Integration of Al-Ghazali's Moral Thought and Nurcholish Madjid's Intellectualism in the Development of Islamic Religious Education in the Contemporary Era

Integrasi Pemikiran Moral Al-Ghazali dan Intelektualisme Nurcholish Madjid dalam Perkembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam pada Era Kontemporer

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This study looks at how Nurcholish Madjid's intellectualism and Imam Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy have been incorporated into the evolution of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the modern day. The problem brought up is the Islamic educational system's duality between morality and reason, which results in a poor balance between the development of spiritual character and critical thinking abilities. The goal of this research is to offer an integration model between *tazkiyat al-nafs* (soul purification) and the intellectualism of tauhidi (reason based on divine principles). A literature study is carried out using a qualitative method by examining the original and secondary works of both figures as well as pertinent research findings. The results show that Al-Ghazali emphasizes the formation of morality through heart purification. The results show that although Al-Ghazali emphasizes the formation of morality through heart purification, Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes the importance of freedom of thought within the context of tauhid. When the two are combined, an Islamic educational paradigm is created that strikes a balance between faith and knowledge, ethics and logic, and dhikr and fikir. This methodology offers an innovative approach to the revitalization of holistic and transformative PAI and helps create a generation of Muslims who are morally upright, logical, and able to deal with contemporary issues.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, Nurcholish Madjid, Morality, Intellectualism, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the contemporary era is currently facing dual pressures: on the one hand, it is required to prepare students with intellectual competencies ready to face the dynamics of digitalization and globalization. On the other hand, the urgent need for strengthening character and morals remains an unresolved phenomenon, such as: the continued prevalence of bullying in educational environments, hate speech through social media, and the increasing culture of corruption that has not yet ended. This condition of moral decadence gives rise to concerns (dilemmas) in the implementation of the PAI curriculum and learning practices in educational institutions. The phenomenon of moral decadence, if left unchecked without any remedial efforts, will form a negative culture that will have implications for the loss of moral values in society (Permadi & Anshori, 2025).

Referring to the aforementioned phenomenon, the concept of moral education integrated into student's intellectual development is a necessity that can be implemented, particularly within the scope of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. One way is to adopt the concept of moral education introduced by Imam Al-Ghazali, emphasizing the control of the soul and desires. Meanwhile, the concept of intellectuality that is relevant to the current contemporary era, one of which can be the concept of intellectuality initiated by Nurcholis Madjid (Cak Nur), by openly facilitating a dialogue between religion and modern science, encouraging freedom of thought, inclusivity, and the creation of a humanist approach in the Islamic education system. Thus, the study of the integration of moral education and intellectuality becomes a transformative approach for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in the current contemporary era, considering the diverse demands on outcomes resulting from student competencies.

Various previous studies have shown the importance of the concept of strengthening character education as a form of effort to minimize the emergence of the phenomenon of moral decadence (Permadi & Anshori, 2025), as research that state the concept of moral education from Muhammad Syakir's perspective has proven effective in answering the challenges of education in the digital era by implementing four pillars of moral education in the book *Washāyā Al-Ābā Lil Abnā'* by focusing on self-nobility which includes vertical moral values, horizontal moral values, moral values related to oneself and moral procedures (Yusuf, 2019). Relevant to the research on moral education according to Sa'id Hawwa, which is oriented towards the formation of children's personalities in an Islamic manner so that they have a solid moral foundation and Islamic (intellectual) knowledge (Awaliyah & Nurzaman, 2018). Similarly, a research that state about multiple intelligences are an effective approach in building the character of the younger generation that balances spiritual and intellectual intelligence (Khatin & Fauzi, 2025). In addition, this approach contributes to the formation of character based on Islamic values. Although, in the process facing challenges such as limited adaptive methods and minimal integration of approach models, implicitly this model if implemented can have the potential to strengthen comprehensive Islamic education and support the creation of a generation that is both faithful and academically superior.

Referring to the articulation of one of the results of previous studies, it shows that there are still limitations or research gaps that have not been explored by researchers, one of which is the absence of specific integration between the concept of moral education and intellectuality, especially in the level of Islamic education. Therefore, to cover the gap in previous studies, this study was conducted by offering a conceptual integration between Imam Al-Ghazali's moral education and

Nurcholis Madjid's intellectual concept to become a transformative approach in Islamic Religious Education learning in the current contemporary era. By focusing research on how the concept of integration of Imam Al-Ghazali's moral education and Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual concept in the development of Islamic Religious Education learning in the Contemporary Era. The goal of this study is to thoroughly investigate the idea of integrating Nurcholish Madjid's intellectual concept and Imam Al-Ghazali's moral education in the development of Islamic Religious Education learning in the modern era.

In the evolution of Islamic Religious Education learning in the modern period, this study offers an innovation in the form of an integrative synthesis between moral and intellectual education. This integration is a transformative method that underscores the significance of moral principles to contemporary intellectual dynamics rather than just a conceptual combination. Thus, this research opens up new space for the birth of a more contextual, integral, dynamic, and humanistic paradigm of Islamic Religious Education learning, which is expected to contribute to strengthening the character and developing the intellectuality of students in the modern era.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design, aimed at tracing, analyzing, and synthesizing the thoughts of key figures (Permadi, et al. 2025). It focuses on the main works of Al-Ghazali concerning morals and the writings of Nurcholish Madjid, highlighting intellectualism and the modernization of Islamic education. Data collection involved primary and secondary literature, including books and journal articles, analyzed through content analysis techniques, which facilitate data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and the formulation of integrative conclusions (Bowen, 2009). This method is suitable for exploring thought leadership while developing a conceptual model for contemporary Islamic Religious Education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Morality in Al-Ghazali's Perspective

The discussion in this study begins with an examination of Al-Ghazali's concept of morality, considering that this figure has a significant contribution to the Islamic scientific tradition, particularly in formulating the foundations of moral education that are still relevant today. Al-Ghazali's thoughts on morality are not only normative-theological, but also touch on psychological and pedagogical aspects that can be applied in education. Therefore, exploring Al-Ghazali's concept of morality is a strategic initial step in understanding how the moral dimension can be combined with intellectual strengthening in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the contemporary era.

Imam Al-Ghazali, or Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmada al-Tusi Al-Ghazali, was born in 450 AH/1058 AD in Gazalah, Khurasan (Ali Khan, 2005). Since childhood, Al-Ghazali has shown great interest in various branches of Islamic science, such as fiqh, kalam science, tafsir, hadith, as well as logic and philosophy. He studied in a variety of locations, most notably in Nishapur under the direction of Imam al-Juwayni, who later shaped his way of thought (Sicca, 2021). After losing his father at an early age, he was raised in a Sufi community and became a prolific Muslim writer and thinker. He became a well-known character in both the eastern and western worlds as a result of his life's quest for knowledge and identity. He is a well-known individual with a number of titles, including hujjatul Islam,

because of his writings on philosophy, logic, and Sufism. (Ali Khan, 2005). He died on 4 Jumadil Akhir 505 H / 19 December 1111 M in his hometown, Taberan/Tus, leaving behind many monumental works such as *Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Tahafut al-Falasifah*, and others, which to this day are still important references in Islamic thought (Amsir, 2025).

Al-Ghazali views morality as a *malakah* (spiritual habit) that is deeply ingrained in a person, thus spontaneously giving rise to good deeds without requiring lengthy rational consideration (Al-Ghazali, 2011) With this definition, Al-Ghazali asserts that morality is not merely an outward act, but rather an inner condition that underlies daily behavior. This viewpoint distinguishes itself from merely formal ethics by emphasizing the growth of the heart and soul as the foundation of human morality. Al-Ghazali's moral theory is based on the anthropological worldview of Islam, which sees people as entities with both good and evil potential. He asserts that the heart (*qalb*) is the center of moral knowledge that directs all external human behavior. A pure heart will produce good deeds and a dirty heart, on the other hand, will produce corrupt deeds. Therefore, moral education in Al-Ghazali's view functions to organize the heart through the process of self-knowledge *(ma'rifat al-nafs)* and knowledge of God *(ma'rifatullah).* Such education not only teaches what is right and wrong, but instills the ability to consciously choose goodness as a form of spiritual responsibility before Allah (Nasr, 2007).

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali emphasized that good morals arise from the purification of the heart *(tazkiyat al-nafs)* and the control of desires. The two main stages of tazkiyat al-nafs, according to Al-Ghazali, are tahliyah (adoring the soul with admirable traits like sincerity, patience, and trust in God) and takhliyah (cleansing the soul from despicable traits like riya', arrogance, and envy) (Sanuhung et al., 2021). Therefore, morality is the outcome of an ongoing process of spiritual education rather than something that appears   overnight.

Tazkiyat al-nafs is a philosophical framework used in Islamic religious education that highlights that the purpose of education is to become closer to God rather than just pursue social or monetary status. Al-Ghazali therefore highlighted the significance of the teacher's role in helping pupils purify their spirits from worldly temptations while fostering the virtues of sincerity and devotion to God (Akhmad et al., 2021). According to Al-Ghazali, the ideal teacher is a *murabbi* who molds his students' spiritual character in addition to imparting information. According to Al-Ghazali, a teacher builds, develops, and perfects human potential in an attempt to purify his heart and become closer to the Creator. He emphasized the role and responsibility of the teacher. "The best of affairs is that which is said to be knowledge," he said. because it is considered an honor from heaven. A person will not be good when he is like a needle that can clothe others but is naked or a wick that can light others when it burns. Therefore, a teacher must be able to carry out his responsibilities as an educator while protecting ethics (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

The process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is also manifested through *riyadhah* (spiritual training) and *mujahadah* (seriousness in resisting lust). Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of repeated practice, for example through daily worship, dhikr, and the habituation of good deeds, so that the heart becomes strong in facing negative impulses from lust (Rohayati, 2011). Here, moral education functions as a process of spiritual discipline that forms good habits permanently. The concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is highly pertinent given the moral quandary of today. The problems of moral deterioration, such as intolerance, hedonism, misuse of digital technology, and an increase in corruption,

show how character education has failed in the face of modernization. Religious education that concentrates just on cognitive problems without soul purification will produce a generation that is intelligent but morally fragile.

Al-Ghazali argues that habituation, sometimes referred to as ta'dib or moral training, is the cornerstone of moral formation. Noble character grows into a habit that is embedded in the soul and permits good behavior to occur naturally rather than just as a result of external duties via repeating good deeds, getting spiritual instruction, and imitating teachers. This approach can be used to develop habituation programs in madrasas and schools that aim to transform moral knowledge into intrinsic character. Examples of these programs include regular self-reflection, systematic prayer routines, and social work projects.(Wandira et al., 2023.).

In his treasury of thought, Al-Ghazali prioritized moral balance as an ethical principle: virtue lies in the middle between two extremes so that control of lust and rational wisdom are balanced. This principle of moderation provides direction for modern character education to reject attitudes of excess or deficiency—an important foundation for combating moral radicalism and extreme consumerism in the younger generation. The educational process assists students in adopting proportionate and appropriate attitudes in reacting to current societal challenges by teaching the pedagogical ideal of moderation (Igo Fadhli Sa'bani et al., 2024). Al-Ghazali disagreed with the notion that knowledge and morality should be kept entirely apart. He thought that knowledge should be directed by a pure heart to avoid haughtiness or abuse, and morality should have a reasonable understanding to avoid becoming a passive attitude without direction. Thus, moral education should ideally combine spiritual (intention, mujahadah) and cognitive (understanding, criticism) elements so that students not only "implement" values but also comprehend their moral context and purpose—to produce informed, modest, and socially beneficial individuals (Mud'is, 2023).

2. The Concept of Intellectuality in Nurcholish Madjid's Perspective

Nurcholish Madjid, or familiarly known as Cak Nur, was born in Jombang, East Java, on March 17, 1939, to a family of Islamic scholars steeped in the Islamic boarding school tradition. He pursued his schooling at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta after becoming acquainted with Islamic customs at an early age. Under the direction of Fazlur Rahman, he was able to obtain a PhD in Islamic Thought from the University of Chicago in 1978 with a dissertation titled Ibn Taymiyyah on Kalam and Falsafah: Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam. Since the 1970s, Cak Nur has gained widespread recognition for his well-known concept, "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No," which urges Muslims to differentiate between politics as a practical arena and Islam as a moral teaching. In addition to emphasizing the necessity of ijtihad to address the problems of the contemporary times, his philosophy highlights the significance of monotheism as an intellectual and social foundation (Barton, 1999).

Cak Nur established Paramadina University and served as its first rector, contributing significantly to the field of education in addition to his active writing and talks. He advocated for a logical, inclusive, and pluralistic interpretation of Islam, stressing that morality and true intellectualism are inextricably linked. His thoughts were widely expressed in works such as Islam, Modernity, and Indonesianness and Islam: Doctrines and Civilization, which remain the main references in the study of Islamic modernization in Indonesia. Nurcholish Madjid died on August 29, 2005, in Jakarta, but his ideas remain alive and relevant, particularly in building a critical, open, and humanity-oriented Islamic intellectual tradition (Adam Hasyim & Munasir, 2023).

Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) sees intellectuality as one of the keys to the rebirth of the Muslim community based on his intellectual journey. According to him, intellectuality is a trait of reason combined with morality and spirituality, meaning that knowledge is not just for logic but also for goodness and devotion to God. It goes beyond simply being able to think rationally or grasp knowledge. He is based on the idea that Islam has always respected reason, as shown by the Quran's many verses that exhort people to employ reason *(ta'akkul)*, consider *(tafakkur)*, and reflect *(tadabbur)* (Iddian, 2021; Madjid, 1992).

According to Cak Nur, Islamic intellectualism must be open, dynamic, and free from stagnation. He rejects the view that limits the function of reason to the realm of theology or jurisprudence alone, and instead encourages its widespread use in all aspects of life, including science, politics, social studies, and culture. Thus, Islamic intellectualism is expected to become a force for social transformation that can encourage the creation of a just, advanced and humane civilization (Madjid, 1992).

According to Cak Nur, in the context of modern Islamic philosophy, intellectual awakening of the population necessitates the instillation of ethical and spiritual consciousness behind the quest of knowledge in addition to scientific competence. The intellectuality he promotes is tauhidi, or a mind that yields to divine principles while retaining the ability to reason and think critically. This viewpoint views knowledge not only as a tool for logical inquiry but also as a way to devote oneself to God and the welfare of humanity (Lidyaningsih & Hanif, 2024). Cak Nur also views education as a space for the liberation of the mind and heart. He rejects an educational system that restricts freedom of thought in the name of dogma, because for him intellectual freedom is the primary requirement for cultivating a mature faith. Islamic education, he believes, must provide opportunities for students to dialogue, interpret, and test ideas with critical reasoning oriented towards moral values. This concept makes schools and universities not only places for the transfer of knowledge, but also laboratories for ethics and spirituality (Hasan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, according to Cak Nur, intellectualism has a crucial ethical dimension. He rejects intellectualism that stops at academic ability or pure rationality devoid of moral values. For him, knowledge and reason must be directed toward achieving the values of goodness, honesty, and justice. In this view, true intellectualism is one that is able to integrate intellectual intelligence with moral intelligence (Mahdin, 2014). This is what he calls a moral scientific ethos, namely, making knowledge a means of worship and devotion, not merely a tool for the pursuit of prestige or pragmatic gain.

Cak Nur's concept of intellectuality is also heavily influenced by the principle of tauhid. According to him, tauhid is not only the foundation of faith but also the source of intellectual orientation. From tauhid comes the awareness that knowledge must be used to serve God and bring benefit to humanity (Abdullah, 2017). This suggests that rather than being limited to mental activity, a Muslim's intellectual potential is always linked to moral and spiritual consciousness. Additionally, Cak Nur emphasizes the importance of intellectual ijtihad as a cornerstone of Islamic tradition. He laments the intellectual stagnation of Muslims who are overly dependent on their classical heritage and lack the courage to pursue renewal. He defines intellectuality as having the courage to reevaluate, reinterpret, and alter Islamic beliefs in light of current events without compromising the fundamental ideas (Akmalia et al., 2021). This aligns with the spirit of Islam as a religion that is always contextual and universal.

In addition to the aspect of freedom of thought, Cak Nur emphasizes the social dimension of intellectuality. For him, a Muslim intellectual must be present in society as an agent of transformation who fights for justice, openness, and tolerance.

Intellectualism bound by tauhid demands concern for universal humanity; therefore, scientific and social activities must be grounded in the values of empathy, equality, and social responsibility (Sabani, 2025). Furthermore, Cak Nur proposes that Islamic intellectualism must be dialogical and adaptive to changing times. He rejects intellectual isolation that closes itself off from global scientific developments, because for him, openness to modern science and culture is part of the mandate of science. By standing on tauhid and morality, Muslims can interact critically with the progress of civilization without losing their religious identity (Abdurrohim et al., 2024). This way of thinking will serve as a solid basis for attempts to incorporate Cak Nur's intelligence and Al-Ghazali's moral dimension in the revitalization of Islamic Religious Education.

Nurcholish Madjid's concept of intellectuality shows that morality and true intellectuality are inextricably linked. Humanitarian crises like technology abuse, radicalism in thought, and pragmatism in education can result from rationality that is not grounded in morality. Cak Nur's ideas provide a pertinent framework for creating an Islamic intellectual legacy that is critical, open, moral, and humanity-oriented in the current moment of moral crises, social polarization, and the swift pace of globalization. Thus, by integrating intellectualism with moral education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) might draw inspiration from Cak Nur's views. This implies that pupils are encouraged to cultivate noble character in addition to academic intelligence. This implies that students are expected to cultivate noble character, Qur'anic values, and social responsibility in addition to academic intelligence.

3. Integration of Al-Ghazali's Moral Thought and Nurcholish Madjid's Intellectualism in the Development of Islamic Religious Education in the Contemporary Era

The integration of the thoughts of Al-Ghazali and Nurcholish Madjid represents an academic effort to reconcile two major currents in Islamic scholarship: classical spiritualism and modern rationalism. Both figures departed from a spirit of renewal, albeit through different paths. While Nurcholish Madjid highlighted the growth of reason and freedom of thought within the framework of tauhid, Al-Ghazali highlighted the cleansing of the soul *(tazkiyat al-nafs)* as the moral basis of education. In the framework of Islamic religious education (PAI), a synthesis between the two is essential to addressing the ethical and intellectual dilemma that the society faces in the globalization period, when spiritual depth frequently lags behind technological growth. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the conceptual relationship between morality and intellectuality as well as the ways in which the two might be incorporated into the practice and curriculum of modern Islamic education.

A comprehensive idea of Islamic education emerges from the fusion of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-centeredness) and the intellectualism of tauhidi (monotheism), balancing dhikr (remembrance of God) and thought (thinking), spirituality and reason, ethics and logic. *Tazkiyat* serves as a moral foundation to guide thought, while intellectuality serves as a means of broadening insight and solving life's problems critically and contextually. If education only develops cognitive aspects without purifying the soul, it will produce individuals who are intelligent but poor in morals. Conversely, if it only emphasizes morality without rationality, education will produce passive, unproductive piety (Idham, 2025). The integration of the two ensures that students possess both spiritual depth and the ability to think adaptively to modern challenges.

The concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* provides spiritual direction for the freedom of thought initiated by Cak Nur, so that intellectual freedom is inseparable from divine values that guide behavior and ways of thinking. In Al-Ghazali's view,

a pure heart is a vessel for beneficial knowledge, while knowledge without purification of the heart can be misleading because it is born of arrogance and lust (Al-Ghazali, 2004).Conversely, Cak Nur emphasizes that critical and scientific thinking is part of faith, but must still be guided by the values of tauhid so as not to lose its moral and humanitarian foundation. Tauhid is the basis for critical and open thinking, but still maintains a moral orientation so as not to fall into relativism — intellectual freedom is limited by divine awareness (Munawar & Rachman, 2022).The integration of these two views makes Islamic education a means of building a balance between inner purity and intellectual freedom. Thus, *tazkiyat al-nafs* becomes the ethical-spiritual dimension of responsible intellectuality.

In the context of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-awareness) can be used as the basis for educational values and goals, while intellectualism serves as the pedagogical approach to achieving them. Every educational process aims to cultivate both spiritual awareness and the capacity for critical thought regarding social problems. For instance, teaching tafsir and hadith emphasizes their moral reflection in contemporary life, such as media ethics or social responsibility in the digital environment, in addition to text memorization (Nadirah, 2025). Students are encouraged to both internalize and actualize spiritual principles through contextual and logical thinking in this way. Such an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum will foster individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and moral at the same time.

To concretely implement the integration between *tazkiyat al-nafs* and intellectuality, a systematic design is needed in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning structure. First, at the beginning of the year or semester, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to design themes that facilitate the internalization of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, such as the modules "Intention and Inner Awareness," "Controlling Lust," and "Spirituality in Worship," along with themes that develop critical thinking such as "Ethics of Technology and Islam," "Religious Dialogue and Tolerance," or "Social Issues from an Islamic Perspective." Second, in implementing learning, teachers begin the learning process with inner reflection activities—such as daily worship, dhikr, habituation of good deeds, light meditation, or short reflections—then link religious material to contemporary issues through discussion methods, case studies, social projects, and interdisciplinary studies. Third, as a means of putting values into practice, learning evaluation is carried out not only through written exams but also through student reflective portfolios, behavioral observations, and community or school-based social initiatives. Fourth, in order to maintain the Islamic Religious Education learning model's adaptability to student needs and local and global contexts, assessment results are reviewed to improve the syllabus, materials, and procedures for the upcoming semester. The ethos of sustainable tazkiyah (religious service) and intellectual growth that keeps evolving with the times is reflected in this dynamic approach.

Teachers play the dual roles of *mufakkir* (intellectual motivator) and *murabbi* (spiritual advisor) within this integrated framework. According to Al-Ghazali, educators must be moral role models who can purify themselves before they can purify their students. This is because knowledge is useless without example behavior and sincerity (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This perspective is consistent with Cak Nur's philosophy, which highlights the value of educators who are logical, accepting of diversity, and respectful of their students' freedom of thought (Munawar & Rachman, 2022).

Thus, the development of two primary competencies (spirituality and intellectuality) must be the focus of Islamic Religious Education teacher training in

order for instructors to not only instruct but also to mentor the cleansing of the heart and the sharpening of reason.

The way that Al-Ghazali and Nurcholish Madjid's ideas are combined also illustrates how Islam's classical tradition and modernity converge. While Cak Nur highlighted open reason as a way to anchor Islamic ideals in social reality, Al-Ghazali focused on the tazkiyah dimension that promotes inner awareness. When the two are combined, an Islamic educational model that can adapt to change without losing its spiritual core is presented. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this means that learning is not only aimed at transmitting dogma, but also developing the power of interpretation and critical awareness of humanitarian problems. This approach aligns with the idea of holistic education according to Zohar & Marshall (2001), who define spiritual intelligence as the pinnacle of human intelligence, namely the ability to integrate the meaning of life with knowledge. The integration of morality and intellectuality as proposed by these two figures can develop students who have a balanced spiritual quotient (SQ), emotional quotient (EQ), and intellectual quotient (IQ) (Zohar & Marshall, 2001).

The integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and Cak Nur's intellectualism also has broad social implications. *Tazkiyat al-nafs* does not stop at developing a pious individual but continues to foster a moral and just society. In the meantime, the intellectualism of tauhidi (monotheism) promotes active involvement in creating a community that is tolerant, pluralistic, and dialogical. Students will develop into social citizens who contribute to upholding justice and harmony in a multicultural society in addition to being religious individuals if these two concepts are incorporated into Islamic education (PAI) (Adam Hasyim & Munasir, 2023). Al-Ghazali's morality and Nurcholish Madjid's intellectualism can be integrated in social practice through community-based Islamic education initiatives. For example, schools or madrasas may establish spiritual-based community service programs like as service learning, where students apply their religious knowledge to environmental, social, and humanitarian projects. This approach strengthens the virtues of empathy and social responsibility while also cultivating an intellectual mindset centered on the common good (*maslahah 'ammah*). This educational approach is consistent with Al-Ghazali's view of the value of good actions as a manifestation of knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2011), and Cak Nur's view of Islam as a kindness for all worlds (Hidayat, 2021).

Additionally, from the standpoint of Islamic educational philosophy, the concept of *insan kamil* (a whole human being who thinks, remembers, and acts) is affirmed by the merger of tazkiyat al-nafs and the intellectuality of tauhidi. This idea is not just a spiritual ideal; rather, it is the epistemological objective of education, which is for knowledge to lead to wisdom *(ḥikmah)*. Islamic education built on this integration places religious knowledge and worldly information in a symbiotic relationship rather than trapping them in a contradiction. As stated by Naquib al-Attas (1991), the Islamization of knowledge does not mean separating modern science from religion, but rather instilling manners and divine awareness into scientific activities (Naguib Al-Attas, 1991.). Thus, PAI based on this integration is able to foster a civilized scientific tradition (knowledge with adab).

Philosophically, the integration of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-centeredness) and the intellectualism of tauhidi (theology) establishes a non-dichotomous paradigm of Islamic education. Rationality and spirituality, knowledge and faith, and reason and heart are not two distinct things but rather two

wings that support one another in the search for the truth. While intellectuality gives religion a logical framework,

tazkiyat gives knowledge an ethical perspective. This educational approach turns Islamic Religious Education (PAI) into a platform for responsible and focused intellectual liberation as well as a tool for moral development.

The issues of the modern era ,the moral dilemma, the secularization of knowledge, and the deterioration of human values can be addressed by Islamic education that incorporates both.

The merging of Nurcholish Madjid's intellectualism and Al-Ghazali's *tazkiyat al-nafs* offers a fresh approach to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) renewal that is pertinent to contemporary needs. PAI is producing a generation of Muslims with rational spirituality, powerful reasoning, and clear souls through this union. This education no longer separates religion and knowledge, but combines them as a path to truth, with *tazkiyat al-nafs* as an ethical basis and intellectuality as a practical bridge towards becoming a person of faith, thinking, and civilized.

Although the integration of moral strengthening and intellectual development in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning remains relatively limited in formal educational practice, several efforts have shown the direction of implementing this concept. The character development strategy used at Panca Budi Junior High School in Medan is one pertinent example. It stresses the ongoing instillation of moral ideals while also encouraging students' intellectual comprehension of religious teachings. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes at Panca Budi Junior High School in Medan combine intellectual talks with everyday moral values practice. Every learning exercise starts with a ritual of group prayer, reading from the Quran, and a quick analysis of the day's central moral principle. Then, through class discussions that call for critical thinking and the capacity to evaluate religious texts, teachers connect these practices to more intellectual PAI learning issues, such as the ethics of social interaction. Students submit individual comments on how they apply moral principles in their own life as a follow-up, and their ability to make the connection between moral practice and academic comprehension is evaluated. This practice demonstrates how moral values can be strengthened through daily discipline while also being developed through in-depth intellectual dialogue (Lubis, 2024).

This example demonstrates that the integration of moral development through habituation and intellectual strengthening through dialogue and critical reflection is feasible in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, although it has not yet become mainstream in Islamic educational practices. This model reflects both Nurcholish Madjid's tauhidi intellectualism, which situates freedom of thought within the framework of divine values, and Imam Al-Ghazali's tazkiyat al-nafs (the principle of self-control), which emphasizes the formation of morals through a process of habituation and self-control. As a result, the study's discussion of the integration of these two personalities' ideas is both philosophically and practically significant as a path for the advancement of comprehensive and revolutionary Islamic Religious Education in the modern period.

CONCLUSIONS

The integration of Al-Ghazali's moral thought and Nurcholish Madjid's intellectualism demonstrates that the renewal of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can stem from a synthesis between the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-

nafs) and the freedom of monotheistic thought. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of spiritual and moral dimensions as the foundation of education, while Nurcholish Madjid emphasized the role of reason and rationality within the framework of divine values. An educational paradigm that integrates morality and intellect, dhikr and thought, and faith with knowledge is the result of this integration. As a result,

Islamic education creates knowledgeable, critical, and socially conscious people in addition to ritually devout people.

In practical terms, this integration necessitates changing the PAI curriculum and teaching strategies in favor of a comprehensive and contextual educational approach. Teachers must serve as both mufakkir (spiritual leaders who are logical and receptive to academic discussion) and murabbi. Learning is directed toward developing a deep spiritual awareness and

the ability to think reflectively about modern social realities. With this approach, Islamic Religious Education in the contemporary era can become a means of forming perfect human beings who are knowledgeable, moral, and play an active role in realizing an Islamic civilization that is civilized, adaptive, and oriented towards the welfare of humanity. However, there are certain limitations to this study. It has not looked at the empirical application of incorporating Nurcholish Madjid's intellectualism and Al-Ghazali's moral philosophy in real PAI learning practices because it is conceptual in character and depends on a library research technique. Furthermore, the study is still philosophical in nature and has not yet been converted into practical learning models or evaluation tools. In order to test and create relevant PAI learning models that incorporate tazkiyat al-nafs and tauhidi intellectualism, as well as to create useful curriculum designs and assessment techniques appropriate for modern educational settings, future research is advised to use empirical methods.

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