

Islamic Views on the Role of Philosophy in the Formation of Science and Ethics According to Al-Ghazali's Thought

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Philosophy, science, and ethics are three essential pillars of the Islamic intellectual tradition. However, in modern practice, a disconnect between science and ethics often occurs, giving rise to various moral deviations. Al-Ghazali's thought offers an integrative framework that combines rationality, spirituality, and morality as the foundation for developing knowledgeable and moral individuals.

Aims: This study aims to analyze the role of philosophy in the formation of science and ethics according to an Islamic perspective based on Al-Ghazali's thoughts, and to explain how the integration of the two can be a solution to contemporary ethical problems.

Methods: The study employed a qualitative design with a library research approach. Data were obtained through analysis of Al-Ghazali's works and relevant classical and contemporary literature, then analyzed using content analysis methods.

Result: The research results show that philosophy plays a crucial role in guiding reason to understand the truth through a proper scientific process, while simultaneously strengthening ethics as a moral foundation. Al-Ghazali accepted aspects of philosophy that were in harmony with Islam, particularly logic, epistemology, and morality, while rejecting those that contradicted his creed. The integration of philosophy, science, and ethics is reflected in his works such as *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and *Al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*.

Conclusion: Al-Ghazali's thinking asserts that knowledge without ethics is empty, while ethics without knowledge is unsound. Philosophy serves as a bridge to harmonize the two through the integration of reason and revelation, thus serving as a foundation for educational development and character formation in the modern era.

Keywords: Islamic Philosophy, Science, Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and ethics occupy a central position in human life, especially from an Islamic perspective which places both as the foundation for the formation of character and the quality of civilization (Deslina et al., 2024; Harahap & Salminawati, 2022; Wahyuningsih, 2022). The first revelation that ordered humans to read shows that knowledge is the path to self-knowledge, strengthening faith, and distinguishing between truth and falsehood. However, science cannot stand alone without ethics as a guide to behavior; someone who has high knowledge will be meaningless if it is not followed by moral behavior (Muktapa, 2021; S. Ramadhan et al., 2023; Santi et al., 2022). Therefore, studying the relationship between science and ethics is important as a basis for understanding how humans should live meaningful and responsible lives before God and others.

In social reality, these ideal principles are often not reflected in practice. Many highly educated individuals engage in unethical behavior, such as corruption and abuse of power. Data from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) shows that the majority of corrupt individuals come from academic circles, including undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral graduates. This fact illustrates a disconnect between the knowledge acquired and the morality that should accompany that knowledge. This phenomenon indicates that the system of knowledge formation in modern society has not fully instilled the ethical values taught in Islam, necessitating an in-depth study of the causes and solutions to this imbalance.

Amid these problems, an important opportunity presents itself to re-examine how Islam integrates science and ethics through a philosophical framework. In the Islamic tradition, philosophy is not only a rational activity, but also a means of reflecting on the purpose of creation, understanding human nature, and discovering the meaning of life (Haryadi et al., 2024; AR Ramadhan et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2025). When combined with Islamic values, philosophy serves to purify ways of thinking while strengthening morality (Durasas, 2023; Dzahabie et al., 2025; Ulfana & Ma'arif, 2024). Therefore, examining the role of philosophy in the formation of science and ethics is relevant as an effort to rediscover the harmony between reason and spiritual values in shaping the ideal human being according to Islam.

Despite the extensive body of literature on Al-Ghazali, a significant research gap remains. Previous studies have predominantly adopted fragmented perspectives, focusing either on his critique of philosophy, his theological positions or his Sufi orientation. While these studies have provided valuable insights, they largely treat epistemology, ethics and philosophy as distinct fields. What remains under-explored is Al-Ghazali's systematic positioning of philosophy as an integrative framework that actively shapes the structure of knowledge and the formation of ethics (Ali et al., 2025; Artika et al., 2023; Hamzah et al., 2024). In other words, existing research has not adequately explored the functional role of philosophy in reconciling epistemological validity and moral accountability within Al-Ghazali's thought.

This study fills this gap by offering a theoretical reconstruction of al-Ghazali's philosophy as a unifying bridge between science and ethics rather than merely as an object of critique or historical debate. Through an analysis of Al-Ghazali's seminal works, including *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, this article reveals that Al-Ghazali did not dismiss philosophy outright, but rather adapted it to promote ethical refinement, intellectual integrity and spiritual fulfilment (Abdurrasyid et al., 2024; Assyabani, 2020; Nugraha et al., 2024). This integrative reading is the study's main theoretical contribution, setting it apart from prior research that isolates Al-Ghazali's epistemology or ethics without examining their philosophical interdependence.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze how Al-Ghazali's thought explains the role of philosophy in the formation of knowledge and ethics. This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution in the form of a more comprehensive understanding of the integration of rationality, spirituality, and morality in the Islamic tradition, as well as a practical contribution as a reference in the development of education that prioritizes harmony between reason and morality. Thus, this study not only emphasizes the importance of philosophy in Islam but also offers a conceptual approach to addressing ethical problems that arise in modern society.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design with a library research approach. All analysis is conducted through searching, reading, and interpreting sources (Fadli, 2021; Nasir et al., 2023; Nurdiana & Usman, 2025). relevant literature, including classic books on Islamic philosophy, the works of Al-Ghazali, and contemporary academic references discussing Islamic philosophy, ethics, and epistemology. This qualitative literature research focuses on content analysis to understand the main ideas, arguments, and relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts regarding the role of philosophy in the formation of science and ethics.

Participant

Participants in this research took the form of a literature review, not directly involving human participants. "Participants" in this research refer to the texts and scientific works being analyzed, especially authoritative works on Islamic philosophy and Al-Ghazali's thought such as Maqasid al-Falasifah, Tahafut al-Falasifah, Ihya' Ulumuddin, as well as relevant supporting literature.

Population and the methods of sampling

The research population consisted of all literature discussing Islamic philosophy, Islamic epistemology, Islamic ethics, and Al-Ghazali's thought. Given the nature of library research, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves deliberately selecting sources based on scientific relevance, authority, and direct relevance to the research topic.

Instrumentation (sample of questions, scoring method, and psychometric properties)

Because this study did not use quantitative instruments, there were no questionnaires, scoring systems, or psychometric validity-reliability analyses. The primary instrument was the researcher herself as the data collector, reader, and analyzer, assisted by documentation instruments in the form of:

- Reading/reference list,
- Literature notes,
- Thematic coding techniques to identify patterns of philosophical, scientific, and ethical concepts according to Al-Ghazali.

Instrument

The main research instruments are literature documents that are systematically analyzed. These documents include:

1. Books by Al-Ghazali (primary),
2. Islamic philosophy books and journals (secondary),
3. Conceptual data on Islamic science, ethics, and philosophy.

Supporting instruments:

- Content analysis techniques,
- Thematic recording,
- Classification of concepts.

This instrument is used to extract the main concepts related to the nature of philosophy, the position of science, and the formation of ethics according to Al-Ghazali and to relate them to contemporary problems.

Procedures and if relevant, the time frame

The research procedure was carried out in four stages:

1. Data collection
Researchers explored classical and modern literature, Al-Ghazali's primary works, and other supporting literature.
2. Data Organization and Categorization
The literature was selected based on relevance, then coded according to themes: philosophy, science, ethics, epistemology, and spirituality.
3. Data analysis
Each concept is analyzed using a content analysis approach and an interpretive approach.
4. Synthesis of Findings
Key concepts are linked to answer the research focus regarding the role of philosophy in the formation of science and ethics.

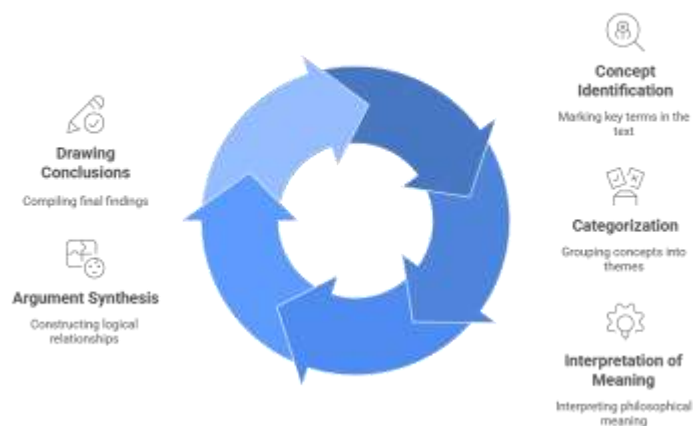
The implementation time is not regulated by field interactions, but follows the literature review process until data saturation is achieved.

Analysis plan

The analysis was carried out using content analysis with the following steps:

1. Concept Identification, marking key terms such as philosophy, science, ethics, reason, revelation, and morality in the text.
2. Categorization, grouping concepts into main themes (the role of philosophy, the concept of science, the relationship between science and ethics, Al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophy).
3. Interpretation of Meaning, interpreting the philosophical meaning based on the context of the text and Al-Ghazali's framework of thought.
4. Argument Synthesis, establishing logical relationships between philosophy, science, and ethics as theoretical constructs.
5. Drawing Conclusions, compiling final findings related to the contribution of philosophy to the formation of science and ethics according to Al-Ghazali.

Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Analysis Cycle



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Table 1.1 Findings

Aspect	Key Findings
The Role of Philosophy in Islam	Philosophy teaches humans to think deeply, know themselves, and understand the purpose of creation; it becomes a means of getting closer to God.
The Position of Ethics in Islam	Knowledge without ethics is worthless; ethics is the moral foundation that saves humanity from error and the misuse of knowledge.
Al-Ghazali's Views on Philosophy	Al-Ghazali criticized aspects of philosophy that contradicted creed but accepted parts of philosophy that supported faith, logic, and morality.
Supporting Works	<i>Ihya' Ulumuddin</i> , Maqasid al-Falasifah, Al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal, Mi'yar al-Ilmi, and other works discussing logic, ethics, and epistemology.

The research results show that philosophy plays a central role in shaping human thought patterns from an Islamic perspective. Based on the text analysis in the thesis, philosophy is understood as a means for in-depth thinking, self-awareness, and understanding the purpose of human creation in the universe. The findings in the abstract emphasize that philosophy is not merely a rational study, but also a path to drawing closer to God and guiding humans to understand the truth through a structured scientific process. Thus, philosophy serves as a gateway for the integration of reason, revelation, and spiritual awareness.

Furthermore, the study found that ethics play a crucial role in determining the value and quality of knowledge in Islam. This thesis emphasizes that a knowledgeable person is worthless without good ethics, as ethics guides the misuse of knowledge. Ethics, in Islam, encompasses moral responsibility, truth, obligation, and rules of conduct that must be adhered to. This emphasizes that the development of knowledge must always go hand in hand with character development, as ethics serves as a safeguard to ensure that knowledge is used for righteous purposes.

In terms of his thought, research shows that Al-Ghazali held a unique perspective on philosophy. Although he famously criticized philosophers in his *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (Theology of the Philosophy).

Discussion

Research findings demonstrating the integration of philosophy, science, and ethics in Al-Ghazali's thought have important implications for the development of modern Islamic education. The finding that philosophy can guide human reason toward self-knowledge, understanding the purpose of creation, and aligning knowledge with morality demonstrates the urgent need for strengthening the philosophical dimension in today's education system (Basuki et al., 2023; Hasibuan & Purba, 2024; Octaviana & Ramadhani, 2021). By placing philosophy as the foundation for forming a mindset, science is no longer understood merely as a collection of facts or rational methods, but rather as a path to developing wisdom and moral responsibility (Ar & Ismail, 2024; Bahri et al., 2025; Muzakir et al., 2024). This implication is very relevant to addressing contemporary issues, especially the phenomenon of misuse of knowledge by highly educated individuals, so that Al-Ghazali's approach offers an integrative model between intellectual intelligence and spiritual intelligence.

This research's contribution lies in remapping the position of philosophy in Islam through the perspective of Al-Ghazali, who has often been misunderstood as merely a critic of philosophy. The analysis shows that Al-Ghazali actually utilized logic, epistemological reflection, and ethical

values to construct a more balanced framework of thought between reason and revelation (Fadlullah & Hidayah, 2020; Renaldi, 2025; Selvia, 2024). This research offers a theoretical contribution by strengthening the argument that philosophy is not in conflict with Islam but can instead be an instrument for deepening knowledge and upholding ethics. Practically, this study can serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in developing curricula that place philosophy and ethics as pillars of student character development.

In practice, the findings have significant implications for education and ethical development in modern societies. International discussions on character education, professional ethics and value-based learning are increasingly recognising the limitations of purely technical or competency-based models. By rearticulating Al-Ghazali's integrative approach, this study provides a philosophical basis for educational curricula that balance cognitive excellence with ethical and spiritual development. In professional and public life, this framework can inform ethical governance, scientific responsibility and leadership development, by reinforcing the idea that expertise without a moral compass can cause social harm.

However, the study is limited by its reliance on textual and conceptual analysis. While it successfully situates Al-Ghazali's thought within global philosophical discourse, it does not empirically examine the implementation of such an integrative epistemological model in contemporary educational or institutional settings. Future international research could extend this framework through comparative studies with other Islamic philosophers, or by conducting empirical investigations into curriculum design, ethical training programmes and professional education informed by Islamic epistemology.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that philosophy plays a fundamental role in the formation of science and ethics according to Al-Ghazali's thought. Philosophy is not viewed as something contrary to Islam, but as a means to strengthen reason, understand the purpose of human creation, and develop ethical awareness in behavior. Al-Ghazali positions philosophy as a vital part of the process of discovering truth, as long as it remains within the corridors of revelation and faith. Through the integration of rationality and spirituality, philosophy becomes the foundation that enables knowledge to be used responsibly and meaningfully.

Furthermore, this research confirms that the relationship between science and ethics is an inseparable whole. Ethics serves as a guide to prevent science from leading humans to abuse of power, while science serves as a means to a deeper understanding of moral values. Al-Ghazali's thinking provides a strong foundation for developing a holistic concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes not only the mastery of knowledge but also the formation of morals. Thus, this research provides a basis for developing an educational system that places philosophy, science, and ethics in a harmonious and mutually reinforcing unity.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

HA contributed as the main author who designed the theoretical framework and conducted literature analysis, while S. provided academic direction and review of Islamic philosophical concepts, and DA strengthened the methodological study and consistency of analysis so that the research was structured systematically and comprehensively.

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