Building a Culture of Peace in Education: An Exploration of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Inner and Social Peace

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Abstract

A culture of peace in education is a concept that emphasizes the importance of creating a harmonious learning environment and respecting differences to achieve an effective, conducive, and harmonious learning environment for students. Research on the culture of peace in education on the mental and social aspects of creating peace often receives less attention. The thoughts of figures such as Imam Al-Ghazali offer a holistic and comprehensive view of peace. This study aimed to explore Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on inner and social peace and how to build a culture of peace in education. A qualitative approach was chosen to understand Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on inner and social peace and how these concepts can be applied in an educational context. The methods used in this research were literature study and content analysis. The three main works of Imam Al-Ghazali studied were Ihya 'Ulum al-Din, Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal, and Bidayat al-Hidayah. The results showed three principles in building a culture of peace: inner peace, cleansing of the soul, and noble character. This study has an implication to pay attention to mental and social aspects of creating a harmonious learning environment by strengthening the values of tolerance, empathy, justice, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution in the curriculum and learning. In addition, the character building of students who can communicate, think critically, and solve problems peacefully should be prioritized in education.

Keywords: culture of peace, Imam Al-Ghazali, inner peace, social peace

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A. Introduction

The increasingly complex and interconnected world causes the global community to face various challenges that can affect the quality of life and relationships between individuals and groups (Majeed, 2018). Conflict, injustice, social tension, and division are often the main issues that hinder efforts to create sustainable peace and harmony (Akylbayeva et al., 2014; Ezcurra & Manotas, 2017; Monkman, 2006; Wejnert, 2013). In overcoming these problems, the thoughts of figures about peace are critical because they can provide valuable insights and views. After all, they have extensive experience and knowledge (Sandal, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to explore and study the thoughts of great historical figures who offer solutions and guidance in achieving peace on an inner and social level.

Imam Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 M), an 11th-century Islamic philosopher, theologian, and jurist, is known as one of the greatest figures in the history of Islamic thought. His works cover various topics, from philosophy and theology to Sufism and morality (Michael, 2011). In his view, peace is one of the core values that must be achieved by every individual and society (Al-Akiti & Halim, 2021). Given the relevance and depth of Al-Ghazali's thought, exploring his concepts of inner and social peace is essential to help build a culture of peace in the contemporary era.

Towards the middle of the 20th century, various studies on peace began to emerge in response to devastating world wars and ongoing conflicts (Badruzaman & Vitón, 2021; De La Guardia, 2018). However, most of these studies focus more on efforts to create peace through diplomacy (Amadei, 2019; Lehti, 2019b; Zembylas & Loukaides, 2021). In addition to the study of diplomacy, peacebuilding through mediation is considered in its golden age in the mid-1990s to early 2010s (Lehti, 2019a). The trend of the development of peacebuilding studies through mediation is also limited to between institutions (Bergmann, 2021), between countries (Kostelyanets, 2020; Mahmudlu & Abilov, 2018; Wallensteen & Svensson, 2014), gender analysis (Sapiano, 2020) as well as conflict resolution (Galtung, 2010; Sahoh & Sattar, 2016).

Building a culture of peace in education has been proposed in various studies, for example, the importance of integrating the values of peace, tolerance, and justice in curriculum and teaching practices to create a conducive and harmonious learning environment (Setiadi et al., 2017), The need for the integration of peace education in the curriculum, the development of conflict resolution skills and empathy in students, the creation of a safe and conducive learning environment, and community involvement in efforts to create peaceful schools (Cavanagh, 2012) to the low competence of teachers in the building and creating a culture of peace (Suherman et al., 2019). Thus, education becomes one way to build a culture of peace (Roque-Hernández, 2022). While research on the culture of peace in education continues to grow, the inner and social aspects of creating peace often receive less attention (Chérif et al., 2022; Xi & Lee, 2021). The thought of figures such as Al-Ghazali offers a holistic and comprehensive view of peace, which involves changes in the individual and harmonious social interaction (Michael, 2011).

Al-Ghazali's thoughts on inner and social peace are interrelated and influence each other. Inner peace, which includes a balance between the material world and the spiritual world and between reason and heart, is the foundation for creating social peace. Individuals who have achieved inner peace will be better able to deal with conflicts and tensions in social life and contribute positively to creating harmony between people (Chérif et al., 2022; Xi & Lee, 2021). Therefore, understanding the

concepts taught by Al-Ghazali about inner and social peace will provide valuable insights into efforts to build a culture of peace in education (A. H. Al-Ghazali, 2000).

B. Method

This research used a qualitative approach to understand Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on inner and social peace and how these concepts can be applied in an educational context. The methods used in this research were literature study and content analysis (Adlini et al., 2022; Ahmad, 2018). These two methods will help to delve into Imam Al-Ghazali's concepts and thoughts regarding inner and social peace and understand how these concepts are relevant in education. Data collection was done through literature study and document analysis. This study focused on the review of the works of Imam Al-Ghazali, especially those related to inner and social peace, as well as related literature on education and the culture of peace. The three main works studied were Ihya 'Ulum al-Din, Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal, and Bidayat al-Hidayah. The data collected were then analyzed through several steps, namely (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) data presentation, and (d) conclusion (Ridder et al., 2014). To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, triangulation of sources was carried out by reviewing various relevant literature sources (Bachri, 2010), including the works of Imam Al-Ghazali and related studies.

C. Findings and Discussion
1. Inner Peace

Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of achieving inner peace as the foundation of happiness and spiritual success. He taught that the individual must achieve a balance between the material world and the spiritual world, as well as between reason and heart. This inner peace can be achieved through worship, remembrance, and reflection (Shah, 2015).

Inner peace, according to Al-Ghazali, is an essential element in human life, especially for those who want to achieve happiness and spiritual success. Al-Ghazali argued that attaining inner peace is critical to a meaningful, prosperous, and peaceful life. In his view, inner peace can be achieved by finding the right balance between the material and spiritual worlds, as well as between reason and the heart (Hasballah et al., 2021).

Al-Ghazali advises individuals to engage in regular and consistent worship practices, such as prayer, fasting, and zakat, to achieve this balance. This worship is not only a religious obligation but also a means to hone self-discipline, reflect on life, and draw closer to God. In addition, worship can help individuals calm their minds and soul and strengthen their relationship with God (Othman et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of remembrance remembering Allah in everyday life. Remembrance can be done through chanting or meditation that helps remind individuals of God's presence and greatness and directs their attention away from worldly worries. Regular practice of remembrance will help individuals achieve calmness and peace of mind, as well as reduce anxiety and stress.

Self-reflection or introspection is also considered necessary by Al-Ghazali to achieve inner peace. It encourages individuals to regularly reflect on their lives, actions, goals, and values (Kukkonen, 2016). This reflection allows a person to

identify weaknesses and mistakes and make the necessary changes to improve oneself and achieve inner peace.

Through a combination of worship, remembrance, and reflection practices, individuals can develop a deeper relationship with God and experience true inner peace (Kianifard, 2020). In Al-Ghazali's view, attaining inner peace is an essential first step towards creating a peaceful, harmonious, and meaningful life, personally and with others.

Inner peace in education refers to the creation of a harmonious and conducive learning environment in which students can develop emotional, intellectual, and spiritual balance (Soleh, 2022). In this context, education focuses not only on teaching subject matter but also on character building and the development of healthy inner qualities.

The inner qualities referred to in the context of inner peace in education include several aspects such as: (a) Emotional balance: The ability of students to manage their emotions well, including coping with stress, anxiety, and interpersonal conflicts. This involves developing empathy, patience, and tolerance for differences. (b) Intellectual intelligence: The ability to think critically, analytically, and creatively. Students are taught to evaluate information, make good judgments, and develop effective problem-solving and decision-making skills. (c) Spiritual well-being: Understanding and appreciation of the spiritual dimension of life, which involves higher values, beliefs, and life goals. This includes respecting the beliefs of others, forging a deeper connection with oneself and the environment, and seeking meaning and purpose in life. (d) Character building: Development of strong moral and ethical values, such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and respect for others. This includes teaching about rights and duties and the importance of being a good citizen and contributing to society. (c) Social skills: The ability to establish healthy and positive relationships with others, including effective communication, cooperation, and conflict management skills. It helps students to develop a greater sense of empathy and social awareness.

2. Cleansing of the Soul

Al-Ghazali argues that cleansing the soul of negative qualities such as envy, arrogance, and anger is essential to achieving inner peace. This process involves introspection, *muhasabah* (self-evaluation), and determination to change behavior that does not follow Islamic teachings (Mobarak, 2022).

Tazkiyah al-nafs, or cleansing of the soul, is an essential concept in Al-Ghazali's thoughts regarding attaining inner peace. According to Al-Ghazali, cleansing the soul of negative qualities such as envy, arrogance, and anger is essential to achieve true and deep inner peace.

Introspection, or contemplation about oneself, is the first step in *tazkiyah al-nafs* (Khasani, 2020). Individuals must observe themselves and objectively assess their actions, motivations, and traits. This introspection allows one to admit shortcomings and mistakes and identify negative characteristics that need to be cleansed from their psyche.

Muhasabah, or self-evaluation, is an advanced process of introspection. In *muhasabah*, individuals critically assess their actions and behaviors and consider how much such actions follow Islamic teachings (Yahya & Sham, 2020). *Muhasabah* allows people to take responsibility for their mistakes, ask Allah for forgiveness, and determine concrete steps to improve themselves.

After introspection and *muhasabah*, the determination to change behavior is essential to *tazkiyah al-nafs* (Suriansah, 2021). The individual must have a strong desire to remove negative traits and replace them with positive qualities following Islam's teachings. These changes may involve self-control, moral training, and the development of empathy for others. The process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* is a long and continuous journey that requires commitment, patience, and persistent effort. However, this soul cleansing will help the individual achieve true inner peace, creating a more harmonious and peaceful life, personally and in relationships with others (Amin, 2022).

Tazkiyah al-nafs (cleansing of the soul) in education refers to how education helps students control and change negative traits within themselves and develop positive and noble qualities (Hidayat & Wijaya, 2016). The implementation of the concept of *Tazkiyah al-nafs* proposed by Al-Ghazali involves various interrelated aspects. One crucial element is integrating Islamic moral and ethical principles into the educational curriculum. Character education becomes the main focus, where students are taught to develop positive traits and reduce negative characteristics. To assist students in the process of introspection and goodwill, teachers need to create a conducive and safe learning environment. This environment will allow students to objectively assess their actions, motivations, and traits. Activities such as reflective journals, group discussions, or other activities that assist students in self-evaluation can be applied in this learning environment.

Teachers and educators play an essential role in the process of *Tazkiyah al-nafs*. They must provide the support, guidance, and resources necessary to help students acknowledge and overcome negative traits and develop positive ones (Idris, 2017). In addition, cooperation between teachers, parents, and the community is needed to support this process. Relevant activities and programs should also be included in the education to assist students in the journey of *Tazkiyah al-nafs*. Involving students in religious activities, self-development classes, and counseling services can improve students' mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

By applying the concept of *Tazkiyah al-nafs* in education in a comprehensive and integrated manner, educators will help students overcome negative traits and develop good character. This cleansing of the soul will create a balanced and holistic individual who can contribute positively to society and the surrounding environment and achieve true and deep inner peace(Setia & Imron, 2021).

3. **Noble Character**

Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of noble morals in creating peace in society. He taught that good behavior, such as honesty, fairness, generosity, and tolerance, will bring peace and harmony between people (I. Al-Ghazali, 2007). Noble morals are central to Al-Ghazali's view of peace and harmony in society. According to Al-Ghazali, good behavior and noble ethics are the keys to creating harmonious and peaceful relationships between individuals, families, and society as a whole (Yusuf, 2019).

Some examples of good behavior and noble morals emphasized by Al-Ghazali (Rohman, 2014) Include: (a) Honesty: Al-Ghazali teaches that honesty is the foundation of all healthy and harmonious relationships. Honesty creates trust and avoids misunderstandings that can lead to conflict and disharmony. (b) Justice: According to Al-Ghazali, justice is an essential principle in creating peace

in society. Justice involves granting equal rights and obligations to everyone and treating others fairly and impartially. (c) Generosity: Al-Ghazali stressed the importance of charity and concern for others. Generosity includes sharing possessions, time, and knowledge with people in need and showing empathy and respect for the suffering of others. (d) Tolerance: Tolerance is an attitude of respecting and respecting differences, whether in terms of beliefs, views, or culture. Al-Ghazali taught that tolerance is essential to creating a peaceful and harmonious society where everyone feels valued and respected. (e) Forgiveness: Al-Ghazali affirms the importance of forgiveness in maintaining harmonious relationships. Forgiveness involves letting go of resentment and resentment and allowing others to correct their wrongs.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, noble morals are essential to a balanced education. Al-Ghazali believed that education should include intellectual knowledge and the development of good character and ethics (Suryadarma & Haq, 2015). In education, the concept of noble morals proposed by Al-Ghazali is very relevant to shaping the character of good students and creating a harmonious learning environment. Education that not only focuses on academic knowledge but also on the development of noble morals will help students form healthy and harmonious relationships with others (Kurniawan, 2017).

Teachers have an essential role in teaching noble morals to students. They should exemplify good behavior and provide the guidance and support necessary to help students internalize these values (Wally, 2022). In addition, curriculum and learning methods should be adapted to include learning about noble morals, such as honesty, justice, generosity, tolerance, and forgiveness.

A learning environment conducive to the development of noble morals also needs to be created in schools (Arianti, 2019). This includes creating an atmosphere that respects differences, promotes justice, and encourages empathy and concern for others. Extracurricular activities and character-building programs can be introduced to reinforce noble moral values outside the classroom.

Effective education in teaching noble morals will help students become individuals with noble ethics who can contribute positively to society. Thus, education based on noble morals will create a generation that can maintain peace and harmony amid differences and challenges (Masduqi, 2013).

D. Conclusion

Building a culture of peace through education is one way to build a culture of peace in society more broadly. Therefore, it is essential to integrate the values of peace, tolerance, and justice in the curriculum and teaching practices to create a conducive and harmonious learning environment. The need for integrating peace education in the curriculum, developing conflict resolution skills and empathy in students, creating a safe and conducive learning environment, and community involvement in efforts to establish peaceful schools are essential factors in building a culture of peace in education. This study implies that it focuses on the mental and social aspects of creating a harmonious learning environment by strengthening the values of tolerance, empathy, justice, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution in the curriculum and learning. In addition, the character building of students who can communicate, think critically, and solve problems peacefully should be prioritized in education.

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