



## AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICAL PARADIGM AND ITS RELEVANCE IN AQIDAH-AKHLAK INSTRUCTION AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL-BASED MADRASAH ALIYAH TARBIYATUT THOLABAH

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### ABSTRACT

In the context of contemporary education, many madrasahs attempted to integrate character education into their curriculum. The implementation of Al-Ghazali's thought into the Aqidah Akhlak curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah was expected to contribute positively to character education in Indonesia. This study did not only aim to examine the theory but also provided practical recommendations for educators and policymakers in designing a more effective curriculum. As stated by Raqib, in-depth research on the integration of Islamic values in education opened opportunities to improve the quality of education in a Muslim-majority country. This research used a literature review method by examining relevant sources related to curriculum concepts, character education, and Al-Ghazali's thought. In addition, document analysis of the operational curriculum of Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah was also conducted. The literature analysis became an effective method for collecting comprehensive information and providing a broader context to the issues studied. The results of the study showed that Al-Ghazali's perspective on curriculum had a significant impact on the development of the Aqidah Akhlak curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah. Al-Ghazali's concept of ethics was not only relevant in shaping students' character but also in creating a more conducive learning environment. These findings indicated that the integration of moral values in education could improve the overall quality of education and prepare a generation that was not only intelligent but also possessed strong integrity.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Al-Ghazali's Education, The Madrasah Curriculum of Aqidah and Akhlaq

### ABSTRAK

Dalam konteks pendidikan saat ini, banyak madrasah berupaya mengintegrasikan pendidikan karakter ke dalam kurikulum mereka. Penerapan pemikiran Al-Ghazali ke dalam kurikulum Aqidah Akhlak di Madrasah Aliyah diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap pendidikan karakter di Indonesia. Penelitian ini tidak hanya bertujuan mengkaji teori, tetapi juga memberikan rekomendasi praktis bagi para pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan dalam merancang kurikulum yang lebih efektif. Seperti yang diungkapkan oleh Raqib, penelitian yang mendalam mengenai integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dalam pendidikan membuka peluang untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan di negara dengan mayoritas penduduk Muslim. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian pustaka dengan menelaah sumber-sumber yang relevan terkait konsep kurikulum, pendidikan karakter, dan pemikiran Al-Ghazali. Selain itu, analisis dokumen terhadap kurikulum operasional Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah juga dilakukan. Analisis pustaka menjadi metode yang efektif untuk mengumpulkan informasi yang komprehensif dan memberikan konteks yang lebih luas terhadap isu yang dikaji. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perspektif kurikulum menurut Al-Ghazali memiliki dampak yang signifikan terhadap pengembangan kurikulum Aqidah Akhlak di Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah. Konsep akhlak yang diajukan Al-Ghazali tidak hanya relevan dalam membentuk karakter siswa, tetapi juga dalam menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih kondusif. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai moral dalam pendidikan dapat meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan secara keseluruhan dan mempersiapkan generasi yang tidak hanya cerdas, tetapi juga memiliki integritas yang.

**Kata Kunci:** kurikulum Pendidikan Al-Ghazali, kurikulum akidah akhlak madrasah



## INTRODUCTION

In the current educational context, many madrasahs strive to integrate character education into their curricula. This phenomenon emerges as a response to the need to develop individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess good moral character. The thought of Al-Ghazali, which emphasizes the importance of ethics (akhlak) in education, provides a relevant framework for developing a balanced curriculum between knowledge and morality. According to, the implementation of moral values in education can significantly enhance students' character, preparing them better to face future social challenges .(Hidayah, 2019).

Amid evolving educational policies, many educational institutions face difficulties in implementing effective curricula aligned with Islamic values. This results in a gap between proposed educational theories and the practices applied in the field. Al-Ghazali's thought offers solutions that can help design a relevant and practical curriculum on creed (akidah) and ethics (akhlak). Research by Nurhikmah (Al Burhan & Nurhikmah, 2024) demonstrates that applying Al-Ghazali's principles in curriculum development can overcome these challenges and provide clear guidance for character education implementation in madrasahs.

Currently, there is a shift toward a more holistic educational approach that not only focuses on academic aspects but also on the spiritual and moral development of students. This new paradigm demands education to produce not only knowledgeable students but also those with strong personal character. Al-Ghazali's philosophy, which advocates a balance between knowledge, ethics, and practice, is highly relevant in this context. The application of this concept within the curriculum can strengthen the integration of academic education and character development, thereby creating more well-rounded individuals who are better prepared to face life's challenges.

In a study entitled *The Concept of Imam Al-Ghazali's Thought in the Relevance of Islamic Education Patterns in Indonesia in the Era of Globalization*, the research emphasizes three aspects: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. The cognitive aspect focuses on mastering the subject matter through memorization at the basic level and comprehension at more advanced levels. The psychomotor aspect stresses practical application of the material through *ibadah amaliyah* (practical worship). Meanwhile, the affective aspect involves internalizing the lessons in daily life. This differs from the current study's focus, which emphasizes the curriculum of creed and ethics (akidah akhlak) in Madrasah Aliyah. (Gunawan & Lestari, n.d.).

At Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah, the educational concept of Al-Ghazali is applied. The implementation of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy aims to create a balance between the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development of students. Al-Ghazali's concept of education emphasizes the formation of good character and the application of moral and religious values in daily life. One way this is realized is through the use of Al-Ghazali's writings as instructional materials in the classroom.

Referring to the above background, this research is of great importance. By understanding and applying Al-Ghazali's philosophical concepts into the curriculum of creed and ethics



(akidah akhlak) at Madrasah Aliyah, it is expected to contribute positively to character education in Indonesia. This study not only serves to examine theory but also aims to provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers in designing a more effective curriculum. As Raqib stated, in-depth research on the integration of Islamic values in education opens opportunities to improve the quality of education in Muslim-majority countries (Moslimany et al., 2024).

## METHOD

This study focuses on the phenomenon of character education revitalization occurring at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatul Tholabah, where the institution seeks to integrate character education into the madrasah curriculum. In this context, Al-Ghazali's thought provides an essential foundation for analyzing how moral values can be internalized within the educational process.

Research by Hikmah indicates that a morality-based curricular initiative at Madrasah Aliyah emphasizes the development of ethical character, aligning with Al-Ghazali's principles in nurturing morally upright citizenship. By embedding character values into daily practice, the madrasah fosters a respectful and ethical community, thereby enhancing the learning environment. This approach not only cultivates essential life skills such as respect, honesty, and justice but also reflects Al-Ghazali's conviction regarding the centrality of moral education for both personal and communal well-being. The positive learning atmosphere created through this ethics-based model supports the holistic development of students, resonating with Al-Ghazali's contributions to character education (Al Burhan & Nurhikmah, 2024).

This study also highlights the challenges faced by educational institutions in implementing curricula that are both effective and consistent with Islamic values. Existing educational policies are often not accompanied by practical and consistent application in the field, resulting in a gap between theoretical frameworks and actual implementation. This phenomenon opens a space for analyzing how Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy can offer solutions for designing a relevant and applicable *akidah akhlak* curriculum. A recent study suggests that the application of Al-Ghazali's principles may help bridge this gap by providing clear guidelines for educational practice (Mukarromah et al., 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Curriculum Paradigms in Islamic Education: Historical and Conceptual Perspectives

The curriculum in Islamic education cannot be separated from the historical dynamics of Islamic civilization itself. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the learning system has exhibited an implicit curricular structure, with the Qur'an at its core and the Prophet's practices serving as pedagogical methods. In the classical period, institutions such as *kuttab* and *madrasah* implemented early forms of curriculum that integrated religious sciences and rational sciences. This indicates that Islamic education has always had curricular roots that are both spiritually and intellectually integrated. As noted by Hasibuddin, the traditional Islamic education system emphasizes the transmission of knowledge sourced from both revelation and reason, creating a synergy between the two as the basis of the curriculum (Hasibuddin et al., 2023).



The curricular paradigm in Islamic education is theocentric, in contrast to the more anthropocentric orientation found in Western curricula. In Islamic education, the curriculum is viewed as a means of drawing closer to God and forming the ideal human being (*insan al-kamil*), rather than merely serving as a tool for social or economic reproduction. Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, as cited by Yanti and Hayani, stresses that the ultimate goal of Islamic education is *ta'dib*—the inculcation of adab (ethics and proper conduct)—rather than the mere transmission of knowledge. This serves as a conceptual foundation in which the curriculum is not simply a collection of content, but a system of values that shapes the learner's personality and character within a spiritual framework (Yanti et al., 2023)

One paradigmatic feature of the curriculum in Islamic education is the integration of religious and worldly knowledge. This aligns with the concept of the “interconnectivity of knowledge” promoted by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and further advanced by contemporary Islamic education institutions, such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). In Indonesia, this paradigm is echoed by scholars like Nurcholish Madjid, who argued that Islamic education must remain open to modern sciences without losing its spiritual identity. Within this framework, the curriculum should bridge revealed values and contemporary demands, rather than dichotomizing them.

In the contemporary era, many Islamic educational institutions face the challenge of formulating curricula that are both responsive to modern needs and faithful to Islamic values. A study by Jamin and Putra highlights that most Islamic schools in Muslim-majority countries remain trapped in a fragmented and normative curricular approach, lacking responsiveness to social changes and scientific developments (Riwanda, 2023). In Indonesia, this crisis manifests in the disharmony between the national curriculum and the Islamic values promoted by *madrasahs*, a point critically examined by Azyumardi Azra in his framework of “Islamic education modernization.”

Given the complexities of the modern era, the Islamic education curriculum needs to be reoriented from a normative-dogmatic approach to a critical-integrative one. This does not imply abandoning Islamic principles, but rather reinterpreting the curriculum as a dynamic and contextual system. Such reorientation also requires a fundamental epistemological renewal, as proposed by Ziauddin Sardar through his notion of “postnormal times,” in which Islamic education must be adaptable to uncertainty without losing its spiritual direction (Sardar, 2019). Thus, the paradigm of curriculum in Islamic education must be reconstructed on the foundations of knowledge integration, transcendent ethical values, and contemporary social context.

### **The Concept of Curriculum Thought from Al-Ghazali's Perspective**

Education serves as a strategic tool and medium for transforming religious doctrines into lived realities. Al-Ghazali's educational thought tends toward an empirical orientation, as he placed great emphasis on the formative impact of education on learners. According to him, a child's disposition is largely shaped by their parents and educators, underscoring the critical role of guidance in the development of character and intellect.

Al-Ghazali's Concept of Islamic Education:



1. Introducing learners to the knowledge of Allah SWT as the Creator of the universe and of humankind, and as the One through whose grace human beings are able to develop their innate potential. Thus, the obligation to know and serve Allah is the most fundamental duty.
2. Making learners aware of their role among fellow creatures and their personal responsibilities in life.
3. Cultivating an understanding of social interaction and communal responsibilities, which are essential for living and working together in society.
4. Familiarizing learners with the natural world, encouraging them to reflect upon the wisdom behind its creation, and enabling them to derive benefit from it.

The Aims of Islamic Education According to Al-Ghazali:

1. To make individuals aware of their role among other creatures and their personal responsibilities in life.
2. To educate individuals about social interaction and their duties within the structure of community life.
3. To develop an understanding of the natural world and invite reflection on the divine wisdom embedded in its creation, thereby enabling learners to benefit from its resources.
4. To foster the recognition of Allah as the Creator and to command worship of Him.

The findings of this study indicate that Al-Ghazali's thought has a significant influence on the development of the Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. Al-Ghazali's ethical framework, which emphasizes the balance between knowledge and morality, has proven relevant in shaping a comprehensive and integrative curriculum. In line with the findings of Muflihin, the integration of Al-Ghazali's moral values into the Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum not only enhances students' understanding of morality but also motivates them to apply these values in their daily lives (Muflihin & Madrah, 2019).

The implementation of a curriculum based on Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy strengthens students' comprehension of three essential aspects: faith, knowledge, and virtuous behavior. In this regard, the curriculum functions not only as a vehicle for theoretical knowledge transfer but also as a practical guide for students' everyday conduct.

Literature analysis also reveals that many madrasahs have successfully implemented Al-Ghazali's concepts in curriculum development, particularly in character education. A study by Agung Wahyu Utomo demonstrates that madrasahs adopting Al-Ghazali's approach have experienced notable improvements in student personality development, as indicated by increased positive behavior and a decline in disciplinary infractions. These findings reinforce the argument that a value-based approach inspired by Al-Ghazali contributes to a more effective and contextual model of character education (Wahyu Utomo et al., 2023).

However, the study also highlights challenges in the implementation of the Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum rooted in Al-Ghazali's thought. One of the primary obstacles is the limited understanding among teachers regarding Al-Ghazali's values. A study by Khoulita reveals a significant gap between awareness of the curriculum's importance and teachers' ability to implement it effectively. Given the vital role of teachers as educators, facilitators, and moral



exemplars, professional development and training are essential to support the effective delivery of moral education (Khoulita et al., n.d.).

Moreover, this research finds that a character-oriented Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum based on Al-Ghazali's principles fosters a stronger sense of belonging among students toward Islamic values. Survey data shows that students involved in such programs feel more connected to their communities and more committed to practicing these values in their daily lives. As noted by Nurhikmah, character development aligned with Al-Ghazali's teachings positively impacts not only individual students but also the broader social environment (Al Burhan & Nurhikmah, 2024).

Further analysis indicates that a curriculum integrating Al-Ghazali's approach fosters a more conducive learning environment. Field observations reveal that classrooms implementing interactive, ethics-based methods demonstrate higher levels of student participation. A study by Dirsa notes that this approach contributes significantly to increased student motivation, ultimately resulting in improved academic performance (Dirsa & Kusumawati, 2019).

Preliminary interpretation of the data suggests that the application of Al-Ghazali's thought within the Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum positively influences not only students' academic achievement but also their character and moral development. This aligns with the findings of Murtaza and Eliana, who affirm that strong character education contributes to overall improvements in educational quality (Wahyu Setyawan et al., 2023)

The relevance of these findings is particularly evident in the broader context of education, especially in efforts to nurture a generation that excels academically while maintaining high moral integrity. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on ethics and morality offers educators a robust framework for developing a curriculum that addresses the needs of students in today's complex social environment. These findings underscore the urgency of integrating character education into the curriculum as a response to the moral and social challenges faced by contemporary youth.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy can make a substantial contribution to the design of the Aqidah Akhlaq curriculum in Madrasah Aliyah. While challenges in implementation persist, strengthening educators' and students' understanding of Al-Ghazali's values is essential for achieving the intended educational outcomes. Therefore, this study recommends the provision of teacher training and the development of more comprehensive curricular materials to ensure that ethical values are effectively internalized in the educational process.

### **Ethics, Soul, and the Aim of Education: Al-Ghazali's Contribution to the Philosophy of Education**

Imam Al-Ghazali conceives of education not merely as the transmission of knowledge, but as a process of soul purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) and moral refinement (*tahzib al-akhlaq*) (Azhari & Mustapa, 2021). This perspective signifies that education, in his view, is both transcendental and ethical in nature, where knowledge is only meaningful insofar as it leads to the development of superior moral and spiritual character. In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali asserts, "Knowledge without practice is a disaster, and practice without knowledge



is misguidance.” Hence, the ultimate aim of the curriculum, according to Al-Ghazali, is the formation of the *insan kamil* (perfected human being) who lives with ethical and divine awareness (Hanafie & Khojir, 2023).

Al-Ghazali developed an educational psychology grounded in the structure of the human soul, which consists of reason (*'aql*), the self (*nafs*), and the heart (*qalb*). Each of these elements plays a vital role in shaping the holistic human being who yearns for closeness to God. The ideal curriculum, in his view, addresses all these dimensions: *'aql* for intellectual knowledge, *qalb* for moral consciousness, and *nafs* for purification. Fatimah argues that this approach is particularly relevant in the modern era, which has lost spiritual balance due to the materialistic orientation of education. She refers to Al-Ghazali’s model as a “curriculum of the soul,” which integrates the psychospiritual dimension into education (Salaeh et al., 2023).

Ethics in Al-Ghazali’s philosophy of education is not merely a set of norms, but constitutes the very goal of education itself. For him, *adab* (proper conduct) is the essence of knowledge; without *adab*, knowledge becomes a source of corruption. Consequently, he situates ethics as the ontological, epistemological, and axiological framework of the entire educational process. This view is reinforced by Abidin, who demonstrates that Al-Ghazali-inspired character education significantly influences students’ behavior, not merely their intellectual capacity (Kurniawan, 2018). In this context, the curriculum becomes a system for cultivating ethical values rooted in revelation and sound reason.

Imam Al-Ghazali distinguishes between *ghayat al-ta'lim* (the ultimate goal of education) and *wasa'iluhu* (its instruments). The end goal is not mastery of a profession or worldly status, but rather eternal happiness and *ma'rifatullah* (gnosis of God). In *Ayyuhal Walad*, he advises his student that knowledge which does not lead to God will become a burden on the Day of Judgment. From a curricular perspective, this implies that all subjects must ultimately aim at fostering existential awareness that life is a means to draw closer to the Creator (Shihadeh, 2012).

The curriculum paradigm based on Al-Ghazali’s philosophy offers an alternative to modern education, which is often trapped in the quantification of learning outcomes. By reorienting the purpose of education toward the cultivation of ethics and the soul, Islamic education can reclaim its foundational direction. This entails that evaluation should not rest solely on numerical grades but also on behavioral transformation and spiritual depth. A study by Burton recommends a “mystical ethics-based curriculum” as a solution to the current moral crisis in Muslim educational institutions (Burton et al., 2021). In other words, a curriculum inspired by Al-Ghazali aims to produce learners who are not only competent but also wise and morally responsible.

### **The Aqidah and Ethics Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah**

In the operational curriculum of Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah, the formulation of the curriculum is aimed at fostering faith (iman), piety (taqwa), and noble character (akhlaq al-karimah). This approach emphasizes that faith and piety serve as the foundational basis for shaping students’ holistic personalities. Essentially, the design and development of the *Aqidah-Akhlaq* subject curriculum are intended to support the enhancement of students’



faith, piety, and moral conduct. The broader goal is to optimize students' potential, intelligence, and interests in accordance with their developmental levels.

Recognizing that education is a systematic process for elevating human dignity holistically, it is designed to develop the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains of learners in an integrated manner. Accordingly, the curriculum is structured with consideration for students' potential, developmental stages, interests, intellectual capacities, as well as emotional, social, spiritual, and kinesthetic intelligence.

The *Aqidah-Akhlaq* subject at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah is categorized into two components. The first component aligns with the official curriculum as mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, using standardized textbooks. The second component comprises religious and ethical instruction through classical Islamic texts, one of which is *Ayyuhal Walad* by Al-Ghazali. The scope of the *Aqidah-Akhlaq* subject matter at this madrasah is detailed below.

The *Aqidah-Akhlaq* subject at Madrasah Aliyah is a core component of Islamic religious education and represents an advanced level of what students have previously studied at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (or junior secondary school). Its aim is to prepare students for higher education, social life, and the workplace. In terms of *aqidah* (Islamic creed), the curriculum emphasizes both comprehension and internalization of Islamic doctrinal principles, methods for strengthening belief, and an understanding of theological schools within Islam. This knowledge serves as a foundation for cultivating an inclusive and practice-oriented faith in everyday life. The curriculum also introduces various forms of *tawhid* (monotheism), such as *tawhid ulūhiyyah*, *tawhid rubūbiyyah*, *tawhid al-ṣifāt wa al-af'āl*, *tawhid rahmāniyyah*, *tawhid mulkiyyah*, and others.

The ethical (akhlaq) component introduces concepts from Islamic ethics and *tasawuf* (Sufism), as well as techniques for improving moral character, tailored to students' developmental stages. This includes habituation in practicing virtuous conduct and avoiding immoral behavior. Substantively, the *Aqidah-Akhlaq* course encourages students to study and embody their faith through habitual engagement with commendable behaviors (*al-akhlaq al-karimah*) and avoidance of reprehensible ones in daily life. Such ethical conduct is considered essential not only for individual morality but also for social harmony and national integrity.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the objectives of the *Aqidah-Akhlaq* curriculum in madrasahs include fostering faith by instilling, nurturing, and developing students' knowledge, appreciation, practice, habituation, and experience of Islamic beliefs. The goal is to shape Muslim individuals who continuously grow in their faith and devotion to Allah SWT. It also aims to cultivate Indonesians with noble character and the capacity to avoid immoral behavior in both personal and social contexts as a manifestation of Islamic teachings and values.

The curriculum structure for *Aqidah-Akhlaq* at the Madrasah Aliyah level includes the following elements: core principles of Islamic belief and methods for their enhancement; the *Asma' al-Husna* (Beautiful Names of God); various types of *tawhid* (as mentioned above); *shirk* (polytheism) and its consequences; and the major theological schools of *ilm al-kalam*.



The ethical dimension includes definitions of ethics, primary virtues and vices, strategies for character improvement, and types of virtuous behavior, such as positive thinking (*husn al-dhann*), repentance (*tawbah*), ethics in clothing and appearance, travel etiquette, hospitality, justice, contentment (*rida*), righteous deeds (*amal salih*), unity and harmony, and ethical behavior in peer interactions. It also incorporates an introduction to *tasawuf* as a means to refine and deepen spiritual ethics.

### **Relevance and Implementation: Opportunities for Integrating Al-Ghazali's Curriculum in 21st-Century Islamic Religious Education**

Amidst the crisis of values confronting modern education, Al-Ghazali's educational thought finds urgent relevance. While contemporary educational systems often emphasize cognitive development and market-oriented competencies, Al-Ghazali's intellectual legacy offers a holistic and spiritual approach to education. Islamic religious education, particularly in Indonesia, faces the dual challenges of moral degradation and curriculum secularization. These issues demand an educational model that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates ethical and religious character (Halima et al., 2022). In this context, a curriculum rooted in Al-Ghazali's Sufi values emerges as a strategic and transformative alternative. Kurniawan (Kurniawan, 2018) has shown that internalizing Al-Ghazali's educational values within character education significantly enhances students' ethical awareness.

Concrete efforts to implement Al-Ghazali's curriculum in Islamic educational institutions are evident in the integration of his classical works into classroom instruction. For instance, as noted in an interview with the Vice Principal of Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah, Al-Ghazali's *Ayyuhal Walad* is used as a supplementary text in the *Aqidah Akhlaq* subject. This strategy illustrates that the intellectual heritage of classical Islam can be adapted to modern curricular structures, provided that contextualized approaches are employed. Nevertheless, the success of this implementation depends heavily on teacher quality (Akbar et al., 2021). emphasize the importance of teacher training in comprehending the substance of Sufi moral values, arguing that educators must serve not only as instructors but also as ethical and spiritual mentors. In this framework, teachers are envisioned as moral transformers rather than mere facilitators of learning.

Furthermore, the challenges posed by globalization and digitalization should not be viewed as obstacles to developing a spiritually oriented curriculum based on Al-Ghazali. On the contrary, Al-Ghazali's Sufi approach can be translated into digital media and online learning platforms. This opens new avenues for Islamic education to remain relevant and inclusive in the digital era. Moslimany et al. (2024) demonstrate that value-based Islamic curricula can be developed in digital formats without compromising their spiritual essence. In this sense, the digital adaptation of Al-Ghazali's values represents a progressive innovation in curriculum design. Through technology integration, key virtues such as sincerity, honesty, and humility—central to Al-Ghazali's teachings—can be delivered in more interactive and personalized ways (Imaduddin, 2024).

Al-Ghazali's curriculum also responds to the urgent need for education that fosters both moral and social intelligence. At a time when conventional education often fails to shape well-rounded individuals, Al-Ghazali's Sufi pedagogy offers a synthesis of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. Consequently, this curriculum does not merely



produce intellectually competent students, but also those who are emotionally mature and spiritually grounded. A study by Imaduddin affirms that implementing Sufi values in madrasahs enhances students' empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility. This affirms that curriculum orientation should not be confined to academic achievement alone, but must also encompass affective dimensions and social praxis.

To ensure the broader and systemic implementation of Al-Ghazali's curriculum, supportive policy interventions are required. These include the development of contextual teaching materials, the enhancement of teacher capacity through spiritual-pedagogical training, and the design of assessment methods that evaluate character formation, not just cognitive outcomes. Twenty-first-century Islamic religious education must position values and ethics as its curricular core. Al-Ghazali's approach offers both a philosophical foundation and a practical strategy for building an educational system that not only cultivates the mind but also nurtures moral integrity and spiritual depth. His intellectual legacy is not merely relevant—it is imperative for addressing the contemporary challenges of Islamic education.

### **The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Curriculum Concept to the Aqidah and Akhlaq Curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah**

The findings of this study indicate that Al-Ghazali's educational thought is highly relevant in designing the *Aqidah Akhlaq* curriculum at Madrasah Aliyah Tarbiyatut Tholabah. These findings support previous theories of character education that emphasize the importance of integrating moral values into educational frameworks. Character education based on spiritual values has shown a positive impact on students' personal development. Therefore, the implementation of Al-Ghazali's thought can be regarded as a strategic step toward achieving a more holistic educational goal.

The implications of these findings for the field of education are significant. Integrating Al-Ghazali's conceptual framework into the *Aqidah Akhlaq* curriculum not only has the potential to enhance students' character but also contributes to the creation of a more positive learning environment. This highlights the idea that character education should serve as a core component of an effective education system. By prioritizing moral cultivation, *madrasahs* can prepare a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally upright (Mafruhah et al., 2023).

Comparative studies further suggest that Al-Ghazali's approach to character education offers a distinctive advantage over other methods. For example, research by Kurniawan and Hadi exploring character education approaches in general schools found inconsistent results regarding students' moral development. In contrast, Al-Ghazali's approach provides a strong and systematic philosophical foundation that has proven effective in enhancing students' moral understanding, as reflected in improved academic performance and positive behavior in *madrasahs* that adopt this curriculum (Kurniawan, 2018).

Nevertheless, this study is not without its limitations. One key limitation lies in its focus on a single institution, which may not reflect the broader context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Research by Ismail and Rani suggests that local context significantly influences the effectiveness of character education curricula. This limitation may affect the generalizability of the findings, and results may vary when applied to other *madrasahs*.



For future research, it is recommended that similar studies be expanded to include a wider range of *madrasahs* across different regions to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of Al-Ghazali-based *Aqidah Akhlaq* curricula. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of this curriculum on students' character development are needed. Research by Murtaza and Eliana shows that such studies can offer deeper insights into the effectiveness of value-based education in broader contexts.

In conclusion, this study is significant as it demonstrates that Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy can be effectively integrated into the *Aqidah Akhlaq* curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The findings not only strengthen the argument for incorporating moral values into education but also highlight how spiritually grounded character education can enhance the overall quality of education. By adopting this approach, *madrasahs* can nurture a generation that excels not only academically but also in character and ethical integrity.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that Al-Ghazali's thought has a significant impact on the development of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* curriculum at the Madrasah Aliyah level. The concept of morality proposed by Al-Ghazali is not only relevant for shaping students' character but also contributes to creating a more conducive learning environment. The implications of these findings suggest that integrating moral values into education can enhance the overall quality of education and prepare a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also possesses strong integrity.

The contribution of this research to the field of education is substantial, particularly in filling a gap in the literature regarding the application of Al-Ghazali's thought within Islamic educational curricula. Previously, much research has focused on academic aspects without emphasizing the importance of character education. By offering a new perspective on how Al-Ghazali's values can be implemented in the educational context, this study provides a foundation for developing a more holistic and integrative curriculum in *madrasahs*.

For future research, it is recommended that this study be expanded to include more *madrasahs* from various regions to offer a more comprehensive overview of the implementation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* curriculum based on Al-Ghazali's thought. Additionally, further studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of this curriculum on students' character development. The practical implications of this research suggest that teacher training and the deeper development of curriculum materials should be prioritized to ensure that moral values are well internalized in education.

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