Character Education Concepts in Ihya' Ulumuddin

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Abstract

This research is motivated by moral decline in the current era of globalization, within the family, school, and community. Education has an essential role in rebuilding individual character values. Imam Al-Ghazali's character education concepts in Ihya' Ulumuddin are fascinating because of the many character values reflected and discussed. This study uses a type of library research with a qualitative approach. Primary and secondary data are obtained, collected, and processed through re-examination (editing), organizing the data, and finding the results, then re-analyzed using content analysis techniques to know the benefits, marks, or effects. The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that the concept of character education for Imam Al-Ghazali has two main elements: soul character, which is reflected in sincere worship for God, and physical character, which is reflected in good morals and deepening helpful knowledge. These two characters encourage a person to have a clean heart by continuously doing good for the happiness of oneself and others. Characters emerge that connect us with Allah S.W.T. and other people, such as the character of discipline in praying five times a day and in carrying out work, working hard and independently in all activities, being responsible and respecting the rights of others, being friendly and communicative in socializing, and love peace and love for our beloved motherland.

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A. **Introduction**

Religion and morality are two things that are related and inseparable (Alavi, 2007; Bijlsma, 2023; Mostafa et al., 2020; Nieuważny et al., 2020). Because the quality of a person's religion measures his morality (Kaur, 2020; Van Tongeren et al., 2021). Morality is an essential part of Islam (Alavi, 2007). All aspects of Islamic teachings cannot be carried out properly without good morals. Education, in the simplest sense, is often interpreted as a human effort to develop personality according to social and cultural values.

The notion of education is constantly developing, although essentially similar. According to John Dewey, education is the process of forming intellectual and emotional fundamental skills through life experiences (Frank, 2019). Education might also specifically refer to character education, an essential pillar for building national character including elements of understanding, feelings, and morals (Jayanti & Kumalasari, 2022). Meanwhile, Aristotle describes education as character education, which forms the basis of morality and pedagogy (Kristjánsson, 2016).

In Islam, character or personality is known as morality. Akhlaq is one aspect of the value of Islamic law (Awass, 2019). Morality emphasizes the quality of action when Sharia talks about harmonious conditions, legal or illegitimate. Akhlaq is one of the teachings of Islam that every Muslim must have (Alavi, 2007; Haq, 2015). Rasulullah SAW conveyed the mission of Islamic teachings, which is to perfect human morality. Western educational figures such as Lickona echoed Socrates and Muhammad SAW that character, morals, personality is an inevitable goals of education (Lickona, 2009; Prasetiya, 2020). Likewise, Martin Luther King agrees with the ideas about balancing character, intellect, and personality (Harvey, 2021).

Currently, character education is critical in education (Watts et al., 2021). Due to the impact of the current world of globalization, moral values and character are facing a stream of decline and increasing crime (Koven & Koven, 2018), rampant corruption (Farazmand, 2023), use of illegal drugs by adolescents (Johnston et al., 2019; Schmits & Glowacz, 2019), technology abuse (Brown et al., 2018; Stonard, 2019), and so on.

Based on these conditions, education is one of the efforts that must be taken. Ahmad Tafsir explained that education is an effort to improve in all respects. Education greatly influences the formation of personality, morality, and ethics (Muvid & Taufik, 2022); so a good or bad character depends on education.

Efforts to interpret the concept of Islamic education can begin with a study of its character and pedagogical thinking. Among the relevant figures for studying the concept of thinking in the context of character education is Al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali's concern about religious education (Sheikh & Ali, 2019) and morals or personality (Prasetiya, 2020), following the tendency of education in general, namely the principles that are specifically related to the qualities that teachers must possess to carry out their duties.

To find out about Al-Ghazali's educational concept, it can be known, among others, by knowing and understanding his thoughts regarding various aspects related to education, namely educational goals, curriculum, methods, knowledge and beliefs, daily morals, secrets of obligatory worship and sunnah, amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar, teacher ethics and student ethics, friendship ethics, monotheism and trustworthiness, and other aspects. They can be studied in his works or books, among his well-known works is the Kitab Ihya' Ulumuddin. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the concept of character education in Ihya' Ulumuddin.

B. Method

This study used a qualitative approach. The type of research is library research, namely data collection or scientific research using the subject matter, or data collection with bibliographical characteristics (Walliman, 2021). In data analysis, literature review is the process of finding and systematically compiling data from both primary and secondary libraries, making it easier to understand and share with others.

Researchers used two data sources, namely primary data sources taken directly from the translated and summarized Ihya' Ulumuddin, and secondary data sources derived from books, journals, and other written works relevant to the research. The research data were collected and processed by editing, organizing the data, and finding the results, then re-analyzing it using content analysis techniques so that the benefits, marks, or effects were known (Connaway & Radford, 2021).

C. Findings and Discussion

The concept of character education offered by Imam Al-Ghazali is one of the most contributive character education concepts, namely an effort to cleanse the heart and strengthen faith. Imam Al-Ghazali views humans as noble creatures; all its elements are pearls. Among the pearls, there is the most brilliant and resplendent, which is very attractive, namely the heart or soul. One reflection of the heart is morals or character, and it is essential to have a clean heart. A clean heart will lead human actions to a good path, namely only for Allah, where even in solitude, one does not commit prohibited acts. Thus, two concepts of character education can be summarized in their entirety in the book Ihya' Ulumuddin, namely the concept of soul or spiritual and physical character education or character.

The first is the concept of soul of spiritual character education. The soul has dirt that must be cleaned and clarified; then the soul can reach eternal happiness and the side of Allah S.W.T. In achieving soul or spiritual perfection, it can be formed and cultivated through several elements:

1. Aqidah Tawhid (Faith)

Tawhid is believing that all beings come from God and not paying attention to all intermediate causes, believing that everything comes from God. The final product of monotheism is trust, and surrender to God (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

Imam Al-Ghazali said Tawhid is like a walnut, it is divided into seeds, seeds from seeds, skin from seeds, and skin from skin, which is divided into four levels. First, faith in words is skin to skin, namely the faith of the hypocrites, may Allah protect us. Second, believe in the meaning of the sentence, namely the faith of the Muslim community in general. Third, witnessing it in a visible way, that is, the position of those who are close to Allah. Many causes are seen, but the source is Allah, the One and the Almighty. Fourth, only seeing one, namely the witness of the siddiq people, and the Sufis call it vanishing in monotheism. So he doesn't see himself because his mind is lost in Al Wahidul Haq (God Almighty and True God) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

Meanwhile, the content of monotheism is an acknowledgment and justification with the heart for what is said orally. The heart believes that verbal speech is true. This is the true monotheism that colors every person's dealings with Allah in such a way that their attention does not shift to anything except Allah (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

According to the ahlus sunnah creed, it is stated that Allah SWT. is One, there is no partner for Him, there is no equal to Him, everything depends on Him, there is no opponent for Him, and there is no match for Him alone. These beliefs should be educated and guided gradually at an early age.

2. Worship

Muslims need to know that worship is one of the essential activities that are always carried out by every religious community. Worship is an activity of worshiping God Almighty, asking for goodness and protection, and He is the place to ask for everything. In Islamic teachings, worship is a mandatory activity for its adherents which needs to be carried out with full faith and sincerity solely for the sake of Allah, as a form of a servant's love for Allah with complete submission and humility that obedient will do whatever He commands, whether obligatory and sunnah worship. Allah S.W.T. has said: "Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do righteous deeds, and let him not associate anyone in worshiping his Lord," (QS. Al-Kahf, 18: 110) (Al-Ghazali, 1993b).

Al-Ghazali said, "Prayer is the pillar of religion, the rope of belief, the capital of self-approach to Allah, and the greatest obedience" (Al-Ghazali, 1993a). For example, regarding the primacy of the fardhu prayer, Rasulullah SAW. said: "The prayers are atonement for the sins that occur between them as long as they do not commit major sins" (Siddiqui, 2023). In another hadith, Rasulullah SAW. said: "Prayer is the pillar of religion. Whoever leaves it, then he leaves religion" (Siddiqui, 2023).

It is narrated that the first thing to examine from the servant's practice is prayer. If it is perfect, then it is accepted from them along with their other deeds. If it turns out to be lacking, then it is returned to them along with their other deeds (Al-Ghazali, 1993b). However, he also mentioned other obligatory acts of worship, such as zakat worship, fasting, hajj and umrah, reading the Qur'an, dhikr and prayer. By worshiping, it will perfect our souls.

The second is the concept of physical or ethical character education which covers:

1. Morals/Adab (Attitudes)

Rasulullah SAW. has said: "Indeed, good character can melt mistakes as the sun can wear out the snow." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim) (IslamicFinder, 2023; Siddiqui, 2023).

Imam Al-Ghazali always invites us to get used to good morals or ethics in his book Ihya' Ulumuddin. The various ethics and behaviors he mentioned are always accompanied by commendable morals; it can be said that every action is recommended with good morals, like eating manners, working manners, earning a living, and so on.

Imam Al-Ghazali said, "And because eating to seek help for his religion is worship, it is appropriate for him to prioritize something that applies in religion, such as the application of purification to prayer." (Al-Ghazali, 1993c).

In working or earning a living, the results are full of blessings and become lawful sustenance. As narrated from Ibn Mas'ud, the Prophet SAW. once said: "Seeking what is lawful is obligatory for all Muslims." (HR. Dailami)(Siddiqui, 2023).

And Rasulullah SAW. also said: "Every meat that grows from food that is forbidden, surely the fire of hell is more important as a place of return." (HR. Thabrani) (Siddiqui, 2023).

Next, Imam Al-Ghazali talks about the manners of establishing relationships with other people or the ethics of friendship. He said, "Know, actually compassion, is the fruit of good behavior. Divorce is the fruit of bad behavior. Good behavior embodies a sense of romance, affection, and agreement. Bad behavior results in mutual hatred, incitement, and mutual repulsion." (Al-Ghazali, 1993c).

Al-Ghazali's presentation in his book Ihya' Ulumuddin regarding morals, commendable and despicable attitudes, and other manners aims to draw closer to Allah S.W.T. Soul and body are related to each other, even the body will not move ideally if the soul is still vague and contains reprehensible qualities. But not only that but being moral or civilized also needs to be accompanied by knowledge.

2. Science

Efforts to become a good person, a brilliant character, perfect manners, and one's morals are through knowledge because manners are not perfect if they are not accompanied by knowledge. Knowledge is an essential tool for humanizing humans, as a way for humans to know God, know themselves, and know what they want.

Imam Al-Ghazali started the discussion in his book Ihya' Ulumuddin about knowledge. He said, "I made a request to Allah Ta'ala regarding the emergence of the aspiration to write a book about reviving Religious knowledge (Ihya' Ulumuddin)." And he said, "And he shifted a little from that habit to the charity desired by knowledge because he wanted to get the purity of the soul and the improvement of the heart to worship Allah Ta'ala." (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

A knowledgeable person is very noble and high in rank because Allah S.W.T. emphasizes the primacy, glory, and elevation of the degree of knowledge for its owner in His words: "Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who are given knowledge of several degrees" (QS. Al-Mujadilah, 58: 11) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

3. Life or the World

The world and the hereafter are two lands inhabited by humans and other creations of Allah to live according to the provisions determined by Him. Here we are given orders and prohibitions, tests and rewards, deficiencies and adequacy, and so on.

Imam Al-Ghazali said, "Indeed, the owner of all owners and creators of all causes makes the afterlife a land of reward and punishment while the world is a burden and a shock, preparation, and effort. Preparation in the world is not limited to the hereafter without a place to live, but the place of life (world) is an intermediary for the hereafter and a helper to it. So the world is the fields of the Hereafter and ladders to it."(Al-Ghazali, 1993c).

The discussion about the world in character education is about how we make use of life in this world, how our affairs in this world are, and what is the position of this world towards us as a form of evaluating our physical perfection or our character. Because a perfect human is a human being who is helpful to others, and hating the world is a sign of love for Allah and His lovers.

Abu Musa al-Asy'ari said, Rasulullah SAW. said: "Whoever loves his world, surely he will endanger his hereafter, and whoever loves his hereafter, surely he

will harm his world, then prioritize what is eternal over what is perishable' (perish/destroyed)" (Siddiqui, 2023)*.*

Character Education Process from Imam Al-Ghazali's Perspective in the Book of Ihya' Ulumuddin covers these following characters:

1. Discipline Character

Discipline is an attitude that shows obedient behavior towards the norms that have been made and carries it out obediently and orderly. In essence, our life in this world has been disciplined; norms have been outlined that must be followed and obediently live it, and stay away from all prohibitions, which will bring goodness.

Related to this, Imam Al-Ghazali explained it in discussing the secrets and virtues of prayer. "Prayer is the pillar of religion, the rope of belief, the capital of self-approach to Allah, and the greatest obedience" (Al-Ghazali, 1993a). Allah SWT. says in the Qur'an: "Surely prayer is obligatory upon the believers at a set time." (QS. Al-Nisa', 4: 103) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

There is a disciplinary character contained in it, which Muslims must obey. The first discipline is Allah requires us to establish prayer. Second, day and night, praying (fardhu) five times is obligatory. Third, every prayer service must be on time and meet the conditions and pillars. And reinforced by the words of the Prophet, namely in the performance of prayer, if we want a greater or higher reward, we should do it in the congregation rather than alone. That is, as one of the descriptions of discipline that has been outlined, and is obliged to comply with these provisions.

2. Hard work

Hard work is an attitude of forming professional character, never giving up, being persistent in completing a job and overcoming all obstacles and completing tasks optimally.

To become a person who works hard, Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned it in his Ihya' Ulumuddin regarding people who study knowledge (ma'rifatullah) which is about self-introduction to Allah S.W.T., his qualities, and deeds. He said, "To acquire this knowledge, we need to make a tough effort, purify the soul, distance ourselves from the world's deceptions, and study the behavior of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. along with the other lovers of Allah S.W.T." (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

Three keys need to be applied, namely faith, patience and pleasure. Believing in something that is being lived, that no matter how difficult the path is, there must be a way out, because Allah is Most Just towards His servants. He gives tests according to the limits of His servants' abilities. And Imam Al-Ghazali said, "Nothing will ever be obtained without starting with effort because effort is the only essential guide to what humans want (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

3. Independence

Independence is an attitude and behavior that is not easily dependent on others to complete tasks. Related to this character, Imam Al-Ghazali revealed that Rasulullah SAW. said, which means: "Surely someone who makes a living by collecting firewood, then tied to his back and then sold in the market, is much better than begging (begging) from others, whether given or not." (HR. Bukhari dan Imam Muslim) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a; IslamicFinder, 2023; Siddiqui, 2023).

Thus, it can be seen that to give birth to self-reliance in a person is by learning how to deal with problems. Apart from that, it can also be done by instilling self-

confidence, as the Prophet S.A.W. taught his companions to believe in himself in trying to earn a living instead of sitting idly and looking for sustenance.

4. Responsibility

Within the scope of responsibility, Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned that there are several responsibilities and obligations that humans must carry out, both Muslims and human beings. Among them are rights in wealth and ownership. That is, everyone is a brother or a friend that perfects one another, looks after one another as if they were one body and one goal, and helps and shares joys and sorrows. In other words, it is a shared responsibility to help each other when needed and meet each other's needs (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

Thus, one can build a sense of responsibility through love and respect for one's neighbor because one's love for someone will show them the right path, and they will do whatever they need for good.

5. Social care

Social care is an attitude and action that always wants to assist other people and communities in need. Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned that several forms of social care need to be realized in social life. Among other things, it is not permissible to hurt other people's feelings or harm them, either through words or actions. Be polite to everyone we meet; don't mistreat them or brag in front of them. Let us not listen to slander and then spread it to others. Respect and glorify the friends of our parents, the families of friends of our parents who have passed away, and love their children. In a Hadith, Rasulullah SAW. said, meaning: "When a young person glorifies an older person, then Allah SWT. will establish for him a long life like that old man he venerated." (HR. Al-Tirmidzi) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

6. Environmental care

Environmental care is attitudes and actions trying to prevent damage of the surrounding natural environment and developing efforts to repair the natural damage that has already occurred. Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned it in the book Ihya' Ulumuddin in his discussion of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar. More precisely, the attitude that seeks to repair the damage that has occurred is called doing good deeds (amar ma'ruf), and the act of preventing doing damage is called preventing evil deeds (nahi munkar) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

Imam Al-Ghazali explained that amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar (commanding to do good and prevent evil) are religion's basic (principal) subjects. Allah S.W.T. sent the Prophets to the world to carry out the duties of amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar. If there is no prophethood, then religion will disappear. At the same time, ignorance and heresy will spread everywhere, chaos and corruption will prevail and trouble, disorder and savagery will spread throughout the world so that catastrophes will occur that will destroy humanity and all creatures. So thus, the law to do amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar is mandatory. Allah SWT. has said: "And let there be a group of people among you who call for virtue, instructing those who are good and forbidding those who are evil; they are the lucky ones." (QS. Ali' Imran, 3: 104) (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

And everything is a shared responsibility to prevent wrong things and to try as much as possible to fix what has happened so that we can live in a healthy environment. It can be started from the family, school, and community environment, how the head or leader invites the people to live healthily by maintaining physical health and environmental cleanliness, nothing that destroys

the natural surroundings and always obeys applicable regulations, and continually promotes tolerance among others, thereby creating a civilized society.

7. Friendly / Communicative Attitude

A friendly attitude is an act that shows a sense of pleasure in talking, associating, and working with other people. Imam Al-Ghazali said the bond of brotherhood or friendship is no different from the marriage bond between husband and wife. This means that a person's actions towards his friend are the same, both in association and fulfilling his rights, like a piece of cloth divided in two. As Rasulullah S.A.W. once said: "Two people who are brothers are like two hands, where one will wash the other" (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

In connection with friendship, some things need to be avoided from several diseases that will damage and hinder friendship, both from the tongue or verbal or from the heart. That means don't reduce our friendship because of our tongues, such as talking bad about someone, lying and badmouthing others, saying harshly, and putting someone down. Furthermore, there are several sayings by Imam Al-Ghazali regarding attitudes that must be awakened and instilled in a person to build a good friendly character, namely forgiving and inviting to the right path. (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

8. Love peace

Imam Al-Ghazali said always have a clear face and be gentle with everyone. One of the actions mentioned by Imam Al-Ghazali, which belong to the character of peace-loving, is giving greetings. When we meet a Muslim, we should greet hem first and shake hands because shaking hands can add affection. If a Muslim invites us, let us fulfill the invitation. If they leave the house and go for a few days, let us take care of and look after their possessions. And let us act fairly by loving what others love and like, and not coming to them except with what they like (Al-Ghazali, 1993a).

9. Spirit of nationality

The importance of the character values of the national spirit starts from the awareness of each individual to bring their identity to the times and their existence which must be addressed by building an advanced and dignified national civilization. Commemorating the services of a national hero is a good way of appreciating his services to ourselves and the nation for all the sacrifices and struggles of those whose kindness can be enjoyed by the current generation. Imam Al-Ghazali said in the Book of Ihya' Ulumuddin about the obligations and rights of fellow human beings, "Do as good as we can to everyone who is meritorious (has done good) to us or is not meritorious (did not do good) to us, be it relatives or non-relatives (Al-Ghazali, 1993a). Here it can also be interpreted that one example of the national spirit is respect for diversity because respect for diversity will maintain the integrity and unity of the nation and together promote the country and the good name of the nation.

10. Love the Motherland

For an independent country, love for the motherland today is no longer a jihad against colonialists and their enemies. Still, for them, it is a jihad against desires, a jihad to defend the country and its homeland from dangerous threats. Rasulullah SAW. said: "Fight your desires with hunger and thirst because the reward in that is like the reward of those who strive in the way of Allah, and there is no deed that is dearer to Allah Ta'ala than hunger and thirst" (Al-Ghazali, 1993d).

Imam Al-Ghazali mentions that the benefits for people who are hungry are "Clean heart, shining talent, and penetrating heart vision. Being full causes stupidity blinds the heart, and increases the vapor in the brain like sugar, so it contains mines of thought. Then, the heart is heavy from the flow of thoughts and the fast grasping. If a child overeats, his memory will be wrong, his heart will be damaged, and he will become slow in understanding and catching up." (Al-Ghazali, 1993d).

D. Conclusion

Imam Al-Ghazali's character education concept has two main elements: soul character reflected in sincere worship for Allah and physical character reflected in good morals and deepening useful knowledge. These two characters encourage a person to have a clean heart by continuously doing good for the happiness of themselves and others. In its development, characters emerge that connect us with Allah S.W.T. and other people, such as the character of discipline in praying five times a day and in carrying out work, working hard and independently in all activities, being responsible and respecting the rights of others, being friendly and communicative in socializing, and love peace and love for our beloved motherland. This study is limited to the theoretical aspects, so that it is recommended to discuss its practical aspects and explore the implementation in the field.

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