spiritual and moral self-calculation and assessment. Arpani, Hermina, & Huda (2023) revealed that the evaluation according to alGhazali should focus on the ability of students to overcome life problems independently, and turn into morally responsible individuals. Assessments measure not only cognition, but also changes in students' personality and spiritual independence.

Overall, the application of alGhazali's epistemology in the curriculum, methods, and evaluation of PAI offers an educational model that brings together three main dimensions: knowledge, faith, and morals. This approach is expected to be able to produce students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also strong in faith and moral maturity.

CONCLUSION

The epistemology of science according to al-Ghazali emphasizes that true knowledge is not just a collection of information, but knowledge that fosters faith and forms noble morals. Al-Ghazali distinguishes between useful knowledge (al-'ilm al-nafi') and knowledge that merely adorns the intellect without affecting the heart and behavior. Therefore, the search for knowledge must always be accompanied by spiritual awareness and orientation to Allah SWT.

Tazkiyatun nafs or purification of the soul is the culmination of the learning process from an Islamic perspective. According to al-Ghazali, the essence of education is not only to form intellectual skills, but to purify the heart to be close to the Divine truth. This process includes mujahadah, riyadhah, and muraqabah as a way to form kamil people with noble character.

Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should ideally be structured based on the integration of three main domains, cognitive, affective, and spiritual. The concept of al-Ghazali shows that learning cannot be separated from the development of faith and character. PAI based on the epistemology of al-Ghazali will produce students who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually mature and moral in social life.

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