



The Influence of Al-Ghazzali's Rationality in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the need to understand the contribution of Al-Ghazzali's thought in Islamic education, particularly regarding the concept of rationality that integrates reason and revelation. Al-Ghazzali's rationality is considered crucial in addressing the challenges of the modernization of Islamic education, which demands a balance between spiritual and intellectual values. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of Al-Ghazzali's rationality on curriculum development, learning methods, and character formation in Islamic education. The method employed is qualitative research with a library research approach, focusing on content analysis of various relevant primary and secondary sources. Data were collected through documentation techniques and literature studies from books, journals, and scientific articles related to Al-Ghazzali's thought and Islamic education. Data analysis was conducted inductively by grouping main themes that illustrate the relationship between Al-Ghazzali's rationality and Islamic educational practices. The findings indicate that Al-Ghazzali's rationality plays a central role in building the foundation of holistic Islamic education, harmonizing reason and revelation. His thought encourages the use of reflective learning methods and an integrative curriculum that combines religious sciences with general knowledge, while also emphasizing character formation based on Islamic values. In conclusion, the application of Al-Ghazzali's rationality enriches modern Islamic education by balancing the intellectual and spiritual aspects of students. Recommendations for further research include conducting empirical studies to test the direct implementation of Al-Ghazzali's thought in contemporary educational contexts and comprehensively evaluating its impact on the quality of education and student character.

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1. Introduction

Islamic education is a crucial pillar in shaping the character and intellect of Muslims. As time progresses, Islamic education is challenged to harmonize spiritual values with the rationality that underpins modern science. In this context, the concept of rationality becomes critical to study as a philosophical foundation for developing curricula and teaching methods that not only emphasize faith but also critical and analytical skills.

The rationality of Al-Ghazali is a prominent concept in the history of Islamic thought, offering a balance between reason and revelation. Al-Ghazali, an 11th-century theologian and philosopher, developed a way of thinking that integrated rationality with spirituality. He did this to maintain the authenticity of Islamic teachings while responding to the prevalent influence of Greek philosophy. However, in contemporary Islamic education, a dilemma remains in effectively implementing this rational approach, especially when facing the challenges of globalization and modernity, which prioritize critical reasoning.

The problem that arises is how Al-Ghazali's rationality can be comprehensively integrated into the Islamic education system to meet the needs of the modern era without sacrificing religious values. This gap is a significant concern for educators and researchers seeking to explore the potential of rationality as a tool for strengthening education.

Relevant prior research provides an initial overview of this topic. First, a study by (Hariana, 2024) examined the application of Al-Ghazali's rational thinking method in teaching fiqh, showing that this approach improves students' analytical skills in Islamic law. Second, research by (Isbah & Sihono, 2025) highlighted the role of Al-Ghazali's thought in building student character through moral education, which strengthens both the spiritual and rational dimensions of the learning process. Collectively, these five research findings affirm the importance of Al-Ghazali's rationality as a foundation for developing Islamic education focused on intellectual and ethical formation.

Additionally, other studies have examined Islamic education more broadly. For example, (Yahya et al., 2018) evaluated the effectiveness of pesantren curricula in fostering students' emotional and spiritual intelligence, while research by (Firmansyah et al., 2025) presented the challenges of modernizing Islamic education in the digital era. These five studies indirectly point to the need to integrate rationality into Islamic education to produce graduates who are not only religious but also adaptable and critical.

Furthermore, studies specifically on Al-Ghazali's rationality also make significant contributions. For instance, the work of (Agustina, 2024) examines Al-Ghazali's critique of Greek philosophy in the context of rational thought, and the research by (Zamhariroh et al., 2024) investigates the relevance of Al-Ghazali's rational method in addressing contemporary scientific problems. Both of these studies affirm the relevance of Al-Ghazali's rationality as a vital foundation in modern Islamic education.

To address this problem, an Islamic education approach that integrates Al-Ghazali's rationality needs to be developed systematically. Constructivist theory, which emphasizes active and critical learning, can serve as a methodological foundation, as argued by (Yasin et al., 2024), who assert the importance of active interaction between students and learning materials to produce deep understanding. Additionally, the integrative Islamic education theory from (Usman, 2020) emphasizes the synergy between science and spiritual values, which aligns with Al-Ghazali's thought on unifying reason and revelation.

Against this background, this research aims to analyze the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in Islamic education in depth, specifically within the context of integrating spiritual and rational values into curricula and teaching methods. This study uses a qualitative approach to explore and describe the implications of Al-Ghazali's thought on contemporary Islamic education, with the hope of providing theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a more adaptive and critical Islamic education.

The theoretical review in this study focuses on understanding the concept of rationality in Al-Ghazali's thought and its relevance to modern Islamic education. Rationality, in general, refers to the human ability to use reason and logic to analyze and solve problems. In the Islamic tradition, particularly in Al-Ghazali's thought, rationality is not seen as separate from divine revelation. Instead, it is viewed as an essential tool that strengthens faith and the understanding of religious teachings (Bistara, 2022). Through his monumental work, such as *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Al-Ghazali affirmed that reason must be used wisely and in harmony with revelation to achieve true knowledge and a balanced life (Syahid, 2024). This view distinguishes Al-Ghazali from Greek philosophers who tended to prioritize reason without considering the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions.

In the context of Islamic education, Al-Ghazali's rationality proposes a learning model that focuses not only on memorizing religious texts but also on developing critical and reflective thinking skills (Zhaffar et al., 2022). This approach is crucial given the challenges of the modern era, which require students to be able to solve religious and social problems rationally. Al-Ghazali's thought creates space for the integration of religious and worldly knowledge through deep and analytical understanding (Yaqin, 2016). This aligns with the principles of modern Islamic education, which emphasize a holistic and integrative approach to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions.

Furthermore, constructivist theory provides a relevant theoretical framework for applying Al-Ghazali's rationality in education. This theory emphasizes that learning occurs through active interaction between students and their environment, as well as a process of reflection that encourages the independent discovery of meaning (Fauziah & Anshari, 2025). This constructivist approach parallels Al-Ghazali's ideas about learning, which involves both reason and the heart to produce a complete and meaningful understanding. Therefore, the integration of Al-Ghazali's thought and constructivist theory can form an Islamic education model that is responsive to the needs of the times while preserving traditional values.

The conceptual framework of this research is based on the synergistic relationship between the concept of Al-Ghazali's rationality and the development of Islamic education. Rationality, as a basis of thought, is integrated into Islamic curricula and teaching methods to produce critical, creative, and spiritual learning. Thus, this study focuses on how the application of Al-Ghazali's rationality principles can enrich and revitalize Islamic education to be more adaptive and holistic. This framework forms the basis for a qualitative analysis that examines the philosophical and practical aspects of the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality on contemporary Islamic education.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature review and descriptive analysis approach to explore and deeply understand the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in Islamic education. The chosen type of qualitative research is library research, which focuses on collecting and analyzing secondary data from various primary and secondary sources. These sources include books, academic articles, journals, and relevant documents that discuss Al-Ghazali's thought and Islamic education. The main instrument in this research is an indirect interview guide, which takes the form of an analytical framework for examining the content of documents and literature. This framework focuses on the concepts of rationality, the development of Al-Ghazali's thought, and its application in the context of Islamic education. Data collection is carried out using documentation and literature study techniques, which involve selecting, recording, and managing information from credible and highly relevant sources. Subsequently, the data is analyzed using an inductive content analysis technique, where the collected data is classified, coded, and synthesized to find patterns, themes, and meanings that describe the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in Islamic education. This analysis also considers the historical and philosophical context of Al-Ghazali's thought to ensure a holistic and in-depth interpretation of the data. With this method, the research is expected to provide an accurate, comprehensive, and conceptual overview of the role of Al-Ghazali's rationality in enriching Islamic education.

3. Finding and Discussion

The data for this study was collected from a literature review that included books, articles, and scholarly documents discussing the history of Al-Ghazali's rationality, the development of his thought, and its influence on Islamic education. The data was gathered using documentation and literature study techniques, focusing on credible and relevant sources. Subsequently, the data was analyzed using a content analysis technique to identify key themes related to the application of Al-Ghazali's rationality within the context of Islamic education. The following table summarizes the main findings, which have been successfully categorized based on three primary research aspects.

Table 1: Research Aspects and Key Findings on Al-Ghazali’s Rationality

Research Aspects	Main Findings	Data Sources
History of al Ghazzali's Rationality	Al Ghazzali developed the concept of rationality which harmonizes reason and revelation in the context of the 11th century, rejecting the dualism between philosophy and religion.	(Rizaldi et al., 2024)
Development of al Ghazzali's Thought	The evolution of his thought can be seen from initial skepticism towards philosophy to a holistic integration of rationality and spirituality.	(Gusti & Aprizal, 2025)
Al Ghazzali's Influence on Islamic Education	Al Ghazzali's thinking influences educational models that emphasize critical, reflective thinking and character formation based on Islamic values.	(Kurniawan, 2017)

The table above illustrates the three main dimensions of the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality identified from the literature review. In the historical aspect, it was found that Al-Ghazali lived during a period of intense debate between theologians and philosophers. He rejected the absolute separation between reason and revelation, instead placing them in a balanced harmony. This marked a significant turning point in the history of Islamic thought, where rationality was not considered a threat to religion but rather as an instrument for true proof and understanding.

The development of Al-Ghazali's thought shows a complex intellectual dynamic, ranging from a critique of Greek philosophy, which overemphasized rationality without revelation, to ultimately building a synthesis between the two. This transformation became a strong philosophical foundation in Islamic education, combining rational and spiritual aspects integrally, as seen in his works and contemporary scholarly analyses.

In the context of Islamic education, the influence of Al-Ghazali's thought is highly significant. His rationality, which prioritizes critical and reflective thinking, is applied in learning models that do not solely rely on memorization. Instead, it emphasizes character building and the ability for deep religious analysis. This approach is relevant to the demands of modern education, which requires students to be able to understand and practice Islamic teachings in a rational and contextual manner.

To provide a more detailed overview of Al-Ghazali's influence on Islamic educational practices, the following table details the concrete forms of implementing his rationality in curricula and teaching methods.

Historically, Al-Ghazali lived during a period when debates between theologians (*mutakallimun*) and philosophers (*falasifah*) reached their peak. One of the greatest intellectual challenges of the 11th century CE was how to respond to the legacy of Greek philosophy, which had been translated into Arabic and deeply influenced Muslim intellectual thought. Through his seminal work *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), Al-Ghazali did not reject philosophy in its entirety but offered a sharp critique of those elements he considered incompatible with the principle of divine unity (*tawhid*), such as the eternity of the universe and the denial of bodily resurrection (Marmura, 2000).

His most significant contribution was to dismantle the dichotomy between reason and revelation. He viewed reason as an instrument for discovering truth, not as a threat to faith (Frank, 1992). Rationality in Islam, therefore, does not end with logical argumentation but is directed toward achieving a certainty that strengthens belief (Nasr, 2001). This approach marked a major turning point in the history of Islamic thought, where reason and revelation came to be seen as mutually complementary rather than mutually exclusive (Hourani, 1991).

Al-Ghazali's intellectual journey was marked by a profound existential crisis, as he narrates in *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Deliverance from Error). In the early stages of his career, he doubted the validity of both sensory knowledge and pure rationalism, which ultimately led him to seek certainty through the Sufi path (Griffel, 2021). This transformation resulted in what might be called a paradigm of "rational mysticism," in which spiritual experience occupies the highest place in the hierarchy of knowledge, while the importance of logical reasoning is preserved (Fakhry, 2004).

Al-Ghazali integrated Aristotelian logic into his theological works, such as *Mi'yar al-'Ilm* and *al-Iqtisad fi al-'Itiqad*, demonstrating that logic is a legitimate tool for constructing theological arguments (Griffel, 2009). This indicates that his goal was not

to destroy philosophy but to reintegrate it within the framework of the Sharia. This epistemological stance profoundly influenced the madrasa curriculum and shaped the character of Islamic education for centuries (Makdisi, 1981).

Al-Ghazali's thought has far-reaching implications for education. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences), he emphasizes that the purpose of education is the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) and the formation of virtuous character (al-akhlaq al-karimah), rather than the mere transfer of knowledge (Rosenthal, 2016). This view is consistent with the principles of modern character education, which places moral and spiritual values at the heart of the learning process (Halstead, 2004).

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali rejected educational models that rely solely on rote memorization. He encouraged the use of dialogue, questioning, case studies, and debate as methods for cultivating critical thinking (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). In this sense, he can be regarded as a pioneer of reflective pedagogy within the Islamic tradition. His model is highly relevant to contemporary education, which emphasizes higher-order thinking skills in line with Bloom's Taxonomy—particularly at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Al-Ghazali's vision of an integrative curriculum also teaches that religious and worldly sciences should be studied harmoniously. This perspective continues to inspire movements for the Islamization of knowledge and the development of integrated curricula in modern Islamic schools (Nasr, 2001).

These three dimensions demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's rationality is not merely a philosophical concept but a practical framework for building an educational model that balances cognition, affect, and spirituality. In the modern context, his approach provides a response to the challenges of globalization, which often prioritize instrumental rationality at the expense of ethical considerations.

This middle path offers an alternative between secular rationalism and rigid textual fundamentalism. Critically, Al-Ghazali's model enriches contemporary educational reform discourse by foregrounding critical-reflective pedagogy rooted in transcendental values. This model is highly relevant for implementation in Islamic schools, pesantren, and universities to produce graduates who are not only intellectually capable and critical but also morally grounded and spiritually resilient, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to global civilization without losing their religious identity.

Table 2: Forms of Influence of Al-Ghazali's Rationality on Educational Practice

Forms of Influence of Al Ghazzali's Rationality	Description of Implementation	Examples of Educational Practices
Integrative Curriculum Development	A curriculum that combines religious knowledge and general knowledge in a balanced and holistic manner	Teaching fiqh and logic together
Reflective Learning Method	Using discussion, question and answer, and problem solving approaches to develop critical thinking	Religious case studies and debates

Forms of Influence of Al Ghazzali's Rationality	Description of Implementation	Examples of Educational Practices
Value-Based Character Building	Instilling moral and spiritual values reinforced by rational understanding and common sense	Moral and ethical education

From this table, it can be concluded that the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in Islamic education is not limited to theoretical aspects but also extends to practical domains in curriculum development, teaching methods, and the formation of student character. This confirms that effective Islamic education must be able to integrate spiritual values with rational abilities to produce graduates who are intelligent and of noble character.

Based on the results of this analysis, it can be briefly summarized that Al-Ghazali's rationality plays a central role in advancing Islamic education by harmonizing reason and revelation, encouraging the development of dynamic thinking, and implementing these values in a holistic and contextual manner in educational practices. This research successfully met its objective of understanding the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in enriching and revitalizing contemporary Islamic education.

The discussion of this research focuses on how Al-Ghazali's rationality makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education, as reflected in the analysis of its history, thought, and practical influence. First, the findings on the history of Al-Ghazali's rationality affirm that his concept of harmonizing reason and revelation provides a strong philosophical foundation for Islamic education. This prevents it from being trapped in a dualism that could hinder a deep understanding of religious teachings. This aligns with the research of (Anwar & Ridlwan, 2024), which emphasizes the need for integration between classical and modern scholarly traditions in Islamic education to face the challenges of globalization. Furthermore, the findings of (Ghozali & Usman, 2021) support the view that rationality in an Islamic context must be understood contextually, inseparable from the underlying spiritual values.

The development of Al-Ghazali's thought, which shows an evolution from a critique of philosophy to a synthesis of the rational and spiritual, serves as an important foundation for an educational model that prioritizes not only the cognitive aspect but also the affective and spiritual. Research by (Saifuddin, 2023) affirms the importance of a holistic approach in Islamic education that can develop all dimensions of students in a balanced way. This concept is also reinforced by the findings of (Sulistiyowati & Ma'arif, 2025), which discovered that reflective learning methods, as recommended by Al-Ghazali, enhance critical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of Islamic values.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's direct influence on Islamic educational practices is seen in the integration of curricula that combine religious and general sciences, as well as the use of teaching methods that encourage discussion and problem-solving. Research by (Azhari, 2024) shows that learning models that prioritize rationality and character are effective in shaping students who not only understand theory but are also able to apply Islamic values in daily life. The study by (Akbar, 2023) also found that character building through Islamic education based on Al-Ghazali's rationality can reduce dogmatism and increase tolerance among students.

Overall, the findings of this research affirm that Al-Ghazali's rationality makes an essential contribution to modern Islamic education, particularly in building a learning paradigm that is holistic, critical, and spiritual. This research updates previous studies by affirming the relevance of Al-Ghazali's classical thought in a complex and dynamic contemporary educational context. The implication of this research is the need for Islamic educational institutions to adopt the principles of Al-Ghazali's rationality as a foundation for designing adaptive and contextual curricula and teaching methods. Moreover, this approach also opens up opportunities to strengthen the integration between religious and general sciences to produce a generation with broad perspectives and noble character.

As a suggestion, future research can deepen empirical studies by involving the active participation of educators and students in applying Al-Ghazali's rationality in learning practices and exploring its impact on academic achievement and character formation. Longitudinal research is also recommended to observe the long-term development of the influence of Al-Ghazali's rationality in Islamic education across various cultural and social contexts.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that Al-Ghazali's rationality makes an important contribution to building a foundation for Islamic education that harmoniously integrates reason and revelation. His thought underwent significant development, combining rational and spiritual aspects, thereby becoming a philosophical basis for designing curricula and teaching methods that emphasize critical and reflective thinking, as well as character formation based on Islamic values.

The implementation of this concept of rationality has influenced Islamic educational practices by creating a holistic approach, balancing the integration of religious and general knowledge. Consequently, Islamic education that is oriented toward Al-Ghazali's rationality is capable of producing students who are not only intellectually smart but also have spiritual depth and strong character. This finding confirms the relevance of Al-Ghazali's classical thought in the dynamic and complex context of modern Islamic education.

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