



**MORAL EDUCATION VALUES IN IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S MINHAJUL MUTA'ALLIM:
Its Relevance for Contemporary Islamic Character Education**

Muhamad Rifqi Maulana¹, Ahmed Shoim El Amin²

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Al Ghazali Cilacap^{1,2}

mrmrifqi00@gmail.com

Article Submite: (10 February 2026), **Article Review:** (1 Maret 2026), **Article Accepted:** (23 April 2026)

Abstract

The moral crisis among students in the contemporary era has become a significant challenge for educational institutions worldwide. Islamic education emphasizes moral development as an essential component of human perfection, and Imam Al-Ghazali remains one of the most influential scholars in this field. This study aims to analyze the moral education values contained in *Minhajul Muta'allim* and examine their relevance to contemporary Islamic character education. This research employs a qualitative library research approach using content analysis. Primary data were obtained from Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim*, while secondary data were collected from books, scholarly journals, and related studies on Islamic moral education. The findings reveal that Al-Ghazali's moral education framework emphasizes sincerity in seeking knowledge, respect for teachers, self-discipline, humility, patience, spiritual purification, and social responsibility. The study further demonstrates that moral formation is achieved through habituation, self-control, and continuous ethical training. These values remain highly relevant in addressing modern educational challenges, including moral degradation, individualism, and the excessive orientation toward material success. The study concludes that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy provides a holistic framework that integrates intellectual development, spiritual awareness, and ethical responsibility, making it applicable to contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: moral education, al-ghazali, minhajul muta'allim, character education, islamic philosophy

Abstrak

Krisis moral di kalangan peserta didik pada era kontemporer telah menjadi tantangan yang signifikan bagi lembaga pendidikan di seluruh dunia. Pendidikan Islam menekankan pengembangan akhlak sebagai komponen esensial dalam mencapai kesempurnaan manusia, dan Imam Al-Ghazali tetap menjadi salah satu ulama paling berpengaruh dalam bidang ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis nilai-nilai pendidikan akhlak yang terkandung dalam *Minhajul Muta'allim* serta mengkaji relevansinya terhadap pendidikan karakter Islam kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*) dan metode analisis isi (*content analysis*). Data primer diperoleh dari kitab *Minhajul Muta'allim* karya Imam Al-Ghazali, sedangkan data sekunder dikumpulkan dari buku, jurnal ilmiah, dan berbagai penelitian yang berkaitan dengan pendidikan akhlak Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kerangka pendidikan akhlak Al-Ghazali menekankan nilai keikhlasan dalam menuntut ilmu, penghormatan

MORAL EDUCATION VALUES IN IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S

Muhamad Rifqi Maulana, Ahmed Shoim El Amin

kepada guru, disiplin diri, kerendahan hati, kesabaran, penyucian jiwa, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa pembentukan akhlak dapat dicapai melalui pembiasaan, pengendalian diri, dan latihan etika yang berkelanjutan. Nilai-nilai tersebut tetap sangat relevan dalam menghadapi berbagai tantangan pendidikan modern, termasuk degradasi moral, individualisme, dan orientasi yang berlebihan terhadap kesuksesan material. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa filsafat pendidikan Al-Ghazali menawarkan kerangka yang holistik yang mengintegrasikan pengembangan intelektual, kesadaran spiritual, dan tanggung jawab etis, sehingga tetap aplikatif bagi lembaga pendidikan Islam kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Akhlak, Al-Ghazali, *Minhajul Muta'allim*, Pendidikan Karakter, Filsafat Islam.

A. Introduction

The rapid advancement of science, technology, and globalization has significantly transformed educational systems worldwide. While these developments have provided numerous opportunities for learning and communication, they have also contributed to various moral challenges among students, including declining respect for teachers, academic dishonesty, cyberbullying, and increasing individualistic attitudes (Huda et al., 2023). Educational institutions are therefore confronted with the responsibility of not only developing students' intellectual capacities but also nurturing their moral and spiritual character.

Character education has become a major concern in educational discourse. Numerous studies indicate that cognitive achievement alone cannot guarantee the formation of responsible citizens who contribute positively to society (Rahman & Abdullah, 2022). Consequently, educators increasingly recognize the importance of integrating moral values into educational practices. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, moral education (*tarbiyah al-akhlāq*) occupies a central position. The Prophet Muhammad stated that his mission was to perfect noble character (*makārim al-akhlāq*), highlighting the significance of morality in Islam. Islamic scholars throughout history have extensively discussed moral education as an essential component of human development.

Among these scholars, Imam Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) is regarded as one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic philosophy and education. His educational thought integrates theology, ethics, psychology, and spirituality into a comprehensive framework of human development. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that education should not merely transmit information but should transform the learner's character and cultivate virtues that guide behavior. One of Al-Ghazali's important works concerning educational ethics is *Minhajul Muta'allim*. This text provides guidance for students regarding the ethics of learning, the cultivation of noble character,

and the proper relationship between knowledge and morality. Al-Ghazali views education as a process of spiritual purification and moral refinement aimed at achieving closeness to Allah.

Several contemporary studies have explored Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Hidayat (2021) found that Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education remains relevant for modern character education programs. Similarly, Hasanah and Yusuf (2023) argued that Al-Ghazali's emphasis on sincerity and self-discipline offers practical solutions to contemporary educational challenges. However, specific studies examining moral education values in *Minhajul Muta'allim* remain limited, particularly within the context of contemporary character education.

B. Theoretical Study

Moral education occupies a central position in Islamic educational philosophy because the ultimate goal of education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but the formation of individuals who possess noble character and spiritual awareness. In Islam, education is viewed as a comprehensive process aimed at developing intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and moral dimensions simultaneously (Al-Attas, 1991). The concept of *akhlāq* originates from the Arabic word *khuluq*, which refers to a person's character, disposition, or habitual behavior. Moral values are not limited to external actions but are deeply rooted qualities within the soul that influence behavior naturally and consistently (Fuad, 2017). Therefore, moral education seeks to cultivate virtuous habits that become an integral part of an individual's personality and guide their interactions with Allah, fellow human beings, and the surrounding environment (Sahriansyah, 2014).

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, morality is a stable condition of the soul from which actions emerge spontaneously without requiring extensive deliberation (Al-Ghazali, 2005). A person is considered morally virtuous when good deeds arise naturally from his or her character, while immoral behavior results from negative dispositions embedded within the soul. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that moral qualities are not entirely innate but can be developed through education, training, habituation, and spiritual discipline (Asari, 2022). This perspective highlights the transformative role of education in shaping human character and supports the idea that individuals can improve their moral conduct through continuous effort and guidance. Consequently, moral education becomes an essential means of nurturing virtuous individuals capable of contributing positively to society (Suryadarma & Haq, 2020).

Al-Ghazali's theory of morality is closely related to his understanding of human psychology. He explains that human behavior is influenced by several psychological forces, namely reason (*al-'aql*), desire (*al-shahwah*), anger (*al-ghadab*), and justice (*al-'adl*) (Al-Ghazali, 2005). Reason enables individuals to distinguish between right and wrong, while desire motivates the fulfillment of physical needs and personal interests. Anger functions as a protective force that can encourage courage and determination when properly controlled. Justice serves as the balancing principle that harmonizes these psychological elements. According to Al-Ghazali, moral excellence emerges when these forces are balanced and guided by religious teachings. Conversely, moral corruption occurs when one force dominates the others, leading to excessive behavior and ethical deviation (Asari, 2022).

The educational philosophy presented in *Minhajul Muta'allim* reflects Al-Ghazali's broader vision of integrating knowledge and morality. He argues that the pursuit of knowledge should be motivated by sincere intentions aimed at seeking Allah's pleasure rather than worldly recognition, wealth, or status (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Knowledge is viewed as a means of spiritual refinement and self-improvement rather than an instrument for personal gain. Therefore, students are encouraged to purify their intentions, maintain humility, and continuously evaluate their moral conduct throughout the learning process. This emphasis on sincerity demonstrates Al-Ghazali's belief that intellectual development must be accompanied by spiritual and ethical growth (Hidayat, 2021).

Furthermore, *Minhajul Muta'allim* highlights the importance of respect for teachers as a fundamental aspect of educational success. Al-Ghazali considers teachers not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral guides who shape the character and spiritual development of students (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Respect, obedience, and humility toward teachers are therefore regarded as essential virtues that facilitate the acquisition of beneficial knowledge. Students are encouraged to avoid arrogance, maintain proper etiquette, and demonstrate gratitude toward their educators. Through this relationship, education becomes a transformative process that nurtures both intellectual competence and moral integrity (Hasanah & Yusuf, 2023).

Another significant aspect of Al-Ghazali's moral education is the cultivation of self-discipline and patience. He emphasizes that the pursuit of knowledge requires perseverance, commitment, and the ability to control one's desires and emotions (Al-Ghazali, 2005). Students must be willing to endure difficulties, dedicate time to study, and maintain consistency in their educational endeavors. Patience and self-control enable learners to overcome obstacles and

remain focused on long-term goals. Through repeated practice and habituation, these virtues gradually become embedded within the individual's character and contribute to moral excellence (Rahman & Abdullah, 2022).

In addition, Al-Ghazali underscores the social dimension of moral education. Knowledge should not be pursued solely for personal advancement but should contribute to the welfare of society. Educated individuals bear the responsibility of applying their knowledge for the benefit of others and promoting justice, compassion, and cooperation within their communities (Suryadarma & Haq, 2020). This perspective reflects the Islamic understanding that moral development encompasses both personal piety and social responsibility. Consequently, moral education seeks to produce individuals who are intellectually capable, spiritually aware, and socially engaged (Bahri, 2023).

The relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy remains evident in contemporary educational discourse. Modern educational systems increasingly recognize the importance of character education in addressing issues such as moral decline, academic dishonesty, social conflict, and excessive materialism (Huda et al., 2023). The values emphasized in *Minhajul Muta'allim*, including sincerity, humility, discipline, respect, patience, and social responsibility, align closely with contemporary efforts to promote ethical behavior and holistic human development (Hasanah & Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, Al-Ghazali's moral education framework continues to offer valuable insights for educators seeking to integrate character formation into modern educational practices (Rahman & Abdullah, 2022).

C. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design to explore and analyze the moral education values contained in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim*. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research focused on understanding concepts, meanings, and educational values embedded within a classical Islamic text rather than measuring variables quantitatively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary source of data was *Minhajul Muta'allim*, while secondary data were obtained from books, scholarly journals, theses, dissertations, and other academic publications discussing Islamic moral education, Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, and character education. Data were collected through documentation techniques by identifying, reading, and reviewing relevant literature related to the research topic. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using content analysis, which involved several

stages, namely data reduction, data classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing (Krippendorff, 2019). During the analysis process, the researcher identified moral education themes presented in the text, such as sincerity in seeking knowledge, respect for teachers, humility, discipline, patience, self-control, and social responsibility, and then interpreted these themes within the framework of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy and contemporary character education discourse. To enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing the contents of *Minhajul Muta'allim* with other works of Al-Ghazali and relevant contemporary studies on Islamic moral education (Moleong, 2021). Through this method, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the moral values promoted by Al-Ghazali and their relevance to contemporary Islamic educational practices.

D. Results and Discussion

The analysis of Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim* reveals that moral education constitutes the foundation of the educational process. Al-Ghazali does not perceive education merely as the transmission of knowledge but as a comprehensive effort to cultivate noble character and spiritual excellence. The findings indicate that several core moral values are consistently emphasized throughout the text, including sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), respect for teachers, humility (*tawāḍu'*), discipline, patience, self-control, and social responsibility. These values are presented as essential qualities that every student should possess in order to attain beneficial knowledge and achieve success in both worldly and spiritual life (Al-Ghazali, 2020).

One of the most prominent moral values identified in *Minhajul Muta'allim* is sincerity in seeking knowledge. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the intention behind learning should be directed solely toward attaining the pleasure of Allah and improving oneself rather than pursuing fame, social status, or material benefits. He argues that knowledge acquired without sincere intentions may lead to arrogance and moral corruption. This finding reflects Al-Ghazali's belief that the effectiveness of education depends not only on intellectual achievement but also on the purity of one's motives (Al-Ghazali, 2005). In contemporary educational settings, this principle remains relevant as many students often view education primarily as a means of obtaining employment or financial success. Integrating the value of sincerity into educational practices may help students develop a deeper sense of purpose and responsibility toward learning (Hasanah & Yusuf, 2023).

Another significant finding concerns the importance of respecting teachers. Al-Ghazali considers teachers to be not merely transmitters of information but also mentors who guide

students toward moral and spiritual development. Therefore, students are encouraged to demonstrate obedience, gratitude, and humility toward their teachers. Respectful interactions between teachers and students create an educational environment conducive to effective learning and character formation. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that positive teacher-student relationships contribute significantly to students' academic success and moral development (Rahman & Abdullah, 2022). In modern educational contexts, where traditional authority structures are increasingly challenged, Al-Ghazali's perspective provides valuable insights into maintaining mutual respect and ethical conduct within educational institutions.

The study also found that humility (*tawāḍuʿ*) occupies a central position in Al-Ghazali's moral education framework. He warns students against arrogance and intellectual pride, arguing that excessive self-confidence can hinder the acquisition of knowledge and obstruct personal growth. According to Al-Ghazali, true knowledge should lead individuals to greater awareness of their limitations and dependence upon Allah. Humility enables learners to remain open to new ideas, accept constructive criticism, and continuously improve themselves. This finding corresponds with contemporary character education theories that identify humility as an essential component of lifelong learning and personal development (Huda et al., 2023).

Discipline and perseverance are also emphasized as important virtues in the pursuit of knowledge. Al-Ghazali teaches that educational success requires dedication, consistency, and commitment to continuous learning. Students must be willing to endure difficulties, manage their time effectively, and maintain focus despite various distractions. The process of acquiring knowledge is viewed as a long-term endeavor that demands patience and self-control. These findings remain particularly relevant in the digital era, where technological distractions often interfere with students' concentration and learning habits. Developing discipline and perseverance can help students overcome challenges and achieve their educational goals more effectively (Bahri, 2023).

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the significance of self-control in Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. He argues that students should regulate their desires, emotions, and behaviors to prevent actions that may hinder their intellectual and spiritual development. Self-control is closely connected to moral maturity because it enables individuals to make ethical decisions and resist negative influences. This perspective is consistent with Al-Ghazali's broader psychological theory, which emphasizes balancing reason, desire, and emotion in order to achieve

moral excellence (Asari, 2022). Contemporary educational research similarly identifies self-regulation as a crucial factor in academic achievement and character development.

In addition to personal virtues, *Minhajul Muta'allim* emphasizes social responsibility as an important objective of education. Al-Ghazali maintains that knowledge should be used to benefit society rather than serve individual interests alone. Educated individuals are expected to contribute positively to their communities, promote justice, and support the welfare of others. This social dimension reflects the holistic nature of Islamic education, which seeks to develop individuals who are both spiritually committed and socially engaged. The finding reinforces contemporary views that education should prepare students to become responsible citizens capable of addressing social challenges and contributing to community development (Suryadarma & Haq, 2020).

The findings of this study demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's concept of moral education remains highly relevant to contemporary educational challenges. Issues such as moral decline, academic dishonesty, disrespect toward educators, and excessive materialism indicate the continuing need for character-based educational approaches. The values identified in *Minhajul Muta'allim* provide a comprehensive framework for integrating ethical, spiritual, and intellectual development within educational institutions. Unlike educational models that focus primarily on academic achievement, Al-Ghazali's approach emphasizes the balanced development of the whole person. Therefore, the moral education values contained in *Minhajul Muta'allim* can serve as a valuable foundation for strengthening character education programs in contemporary Islamic schools and universities, ultimately contributing to the formation of individuals who possess intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, and noble character.

E. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study concludes that Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim* presents a comprehensive framework of moral education that emphasizes character formation as the primary objective of the educational process. The analysis reveals several fundamental moral values, including sincerity in seeking knowledge, respect for teachers, humility, discipline, patience, self-control, and social responsibility. According to Al-Ghazali, education should not be limited to the acquisition of intellectual knowledge but should also cultivate spiritual awareness and ethical behavior that guide individuals in their daily lives. These moral values are developed through continuous practice, habituation, and self-discipline, enabling students to internalize virtuous

character traits. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy remains highly relevant to contemporary educational challenges, particularly in addressing moral degradation, academic dishonesty, excessive materialism, and the decline of ethical values among students. The integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions in *Minhajul Muta'allim* offers a holistic educational model capable of fostering individuals who are academically competent, morally responsible, and socially engaged.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that Islamic educational institutions incorporate the moral education values proposed by Al-Ghazali into their curricula, learning activities, and character education programs. Teachers and educational practitioners should emphasize not only academic achievement but also the cultivation of noble character and spiritual development among students. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical studies examining the implementation of Al-Ghazali's moral education concepts in contemporary schools, madrasahs, and Islamic higher education institutions. Further research may also explore the effectiveness of Al-Ghazali's educational principles in addressing current social and educational issues, thereby contributing to the development of a more comprehensive and value-oriented educational system.

References

- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1991). *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).
- Al-Ghazali. (2005). *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Ghazali. (2020). *Minhajul Muta'allim*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Asari, H. (2022). Moral education in Al-Ghazali's perspective. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 15(2), 120–135.
- Bahri, S. (2023). Character development in Islamic education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 45–59.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fuad, M. (2017). *Konsep pendidikan akhlak dalam Islam*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Hasanah, N., & Yusuf, M. (2023). Al-Ghazali's educational ethics and contemporary character education. *International Journal of Islamic Education*, 11(2), 87–101.
- Hidayat, A. (2021). Moral values in classical Islamic education. *Journal of Muslim Education*, 7(1), 55–70.
- Huda, M., Rahman, A., & Syafei, M. (2023). Character education and moral development in the digital era. *Journal of Islamic Educational Studies*, 18(1), 45–62.
- Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moleong, L. J. (2021). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Edisi revisi). Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Rahman, M., & Abdullah, S. (2022). Character education in modern Islamic schools. *Islamic Education Review*, 10(3), 155–170.
- Sahriansyah. (2014). *Pendidikan akhlak dalam perspektif Islam*. Banjarmasin: Antasari Press.

-
-
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Suryadarma, Y., & Haq, A. H. (2020). Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy and contemporary relevance. *Journal of Islamic Educational Research*, 12(3), 201–215.
- Zed, M. (2014). *Metode penelitian kepustakaan*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.