

The Importance of Balancing the Knowledge of *Fardhu 'Ain* and *Fardhu Kifayah* According to Imam Al-Ghazali

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ABSTRACT

The rapid changes in the era and the development of the modern world often result in an imbalance in prioritizing the types of *fardhu kifayah* and *fardhu 'ain* knowledge. Many educational institutions prioritize the science of *Fardhu kifayah*, often neglecting the *Fardhu 'ain* aspect. This study aims to explore Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the importance of balance between the science of *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah* in the context of Islamic education. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study, which examines the works of Imam Al-Ghazali, especially those related to education and science. The results of the study show that Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the balance of *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah* knowledge are very relevant to the challenges of today's Islamic education. In a modern context, Islamic education needs to integrate these two types of knowledge in order to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has a noble character and is responsible for building society. This study suggests that the current Islamic education curriculum integrates religious and worldly knowledge, strengthens character education, and utilizes technology as a means to achieve a balance of knowledge. Thus, Islamic education can form a generation that excels in the fields of science and morals and plays an active role in the development of the community and civilization.

Keywords: *Balance of Knowledge, Islamic Education, Fardhu 'ain, Fardhu kifayah, Imam Al-Ghazali's Thoughts*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to human life. In the process, education has an important role in the socialization of values to students. Thus, it is necessary to carry out a quality education system in accordance with the development of the times so that education is able to answer the needs of society in its time.¹ Islam, as a religion of rahmatan lil'alamin, views knowledge

¹ Said Aqil Husain Al-Munawwar, *Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Qur'ani* (Jakarta Selatan: Ciputat Press, 2011), 26.

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as important, as the first verse that was revealed discusses the importance of reading in line with knowledge as stated by Allah SWT:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (1) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (2) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (3) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (4) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (5)

Meaning: "Read, 'O Prophet, ' in the Name of your Lord Who created—created humans from a clinging clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by the pen—taught humanity what they knew not." (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5).

In this verse, Allah has ordered to know Allah SWT first through the revelations that were revealed to him. In this verse, it is also made clear that knowledge is crucial to believing in Allah SWT, since human creation is to worship Him. Islam, as a perfect religion, has established life guidelines that cover all aspects of life, both individual and social. In this scope, the division of knowledge into *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* is one of the important concepts in Islamic education. Imam Al-Ghazali, a renowned scholar of the 11th century, paid special attention to this division in his works, especially in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. According to him, the balance between *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* is essential to create individuals who not only fulfill their personal obligations to Allah but also contribute to the welfare of the community.²

Fardu 'ain includes obligations that must be fulfilled by each individual, such as prayer, fasting, and basic religious knowledge.³ Meanwhile, *Fardu kifayah* includes collective obligations that, if fulfilled by some Muslims, then others are not burdened with sin, such as medical science, economics, and national defense.⁴ However, in the midst of changing times and the development of the modern world, there is an imbalance in prioritizing these two types of knowledge. Many educational institutions focus more on *Fardu kifayah* knowledge, so that the *Fardu 'ain* aspect is often neglected. This raises concerns about the formation of a balanced character of the Muslim generation.⁵ Furthermore, the implementation of Al-Ghazali's thoughts regarding *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* education also often faces challenges in the context of the modern world. Technological developments, social change, and the dynamics of globalization require adjustments in the way this thinking is applied in formal and non-formal educational institutions.⁶

² Imam Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din* (Bandung: Marja, 2016), 54–55.

³ Mukhlis Nugraha, "Konsep Ilmu Fardu Ain Dan Fardu kifayah Dan Kepentingan Amalannya Dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam," *TAFHIM: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 10, no. 1 (2017): 103–49, <https://doi.org/10.56389/tafhim.vol10no1.4>.

⁴ Yuri Indri Yani, Hakmi Wahyudi, and Mhd Rafi'i Ma'arif Tarigan, "Pembagian Ilmu Menurut Al-Ghazali (Tela'ah Buku Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din)," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 19, no. 2 (March 5, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.24014/af.v19i2.11338>.

⁵ Achmad Reza Hutama Al-Faruqi, "Konsep Ilmu Dalam Islam," *Kalimah* 13, no. 2 (2015): 78–79, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v13i2.286>.

⁶ Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, *Priorities of Islamic Education in the Modern Era* (Kairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2015), 67.

Many studies have been conducted on the concept of knowledge based on Imam Al-Ghazali's views, including those of Baihaqi and Adesra,⁷ Sarjuni,⁸ Abdurrasyid et al.,⁹ dan Mubarak.¹⁰ All of these studies explain the concept of knowledge based on Imam Al-Ghazali's views with different methods and approaches. However, these studies have not specifically explained the types of *fardhu 'ain* and *fardhu kifayah* knowledge as conducted in this study. Studies that specifically discuss the two types of knowledge include those of Fadlilah and Safitri,¹¹ Taqiyuddin,¹² and Siregar and Husni.¹³ However, these three studies specifically emphasize that the two types of knowledge must be balanced and how the concept is relevant to the current Islamic education system as conducted by the researcher. This study aims to examine Imam Al-Ghazali's views on the importance of balance between *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah* knowledge and how this concept is relevant to the current Islamic education system. By understanding Al-Ghazali's perspective, it is hoped that this study can contribute to the development of a more holistic and balanced Islamic education curriculum.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. The aim is to deeply understand the concept of the importance of the balance of *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah* knowledge according to Imam Al-Ghazali, which is sourced from relevant academic sources. This study uses a library research approach as the main approach, which focuses on the analysis of secondary data in the form of the latest scientific journal articles, books, and relevant academic documents. Furthermore, the data is analyzed systematically to identify the balance of *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah* knowledge according to Imam Al-Ghazali, as well as the application of these values in the context of learning and curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of *Fardhu 'Ain* and *Fardhu Kifayah* Science According to Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Al-Ghazali, through his monumental work *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, emphasized that knowledge has a very high position in Islam. He divided knowledge into two main categories, namely *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah*,¹⁴ this division is based on the level of obligation in the life of a Muslim.

1. *Fardhu Ain* Knowledge

⁷ Achmad Baihaqi and Aisyah Anin Refani Adesra, "Penerapan Ilmu Menurut Ajaran Islam," *Sumbula: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya* 6, no. 2 (July 24, 2021): 213–25, <https://doi.org/10.32492/sumbula.v6i2.4560>.

⁸ Sarjuni Sarjuni, "Konsep Ilmu Dalam Islam Dan Implikasinya Dalam Praktik Kependidikan," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (August 29, 2018): 47–57, <https://doi.org/10.30659/jspi.v1i2.3208>.

⁹ Faris Abdurrasyid et al., "Filsafat Ilmu Pandangan Imam Al-Ghazali," *Pengertian: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia (PJPI)* 2, no. 2 (June 9, 2024): 393–406, <https://doi.org/10.61930/pjpi.v2i2.723>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Fadhlulloh Mubarak, "Ilmu Dalam Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali," *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 8, no. 1 (August 25, 2020): 22–38, <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2020.8.1.22-38>.

¹¹ Awwalul Fadlilah and Izza Safitri, "Implementasi Konsep Ilmu dalam Kitab *Ihya' 'Ulumiddin* di Madrasah Mu'allimin Mu'allimat Sunan Drajat Paciran Lamongan," *RABBAYANI: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Peradaban Islami* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 40–48.

¹² Muhammad Taqiyuddin, "Tradisi Intelektual *Fardhu Ain* Dan *Fardhu Kifayah* Pesantren Dalam Menanggulangi Terorisme," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (July 16, 2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v9i1.543>.

¹³ M. Taufik Iamail Siregar and Muhammad Husni, "Konsep Ilmu Dalam Pesantren: Antara *Fardhu 'Ain* Dan *Fardhu Kifayah*," *QOSIM: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial & Humaniora* 3, no. 1 (February 8, 2025): 424–33, <https://doi.org/10.61104/jq.v3i1.850>.

¹⁴ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum Al-Din*, 45–46.

Fardu 'ain knowledge is an individual obligation that must be learned and understood by every Muslim without exception. This includes the knowledge needed to carry out religious obligations, such as knowledge of *aqidah* (faith), *fiqh* (worship), and *akhlak* (ethics). Imam Al-Ghazali stated that studying *Fardu 'ain* knowledge is the basis that forms a servant's relationship with Allah. Without adequate understanding, a Muslim is at risk of carrying out his worship in a wrong or invalid manner.¹⁵

For example, a Muslim must understand the procedures for prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj according to the sharia. In addition, knowledge about the correct creed is also included in *Fardu 'ain* because it is the main foundation of a Muslim's faith. Imam Al-Ghazali strongly emphasized that the knowledge of *Fardu 'ain* is a priority because it is essential for human safety in the world and the hereafter. If someone does not learn or understand it, then he is at risk of living a life without the right guidance in both religious and worldly aspects, and someone can even fall into error in worship or even deviate from the true teachings of Islam.

2. *Fardu kifayah* Knowledge

Fardu kifayah is a science that must be mastered by some Muslims to meet the collective needs of society. If there is a person or group who has fulfilled this obligation, then the obligation is waived for others. However, if no one studies it, then the entire community will be sinful.¹⁶ According to Al-Ghazali, *Fardu kifayah* science includes various fields of worldly science that support the welfare of the community, such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, economics, politics, and military science. Imam Al-Ghazali did not limit *Fardu kifayah* only to worldly sciences but also included certain religious sciences that are needed for the sustainability of the community, such as the science of *qira'at*, *hadith*, and *tafsir*.¹⁷ Furthermore, Al-Ghazali emphasized that studying *Fardu kifayah* science is a form of contribution to the community. For example, medical science is needed to maintain the health of the community, while economics helps maintain the financial stability of the community.¹⁸ Thus, *Fardu kifayah* science has a very large role in building a strong Islamic civilization from time to time.

The Relationship Between *Fardhu 'Ain* and *Fardhu Kifayah*

Imam Al-Ghazali provides an in-depth view of the relationship between *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah*, which shows how important these two types of knowledge are in the life of a Muslim. *Fardu 'ain*, which consists of basic knowledge and practices that must be learned by every individual, serves to shape the character and faith of a Muslim. Meanwhile, *Fardu kifayah* relates to the collective knowledge needed to advance society, such as medicine, economics, and politics. According to Al-Ghazali, the complementarity between these two elements is very important. Without understanding and practicing *Fardu 'ain*, individuals may experience difficulties in living their daily lives, even in worship. Conversely, without mastering the knowledge of *Fardu kifayah*, society may be hampered in overcoming various challenges and social problems that exist. Therefore, both must be seen as two sides of the same coin in order to achieve the good of both individuals and society.¹⁹

¹⁵ Yani, Wahyudi, and Tarigan, "Pembagian Ilmu Menurut Al-Ghazali (Tela'ah Buku Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din)."

¹⁶ Anwar Sadat, "Fardhu Kifayah (Analisa, Sebuah Hukum, Pemikiran Ali, Prof K H Ali Yafie)" 9 (2011): 136.

¹⁷ MelliFera Lubis, "Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Islam Al-Ghazali Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Islamijah: Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (December 30, 2023): 226–51, <https://doi.org/10.30821/islamijah.v4i3.12845>.

¹⁸ Aidil Ridwan Daulay and Salminawati, "Integrasi Ilmu Agama Dan Sains Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Di Era Modern," *Journal of Social Research* 1, no. 3 (July 1, 2022): 716–24, <https://doi.org/10.55324/josr.v1i3.75>.

¹⁹ Nadia Nadia, Azhari Akmal Tarigan, and Rahmi Syahreza, "Solusi Al-Qur'an Terhadap Musykilat Al-Iqtisadiyyah: Kajian Tafsir Surah Al-Isra'," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 3 (December 31, 2024): 871–87, <https://doi.org/10.58401/takwiluna.v5i3.1839>.

Furthermore, Imam Al-Ghazali reminded Muslims not to get caught up in the tendency to focus on only one type of knowledge. For example, if a person only studies worldly knowledge and ignores religious knowledge, then the balance in his life will be disturbed. Likewise, if he focuses too much on religious knowledge without understanding the challenges of the times, the individual can be alienated from society. In the context of education, Al-Ghazali's suggestion that Muslim children learn the science of *Fardhu 'ain* first is very relevant. By having a strong foundation in faith and morals, they will be better able to face various challenges and apply these principles in broader knowledge. This solid foundation will help them to use collective knowledge in a way that is in accordance with Islamic teachings. Once children have mastered the science of *Fardhu 'ain*, they are ready to learn the science of *Fardhu kifayah* so that it can be applied in a broader context and make a positive contribution to society. Thus, a holistic educational process—combining religious knowledge and general knowledge—will ensure that individuals become not only devout Muslims but also useful and productive members of society.

The Importance of Balance Between *Fardhu 'Ain* and *Fardhu Kifayah*

Imam Al-Ghazali placed great emphasis on the balance between the knowledge of *Fardhu 'ain* and *Fardhu kifayah*, emphasizing that both are two complementary aspects in building a Muslim individual who is not only pious in worship but also active and productive in society. He realized that religious knowledge and worldly knowledge have equally crucial roles in achieving happiness in this world and the hereafter. Someone who only focuses on the knowledge of *Fardhu 'ain*—which includes fundamental aspects such as performing prayers, fasting, and morals—without expanding his knowledge to the field of *Fardhu kifayah* should only have a set of keys to a much more complex door. Although ritual worship is very important, without an adequate understanding of the knowledge oriented towards society, the individual will have difficulty in making a meaningful contribution to the welfare of the community.²⁰

For example, a Muslim who masters the rules of prayer and fasting but does not understand the principles of economics, health, or social sciences may have difficulty contributing to social situations that require practical and applicable solutions. Amidst the challenges facing humanity, such as poverty, poor health, and social injustice, individuals are needed who are not only pious in carrying out their worship but also intelligent in dealing with these complex problems. Limitations in knowledge and expertise can lead to stagnation in social, economic, and civilizational development. Therefore, Al-Ghazali encouraged Muslims to study not only religious knowledge but also sciences that can improve the quality of life of society. This includes medical science for health, economics to create prosperity, and social and political sciences to build a just and fair system.

Another example is a Muslim doctor who has a deep understanding of *Fardhu 'ain* will carry out his profession based on Islamic values, such as honesty, compassion, and the intention to help others by prescribing drugs that do not contain prohibited substances and do not set very high prices.²¹ Another example is a Muslim politician who has an understanding of *Fardhu 'ain* will exercise his authority to cast his vote for the benefit of the citizens, not just the interests of the coalition or the interests of the supporting party. Thus, the knowledge of *Fardhu kifayah* that he has mastered is not only technically useful, but also brings blessings and spiritual values. In the modern era, the importance of this balance is increasingly relevant because Muslims face complex global challenges, such as technological

²⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum Al-Din*, 54–55.

²¹ Nugraha, “Konsep Ilmu Fardhu Ain Dan *Fardhu kifayah* Dan Kepentingan Amalannya Dalam Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam.”

developments, moral crises, and social conflicts.²² The balance between *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* allows Muslims to remain firm in religious values while being able to compete on the global stage.

For example, in Islamic education, a holistic approach that integrates the values of *Fardu 'ain* with the mastery of *Fardu kifayah* science has been applied in several modern institutions, such as Islamic-based universities, such as the State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, under the leadership of Prof. Azyumardi Azra, successfully transformed from the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) to UIN. This transformation allows the development of faculties and study programs that integrate religious knowledge with other disciplines, such as the Faculty of Psychology, the Faculty of Economics and Business, and the Faculty of Science and Technology.²³ This approach aims to produce graduates who are not only academically intelligent but also have noble morals and high social awareness.

Furthermore, the integration between *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* will produce a generation of Muslims who not only know Allah and His teachings but are also able to think critically, solve problems, and make positive contributions to society. Through this comprehensive approach, Muslims will be able to live a balanced life, where faith and knowledge unite to achieve noble goals, both in this world and in the hereafter. Thus, a balanced understanding and practice between *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* is not only the key for individual Muslims, but also the foundation for building a prosperous and civilized society, in accordance with the values taught in Islam.

Former Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, also highlighted this by giving an example of the phenomenon of the emergence of religious interpretations without a strong scientific basis. He reminded that an excessive religious approach without being based on science can damage the image of religion and disrupt social harmony.²⁴ On the other hand, if the knowledge of *Fardu kifayah* is prioritized while the knowledge of *Fardu 'ain* is ignored, a generation will emerge that is superior intellectually but weak in morals and spirituality.²⁵ This will create individuals who are successful in the world but lose their direction in the afterlife. Imam Al-Ghazali reminded that this balance is very important to prevent a disconnection between the dimensions of the world and the afterlife.

CONCLUSION

Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the science of *Fardu 'ain* and *Fardu kifayah* provide a strong foundation for building a balanced and holistic Islamic education. Imam Al-Ghazali divides knowledge into two main categories, namely *Fardu Ain*, which must be studied by every Muslim individual to carry out worship and strengthen their relationship with Allah, and *Fardu kifayah*, which must be studied by some people to meet the needs of society. The balance between these two types of knowledge is very important to create Muslim individuals who are not only personally obedient but also able to contribute positively to society. *Fardu 'ain* knowledge is a spiritual and moral basis that is very much needed in the life of a Muslim, while *Fardu kifayah* knowledge functions to strengthen the progress of the community in various fields of life, such as medicine, economics, technology, and social sciences. An

²² Andi Elijah Humairah et al., "Memahami Dikotomi Ilmu Pengetahuan Umum Dan Agama Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam," *JUPENJI: Jurnal Pendidikan Jompa Indonesia* 3, no. 3 (August 9, 2024): 15–25, <https://doi.org/10.57218/jupenji.Vol3.Iss3.1165>.

²³ Muhammad Hafid, "Prof Azyumardi Azra Sosok Pendorong Transformasi IAIN Menjadi UIN," *Republika Online*, September 18, 2022, <https://republika.co.id/share/rien5p430>.

²⁴ Wilda Hayatun Nufus, "Khotbah Id, Eks Menag Bicara Fenomena Tafsir Keagamaan Tanpa Dasar Keilmuan," *detiknews*, accessed March 18, 2025, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6171570/khotbah-id-eks-menag-bicara-fenomena-tafsir-keagamaan-tanpa-dasar-keilmuan>.

²⁵ Yani, Wahyudi, and Tarigan, "Pembagian Ilmu Menurut Al-Ghazali (Tela'ah Buku Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din)."

imbalance between the two can have negative consequences, such as a society that is intellectually superior but weak in morals, or a society that is religious but lagging behind in terms of knowledge and professional expertise.

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