A Study of Imam Al-Ghazali's Approach in Strengthening Spirituality, Psychology and Mental Health of Muslims

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Abstract

To every Muslim, strengthening spirituality is part of the effort toward developing their well-being. This is because spirituality is one of the educational goals of the National Education Philosophy. A strong spirit can balance human emotions and positively affect mental health. Failure to strengthen the spirituality of every Muslim can invite negative implications and cause social problems in this country, such as child abuse, domestic violence, parental neglect, and other criminal cases. This study aims to analyse Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening the spirituality of Muslims in Malaysia. This study adopted a qualitative methodology that used library research and document analysis for data collection. The methodology of this writing is based on a literature review and analysis of information obtained through previous studies. In the qualitative method, the data collection process uses the library research method by inspecting the journal articles and theses. Various types of references related to research on Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening Muslim spirituality from Malaysians' psychological and mental points of view are available. The results of data collection and research analysis found that several past studies have been conducted by scholars on Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening the spirituality and mental health of Muslims. Therefore, further research is recommended to help the authorities find the best way to deal with the current issues and challenges to strengthen the spirituality of Muslims in Malaysia and create peace in the country by ensuring the level of mental health is always in good condition.

Keywords: Imam Al-Ghazali's approach, spirituality, mental health

1. Introduction

Imam Al-Ghazali is famous for his contributions in various sectors in helping to build a high-performing and harmonious society. He has also earned the title of *'Hujjatul Islam'* (Proof of Islam) because of his vast contribution not only to Islam but also on the international stage by providing a comprehensive Islamic source of reference. One of his contributions is in psychology, where he focuses more on faith and revelation in bringing forth sincerity to achieve self-satisfaction. Allah S.W.T states in surah al-Tin, verse four which means, "Man is a creature created by Allah S.W.T who was made with the best of stature". Today, Malaysians no longer feel isolated and awkward when talking about psychology and spirituality and gain awareness from various sources, such as social media and awareness campaigns, as initiatives to gain full attention on such topics.

Imam Al-Ghazali has offered many approaches to building and strengthening the spirituality of Malaysian Muslims. However, certain obstacles prevent Malaysians from creating a visionary society. One of them is that most Malaysians suffer from depression caused by various factors, such as genetics and current issues. They experience such severe emotional stress that their perception of life becomes negative as if there is no reason for them to continue living.

Among the other obstacles is that some Malaysians are easily influenced by Western culture to the point of rejecting the Islamic-based narrative. No doubt that Western psychology has its way of solving psychological issues. For example, according to Abulutfi (2008), they focus more on scientific and behavioural studies solely to obtain solutions and diagnoses related to mental problems. However, they fail to observe the human soul as its own. Islamic psychology is more concerned with the holistic approach, which combines empirical, material, or spiritual aspects with theological studies.

Every individual's behaviour, actions, and decisions depend on religious aspects that also play a significant role in the development of a person's soul and spirituality. This supports the nature of religion, which is one of the spiritual needs that always yearn for happiness and peace of mind (Sobri et al., 2022). From a psychological and mental point of view, Malaysians are now increasingly facing challenges related to the deterioration of spirituality, which is increasing every day. Nurussakinah (as stated in Aziz et al., 2020) argued that Western psychology is different compared to the role of Islamic psychology. She opined that Western psychology is only based on explaining, controlling, and predicting human behaviour. In contrast, Islamic psychology is closely related to explaining, controlling, and predicting human behaviour and persuading people to seek the pleasure of Allah S.W.T. Therefore, saving and encouraging people to act according to their natural inclination and nature to submit to Allah S.W.T subsequently has become the most crucial task in Islamic psychology.

1.1 Studies related to Imam Al-Ghazali's approach

A study by Hamjah (2010) explains the relationship between spiritual guidance and the effectiveness of counselling from Imam Al-Ghazali's point of view. The survey and response among clients undergoing counselling treatment at the Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council Counseling Center (PK MAINS) were chosen as the research method. The findings of the study showed that various aspects of spiritual guidance from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective had been applied in conducting each counselling session at PK MAINS. He found that the counsellors at PK MAINS used very brilliant ideas in fostering efforts to eliminate feelings of hatred towards others through a prudent preaching approach. Further, they also fostered Islamic teachings that urge people to love and forgive each other. The views of Imam Al-Ghazali were demonstrated when hatred could be avoided by holding firmly to the teachings of Islam. Islam always encourages its followers to love each other without any grudge. This study also found that the *riyadah al-nafs* component of Al-Ghazali's approach has also been applied in every counseling session. We must always be open to accepting the *qada'* and *qadar* (fate and destiny) of Allah S.W.T. The findings of this study prove that there is a strong relationship between spiritual guidance in counselling and the effectiveness of counselling. Hamjah (2008) also shared the same opinion. He agreed that counselling services, especially for Malaysians who adhere firmly to Imam Al-Ghazali's approach, is the most critical mechanism and an alternative in every behavioural problem resolution, emotional and mental conflict resolution, or self-awareness. In fact, counselling can also be considered a medium or mechanism for continuing to spread da'wah.

Another study, carried out by Sobri et al. (2022), put more emphasis on the terms heart (al-qalb), soul (al-ruh), desire (al-nafs), and mind (al-aql). These terms have two different meanings, namely from the physical and spiritual point of view. Spiritual discipline can be seen in these four elements because when examining the heart, soul, desire, and mind deeply within their spiritual meaning, they are "al-latifah," which means a subtle human being who can understand the commandments of Sharia, including the greatness of Allah S.W.T. Their study also explained that all these aspects of spirituality are not limited to the mind alone. It is also part of the physical context to Allah S.W.T and His Messenger S.A.W in understanding the duty of a human being as a servant of Allah S.W.T. This understanding leads to behaviour that is following the right of ubudiyyat (obedience) as a servant of Allah S.W.T and obeying the sharia of Rasulullah S.A.W. These spiritual elements can influence every human action and may also be the cause of negative things for an individual, such as mental stress. In another study, Ghani and Mansor (2006) also stated that Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening spirituality is by combining obedience from an external and internal point of view, which in turn will create the meaning of "oneness" only to Allah S.W.T.

Therefore, Muslims, especially in Malaysia, should equip themselves with good morals and consistently monitor their behaviour and actions so as not to stray far from Islamic Sharia, as practiced by Imam Al-Ghazali (Noordin & Rahman, 2017). All of Imam Al-Ghazali's approaches aim to avoid mental or emotional disturbances and confusion (Sobri et al., 2022).

Sarawati & Ishak (as stated in Azaman & Badaruddin, 2016) highlighted Al-Ghazali's spiritual model but observed it from the emotional and mental intelligence aspects. This study highlights the heart because it is the element most closely related to emotion. Meanwhile, desire, soul, and mind are also included in Al-Ghazali's spiritual model. This study proves that a person's heart is an important element because it will be able to control the attitude, character, and personality of an individual. If seen from a spiritual point of view, the heart is the most important pillar in all human actions. This study explains that whether the action is good or bad originates from the heart. In addition, Imam Al-Ghazali stated that the will that is born in the human being is mere desire.

If the heart is cleansed, any ill will and desire can be avoided. Spirituality is an essential factor in religious matters from the point of view of belief, worship, morals, and sharia. These factors are important because they are closely related to the inner being of a person (soul and spiritual) (Ghani & Mansor, 2006). Sobri et al. (2022) also think that the strength or weakness of a person's spirit, intellect, and desire/passion will have an impact on the spiritual self who is experiencing emotional stress. They explained that the spirit of a person becomes weaker and more easily disturbed by the devil if there is no effort to recognize the power of Allah S.W.T., whereas the opposite will occur if Allah S.W.T. is always in the heart. A person will easily have negative emotions and emotional stress caused by the evil influence of desire (Md Taib, as stated in Sobri et al., 2022). This study coincides with the explanation of Imam Al-Ghazali, where human personality is believed to form based on spirituality and psychology, which is covered by elements such as heart, soul, desire, and mind that influence a person's thinking.

Based on Al-Ghazali's theory of counseling, Yatimah and Mohd Tajudin (as stated in Aziz et al., 2020) outlined five steps that can benefit humankind to solve any problems in terms of psychological, emotional, and mental health. This study states that the first step is identifying and developing a relationship that includes elements of prayer, promise, and *tawakal* (submission). The second step consists of getting to know oneself and building a deeper purpose in life. This step is where the counsellor explores the client's characteristics through observation, conversation, and hypothetical questions. When clients can guide and reflect on themselves, all carelessness and self-deficiencies will be recognised earlier. The third step is to identify the source and type of problem. This step combines steps one and two, where the counsellor has the role of identifying the source and type of the client's problems and together reach an agreement about the client and his problems. In addition, at this stage, the counsellor also concludes the client's understanding of Islam and Sharia practices. In the fourth step, appropriate medicines are prescribed to the client based on the disease he is suffering from. This step can also encourage clients to improve themselves by studying Islam, *zikir*, repentance, prayer, avoiding immorality, and taking care of what they eat and drink, in addition to protecting themselves from being affected by diseases of the heart such as pride, *riak* (showing off)*, ujub* (vanity) and *takbur* (arrogance). Finally, the last step is evaluation, where the counsellor evaluates the client based on facial expressions, gestures, and conversation by observing the increasing faith, self-understanding, acceptance, and completing the demands of religion, piety, and submission. All these steps can help strengthen the spirituality of Muslims, especially in Malaysia.

A study related to validating the i-SC (Islamic Spiritual Counseling) module was performed by Saper et al. (2016). Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts and explanations about the process of "*Tazkiyat Al-nafs*", which is Al-Ghazali's model of self-purification, have been used as a basis and model to build the theoretical framework of i-SC. This study involved experts who currently serve at public Universities, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), counselling practitioners at private institutions, and counsellors at schools and Teachers' Institutes. In addition, this study was carried out in a national Secondary School located in Selangor. This study has successfully proven a comprehensive theoretical framework or basis through guidance and counselling approaches from an Islamic point of view. Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* was used as a basis for the construction of the theoretical framework. This model has also been used as a supporting theory in constructing i-SC. The study's findings successfully proved that Imam Al-Ghazali's thought about self-purification is complete because it places the gradual formation of the 'self' based on an individual's background.

Therefore, it is proven that Imam Al-Ghazali is a pioneer of Islamic psychologists who emphasise his views on personality development. In addition to being used as a reference and guidance for living, this study went on to prove that Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening spirituality, from psychological and mental points of view, can apply to all Muslims in Malaysia.

2. Research Methodology

According to the fourth edition of Kamus Dewan, a methodology is a system that includes methods and principles used in an activity or discipline (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2022). A methodology can also be described as a way, technique, method, pattern, rhythm, variety, and style. In general, a research methodology is carried out to ensure that the research obtains accurate information. Every research must use an appropriate research design to facilitate the search for information. Thus, the information obtained would be accurate and relevant. In this study, the methodology used to achieve its objective is the qualitative method. Every research effort requires data collection to meet each research problem. Data collection is a mechanism to obtain and analyse the information achieved in this research. In the qualitative method, the data collection process uses the library research method

by inspecting the journal articles and theses. Searching for library materials is a method for obtaining information in a study or research. Various types of references related to research on Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening Muslim spirituality from Malaysians' psychological and mental points of view are available. The references were obtained from books, journals, and theses. This study used an internet search to obtain additional information. This is because the internet network contributes vast knowledge through journals, related portals, online news, and articles uploaded on various websites. Among the websites accessed to obtain information for this study are the Mufti Department of Negeri Sembilan, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, etc. Internet resources allow the study to achieve more extensive and relevant information about the scope of the study.

3. Findings

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the aspect of Spirituality combines the terms Heart (*Al- Qalb*), Soul (*Al-Ruh*), Desire (*Al-Nafs*), and Mind (*Al-Aql*). The concept of man, according to Imam Al-Ghazali, can be studied in terms of spiritual elements consisting of the heart (al-qalb), the soul (al-ruh), the desire (al-nafs), and the intellect (al-aql). In the book Ihya', Imam Al-Ghazali has expressed the human theory based on the arguments of the Quran in Surah Sad verse 72:

"So when I created him (man), and breathed into

him of My (created) soul..."

Imam Al-Ghazali has also described the four terms of spiritual elements in explaining the human soul:

3.1 Soul *(Al-Ruh)*

The Soul is the pillar of life. Allah first created the soul before He created the human body (Metro Daily, 2019). Imam Al-Ghazali defines the soul into two parts, namely the physical and spiritual. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the spirit is a part of the human body that is a very subtle substance originating from the chamber of the human heart and is the centre for the movement of all blood vessels, which then move throughout the human body.

Humans can breathe, move, feel, see, hear, and do everything as blessed human being because of the existence of the soul and with the permission of Allah S.W.T (Muhyiddin & Muhammad, 2021). The second understanding of the soul is a subtle nature in humans that can know and understand everything. According to Mohamad al-Merbawi (2019), the soul is the actual human being, while the body is just a place for the soul. It is the soul that feels pleasure, misery, peace, restlessness, happiness, and misfortune. A person's happiness and tranquillity show that his soul is healthy, while his misery and suffering show that his soul is sick.

3.2 Heart *(Al-Qalb)*

In Arabic, the heart is called *al-qalb*. The term *al-qalb* is found in 130 places in 45 surahs and 112 verses with various definitions and meanings, according to the context of the verse (Mohamad Razif, 2019). Imam Al-Ghazali details the heart (*al-qalb*) into two meanings.

The first meaning is that the heart is a lump of flesh that forms in the left breast (the physical heart). Second, it refers to a more implicit and subtle spiritual meaning (the spiritual heart). It is interconnected with the first understanding of the heart. Nevertheless, Al-Ghazali emphasises the second meaning of the heart (Fathurrozi, 2020). When this heart functions normally, human life will be better and follow its original nature because it has an *ilahiyah-rabbaniyah* (divine) nature (Yudiani, 2013).

3.3 Desire *(Al-Nafs)*

Desire also has two meanings. First, it includes the meaning of anger and lust in human beings. The word desire is always used in Sufism to refer to the reprehensible qualities of humans. That is the reason the Sufis often urge man to fight the feeling of lust (*mujahadah al-nafs*) which weaken carnality. The second definition of desire is the subtle one (*al-latifah*), which has been stated as the essence of man, the human being itself, and its essence, which can be described differently according to the situation. If the desire is in a state of calm under the command of Allah S.W.T and away from the influence and temptation of lust, it is called the tranquil self or soul (*al-nafsu al-mutma'innah*). Based on the words of Allah S.W.T which means:

"Oh calm desire. Return to your Lord with peace and contentment.

So enter My (righteous) servants, enter My paradise."(Al-Fajr 89: 27-30).

The first desire cannot be described as returning to Allah S.W.T because of its nature of distancing itself from Allah S.W.T, which includes being under the influence of the devil. If the level of order is not perfect (as in *al-nafsu al-mutma'innah*), but the desire is in a state of being driven and resisting the urge of lust, it is called the reproaching self (*al-nafsu al-lawwamah*). However, if there is no fight, but instead submit to the will of desire and temptation of the devil, it is called the inciting self or the soul that orders or obeys evil (*al-nafsu al-ammarah bi alsu'*).

3.4 Mind *(Al-aql)*

The Mind is the main item created by Allah S.W.T. The mind is the place where knowledge is inspired or implemented. Imam Al-Ghazali belongs to the group of people who greatly appreciate the development of the mind. Al-Ghazali explains that the source of knowledge comes from the mind, just like fruits come from a tree, light comes from the rays of the sun, and the sense of sight comes with help from the eye (Naufal, 2015). Furthermore, Al-Ghazali also details the definition of the mind into four parts. First, the mind is the attribute or characteristic that can distinguish between two creatures created by Allah, namely humans and animals. Second, the mind can also be categorised as the knowledge that turns a child into almost puberty (*mumayyiz*) so that he can distinguish between good and bad and between possible and unlikely events. The third is that it is the knowledge obtained as a result of the experiences that each individual has. Fourth, the mind occurs at the peak of the power of *tahammus* (spirit) or instinct to know the consequences of all problems and prevent excessive desire as a controller of lust (Fathurrozi, 2020). The presence of the mind allows humans to think more rationally and systematically.

3.5 Imam Al-Ghazali's Thoughts Regarding the Process of Al-Ghazali's Self-Purification Model *(Tazkiyat Al-Nafs)*

The development of human capital here means lifelong efforts to nurture and develop the potential of human existence into a productive potential and possess a strong sense of belief in the pillars of faith as well as being able to promote the goodness and well-being of life under Islamic Shari'a. Human capital development can be seen from two important aspects in life, namely spiritual development and material development, that need to be discussed comprehensively. This balanced and integrated development is an important factor for human survival in facing life's challenges.

The connection between the development of human capital and the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can be seen when a person pays serious attention to the goals he needs to achieve, where these goals are very important to realise the human being as a civilised human being according to Islam (Mohd Zahid, 2019).

Che Zarrina and Nor Azlinah (2019) argued that the determination of faith, integrity of the soul, and moral excellence are formulated in terms of spiritual development as an important aspect in the development of human capital, alongside other elements such as physical development and strengthening the mind.

Therefore, to achieve personal excellence, the most important method suggested by the Sufis is the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). There are at least four processes in applying the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* to the development of human capital.

The first process is to increase faith. The integrity of this faith is the core of human capital development (Che Zarrina & Nor Azlinah, 2019). Applying the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* at an early stage can increase self-confidence. Lack of faith in Allah, angels, prophets, the hereafter, and *qada and qadar* (fate and destiny) due to ignorance and negligence will drag people into spiritual weakness and further push them into the valley of destruction. With an intact faith, a person can create the ability and human identity to control behaviour to be in line with Islamic Shari'a (Salleh et al., 2015). This coincides with the function of religion itself, which includes a relationship with God. By intensifying faith and worship, it will create fear of Allah S.W.T (Muhammad Husni et al., 2012). Thus, fear acts as self-monitoring for a person through behavioural control.

The second process is behavioural control. In short, this behaviour control process contains two main dimensions, namely *tazkiyah al-nafs*, which are *al-takhalli* and *al-tahalli*. *Al-takhalli* refers to the process of purifying oneself from reprehensible qualities, while *al-tahalli* is the process of adorning oneself with noble and praiseworthy qualities (Yusof & Sari, 2017).

The third process is the formation of morality. The formation of morality in a person starts from the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs*. Al-Ghazali defines morality as a trait that is embedded in the soul, by which actions come easily without the need for thought and vision. In addition, applying *tazkiyah al-nafs* can also motivate people to choose the best and highest value course of action in the eyes of Allah S.W.T and indirectly develop commendable morals in people.

The fourth process is the birth of a complete human being. The process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* can build the compositional structure of the human body that has a natural personality and nature based on the Islamic framework. *Tazkiyah al-nafs* is an alternative to increase human motivation in implementing Sharia law because a firm belief in Allah S.W.T will lead to the proper implementation of His laws. The process begins with the application of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, which has the effect of increasing faith, then conducting self-control through behavioral control and forming commendable morals that will produce a perfect human being, holding fast to the Islamic faith and being able to manage things wisely.

Tazkiyah al-nafs involves the transition from a dirty, polluted, and tainted self to a pure self. From a heart that does not follow the rules of the Sharia to a heart that obeys the demands of the Sharia, from a disbelieving heart to a believing heart, from a hypocrite to be honest, trustworthy, and with integrity, the nature of revenge is replaced by forgiveness, humility, trust, control, and so on. Therefore, the *tazkiyah al-nafs* method needs to be seriously dignified in the development of human capital in an integrated manner, followed by some practical methods and spiritual practices. By trying to integrate the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* with current theories and techniques, issues related to human capital from all aspects of behaviour, emotions, and spirituality can be dealt with comprehensively.

3.6 Imam Al-Ghazali's Approach Through Five Steps That Can Help Individuals Find Solutions to Problems Related to Emotional and Mental Health

Imam Al-Ghazali uses a counselling approach based on human characteristics. Allah the All Mighty states:

> "Except those who believe and do righteous deeds and bequeath (advise) with truth and bequeath with patience" (Surah Al-Ashr. 103:3)

Imam Al-Ghazali's approach is based on human nature. The emergence of Imam Al-Ghazali's theory once again gives a positive effect on negotiation according to Islamic perspectives. Imam Al-Ghazali's counselling theory does not use animals or humans as role models in its application. The appropriate Islamic counselling techniques include wisdom, good advice, good discussion, piety, repentance, reflection, and prayer. The books or arguments published by Imam Al-Ghazali can be found in *Ihyak Ululmuddin*. Meanwhile, Imam Al-Ghazali's techniques are widely used in Sufism.

Al-Ghazali's philosophy of thought based on the Al-Quran and Al-Hadith became the main source of reference for Al-Ghazali's Psycho-spiritual Counseling Theory. This theory focuses on three basic things, namely the philosophy of humans, assumptions about humans, and counseling techniques used. This theoretical philosophy states that the spiritual aspect of humans helps them return to God and move towards reaching the level of a perfect human being (Yatimah and Mohd Tajudin, 2011).

Overall, Imam Al-Ghazali's approach can be summarised by the following FIVE steps:
Step 1: Introduction and development of relationships
This step involves building relationships, praying, promising, and submitting in addition to discussing Islamic concepts (life goals, obligations, laws of conduct, *halal* and *haram*, calamity, patience and gratitude, the attributes of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, according to the needs of each case).
Step 2: Self-knowledge and development of life goals
This step also involves the exploration of the client's criteria, which leads to problems based on observation, conversation, and hypothetical questions, as well as guiding the client to do self-reflection in implementing the Sharia. Here, the client will recognise his carelessness and shortcomings.

Step 3: Identify the cause and type of problem

This step involves a combination of steps one and two, which is the basis of exploring the cause and type of problem. The counsellor and the client need to reach a common understanding about the client and his problems, along with the formulation of the problem involving the understanding of Islam and the client's appreciation or practice of Sharia.

Step 4: Give suitable medicine with the type of disease identified

This step allows the client to improve himself through learning Islamic knowledge, improving practice, repenting, zikr, praying, behaving properly in a social environment, staying away from immorality, controlling diet, taking care of the eyes and speech, and avoiding diseases of the heart such as pride, *riyak, ujub,* and *takbur*.

Step 5: Evaluation

This last step involves the counsellor's assessment of the client based on the client's transformation through facial expressions, gestures, and speech in terms of increasing faith, self-understanding, contentment with misfortune, high self-confidence, implementing religious demands, piety, and *tawakal (submission)*.

In conclusion, Imam Al-Ghazali's approach is the latest tool that should be explored and studied by counselling practitioners to strengthen the spirituality of Muslims. This approach is a paradigm shift to counselling services in Malaysia, which has been dependent on Western counselling approaches for the past six decades.

3.7 Al-Ghazali's Spiritual Model Through the Role of the Mind in Awakening the Heart Through the Search for Knowledge that Leads to the Creator

Imam Al-Ghazali believes that a person can reach a high level of emotional intelligence when he can understand himself, believe in God, believe in the afterlife, and understand the concept of nature. Yatimah and Mohd Tajudin (as stated in Abdul Rashid et al., 2021) asserted that the elements of *qalb* (heart), *roh* (soul), and *nafs* (desire) are elements that influence the inner nature of humans while *'aql* (mind) is an element that affects their external nature. However, the most important element that affects human behaviour is the *qalb* (heart). According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the heart in this approach is the heart that always binds itself to the rules and demands of religion instead of the heart that is consumed by destructive passions. Although the heart is like the king of the body and the leader in all forms of human life, the heart also has a strong bond and relationship with its creator, which is Allah S.W.T.

A good heart is a heart that always remembers the greatness of Allah S.W.T., does what is lawful and leaves what is unlawful, and avoids things that are *syubhah* (doubtful). Meanwhile, a broken heart is a heart that is easily influenced by desire and Satan's incitement which makes it easy to get caught up in disobeying Allah S.W.T and abandoning all His orders (Mohd Salleh & Mohd Haridi, 2016).

In the Al-Quran, there are also 13 places where Allah asks 'Afalaa Ta'qiluun,' which means 'Do you not use your mind?' (Hafiz, 2020). As one example, Allah states:

> Meaning: "And He is the one who created and developed you on earth, and to Him you will be gathered. And it is He who gives life and causes death, and it is He who determines the change of night and day. Thus, do you not want to use your mind?" (Surah Al-Mu'minun: 79-80).

This verse is clear proof of faith for all Muslims and ends with the question of whether we, who are perfectly created as humans, use our minds to understand God's statement.

Imam Al-Ghazali also states in his book that a mind that always remembers Allah will produce a pure heart that can control our desire, which contributes to positive behaviour. On the other hand, a mind that does not remember Allah will produce a dark heart and create uncontrollable passions that display negative behaviour (Musa, 2015).

Allah also states in Surah Al-Mulk, verse 10:

> Meaning: And they (disbelievers) said: "If we had listened and used our mind, we would not have been among the inhabitants of Hell."

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that the mind has a significant role in judging matters of right or wrong, controlling a person's thoughts, emotions, and mentality to continuously be in contentment with Allah S.W.T. In addition, the interaction between the heart, desire, and mind is also very important in doing something because from a pure heart, with the appropriate level of desire, a person will be trained to become an individual with morals and a noble personality.

3.8 Imam Al-Ghazali's Approach in Explaining the Concept of Mental Health Based on the Principles of *Riyadhah* and *Mujahadah*

Al-Ghazali combines various teaching methods in his approach to education. It is based on a balanced system between rational ability and divine power, reasoning ability and mystical experience that gives the mind room to work, and logical deductive thinking and human experience. In essence, the method used is based on the principles of *riyadhah* and *mujahadah* (Hasan, 2017).

Hasan (2017) also explained *riyadhah,* which means training. *Riyadhah* is a spiritual exercise to purify the soul, psychologically and mentally, by fighting self-desires. This process is done by cleaning or emptying the soul of everything except Allah, then adorning it with zikr, worship, piety, and high morality. Actions that are part of *riyadhah* include less eating, less sleeping to prepare for night prayers, avoiding useless talk and solitude, that is, avoiding people who are full of sins, anything to avoid God's anger. The purpose of *riyadhah* is to control oneself, both body and soul, so that the spirit remains pure. *Riyadhah* must be done earnestly and voluntarily. Riyadh is a person's effort to do all these things to avoid committing evil against mankind and other creatures, especially against Allah S.W.T. *Riyadhah* is a medium for self-improvement. According to Al-Ghazali, *riyadhah* can be performed by always controlling oneself, leading to enlightenment and appreciation of the presence and existence of Allah S.W.T (Hasan, 2017).

Mujahadah comes from the Arabic word *"jahada",* which means earnest or struggle (jihad). *Mujahadah* is the starting point for humans before achieving a goal or purpose in their lives. *Mujahadah* is also categorised as an inner struggle that aims to get closer to Allah S.W.T. For example, *Mujahadah al-nafs* is a struggle to fight desire and avoid all forbidden acts, negative attitudes, and behaviours triggered by lust. In more depth, *mujahadah* is a serious effort to fight lust, including a desire that goes beyond limits to form a pure and clean soul in the presence of Allah S.W.T. (Hasan, 2017).

A person who is *mujahadah* has the right to obtain a variety of genuine knowledge about Allah and His greatness because they are likened to a glass that is easy to accept anything holy. Allah states in Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 69:

> Meaning: "And those who strive for (seeking) Our pleasure, We will surely guide them Our ways. And verily, Allah is truly with those who do good."

Imam Al-Ghazali also asserts: "Allah will send guidance to anyone who performs jihad." This means that the individual who obtains the most guidance is the individual who does the most jihad. In addition, obligatory jihad is jihad against lust, the devil, enemies of Islam, and hypocrites and jihad against evil and cruelty (Hasan, 2017). Allah also says in Surah Al-Maidah, verse 35:

> Meaning: "O believers, be mindful of Allah and seek the path that brings you closer to Him and strive in His path so that you may prosper."

It is apparent that for anyone earnest in jihad to fight against the five groups above, Allah will show him the path of contentment and send him to the gates of heaven. On the other hand, anyone who leaves jihad, his life will be lonely and empty without receiving guidance from Allah S.W.T (Hasan, 2017). Therefore, it is evident that Imam Al-Ghazali is very optimistic about all the changes in the behaviour and actions of humans. Imam Al-Ghazali explains that a person's morality can always be improved because the human soul always has room for virtue.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the issues that have been debated, Imam Al-Ghazali's approach to strengthening the spirituality of Muslims, from the psychological and mental point of view of Malaysians, has become a major solution for every problem that has arisen in society. For example, Islam is a religion that focuses on faith and revelation in bringing forth the sincere nature of each individual. This can help Malaysians deal with the problem of depression and extreme emotional stress more effectively and rationally.

Next, Imam al-Ghazali sums up that all aspects of spirituality, such as desire, mind, and heart, are Allah's secret, which is spiritual and incorporeal. In *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Imam Al-Ghazali discusses human attitudes and actions which are defined as *suluk* or morals. *Suluk* and morals are not external behaviours that can be observed through the naked eye. Rather, it is a spiritual behaviour that affects all human actions. In fact, every human being should understand the true function of the heart, mind, soul, and desire within themselves. When an individual has a good understanding of the actual function of each element, the person's actions will be more orderly and cautious after

understanding the consequences of neglecting or emphasising a certain function. For example, when an individual emphasises desire in every matter, the heart will become dirty and dark.

In addition, the general public should learn the knowledge of Sufism found in Al-Ghazali's book, as stated by Yusof (2012). According to Kautsar (as stated by Yusof, 2012), "Al-Ghazali's Sufism is suitable for common people while Ibn Al-Arabi's Sufism is suitable for those who have reached the highest level." Thus, selecting Al-Ghazali as the best figure in human capital development is very relevant. People who have lost their spiritual values need to be given proper training through the matters emphasised by Al-Ghazali in the aspect of human capital development. Al-Ghazali's contribution in this aspect has become a reference throughout the world until now, indicating that we should return to the precious knowledge that has been left behind. Today, human capital development is not a new field of knowledge anymore. However, due to various issues, it must accommodate the needs of modern society. Nevertheless, studies on development training and development models are still lacking. Studies on development models should be pursued so that improvements can be made to the models. The same can be said about the development model of previous scholars, which basically needs more exposure to the entire globalised society. Based on Al-Ghazali's model, this study is expected to display the idea of human capital development inclusively and effectively.

Results of the study found that *riyadhah al-nafs* based on Al-Ghazali's model, which includes discussions about strengthening faith, improving worship, and applying the qualities of *mahmudah*, was implemented in counselling sessions at the Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council Counseling Center (PK MAINS). The parallel findings of the questionnaire completed by the client and the interview with the counsellor explain the importance of applying Al-Ghazali's *riyadhah al-nafs* in counselling to strengthen the counselling services. In the counselling session, *mahmudah* (praiseworthy) attributes, such as patience, acceptance, gratitude, and submissive, are mostly emphasised. In addition, it is worth noting that almost all the attributes of *mahmudah* mentioned by Al-Ghazali were applied during the counselling sessions at PK MAINS.

Furthermore, learning about self is essential to form good behaviour, a holistically mature mind, and a commendable personality in each individual. A holistic approach to personality development is not a new field of knowledge, but it must be in line with the needs of today's society. The knowledge of self should be based on Al-Quran, Al-Sunnah, *ijma'* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy), and *ijtihad* (juristic reasoning). The purpose of 'self' education is also to create an institution of community equipped with high religious and moral values. This is because all of these elements can produce a society that is united, polite, and respectful to each other. Self-education may not only be obtained from a formal class, it can be learned regardless of place, time, and era.

The results of the study concluded that Imam Al-Ghazali's moral development method is very relevant and significant and should be applied in the process of raising children, starting when they are young.

This goes well with the Malay proverb, *'melentur buluh biarlah dari rebungnya'* meaning that good values should be cultivated at an early age. Almost all suggested methods have been applied and obtained a high score, except for *mujahadah*, which is the suggestion 'to fight desire' that only achieved a moderate score of 3.91. This may occur because the schools are more likely to use other methods. Here, we can see that along with the development of modern technology, Western countries have a hidden agenda in bringing down and weakening unity among Muslims today. This matter needs to be seriously taken into account by every group in the Muslim community. Normally, the development of the economy and technology, as well as the political system, has become an essential thing to consider. However, we must never forget that the core of balanced development is the element of humanity itself.

After all, as human beings and as citizens of a highly civilised society, we should be aware that the life of every human being is based on peace and tranquillity as prescribed by every religion on this earth. As Muslims, we need to study Islam in more detail and depth. For example, when we learn the interpretation of the Qur'an and practice the teachings of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad SAW, it can create a noble personality in a person and deter him from falling into evil, which can ultimately destroy his life in an instant. We should also respect each other's rights and always make religion the central reference point in every aspect of our life to produce successful people in this world and the hereafter.

Acknowledgement

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