

Analysis of Character Education Values in *Minhājul Muta‘allim* by Imam Al-Ghazali

Muhammad Fadhil Hadziq^{1*}, Muhammad Aqil Abror²

^{1,2} Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

Email: 230104220050@student.uin-malang.ac.id¹, aqilabr05@gmail.com²

*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

This study explores the values of character education contained in *Minhājul Muta‘allim* by Imam Al-Ghazali, emphasizing their relevance to modern education. The research arises from growing concerns about moral decline among students in the 21st century, where education often prioritizes intellectual growth over ethical and spiritual formation. The study aims to identify and analyze Al-Ghazali’s moral framework in relation to the 18 national character education values promoted by Indonesia’s Ministry of Education and Culture. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis, the research examines both the primary text and supporting literature to extract and categorize character values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social care. Findings reveal that *Minhājul Muta‘allim* integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning, emphasizing sincerity, respect for teachers, independence, and the social application of knowledge. These values align closely with Indonesia’s national education character framework and demonstrate that classical Islamic pedagogy offers timeless principles for holistic education. The study concludes that Al-Ghazali’s ethical model remains highly applicable to contemporary education and contributes theoretically by linking classical Islamic ethics with modern character education, and practically by offering a culturally grounded model for moral and educational development.

Keywords: *Al-Ghazali, Character Education, Islamic Education, Minhājul Muta‘Allim, Values.*

INTRODUCTION

The formation of student character has become a central concern in 21st-century education systems. Amid the complexity of modern life driven by the rapid development of information technology and globalization, education is required not only to enhance intellectual capacity but also to shape the moral integrity of learners.¹ Various phenomena such as academic dishonesty, social intolerance, lack of discipline, and the decline of

¹ Loso Judijanto et al., *Pendidikan Abad 21:: Menyambut Transformasi Dunia Pendidikan Di Era Society 5.0* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2025).

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responsibility among students highlight the urgent need for character-based education.² In such circumstances, educational institutions cannot merely transfer cognitive knowledge; they must also nurture individuals with noble character, independence, and social awareness.³

As a response to these challenges, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture has formulated 18 core character values that must be integrated throughout the educational process. These values include religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievement, friendliness, love of peace, love of reading, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. However, in practice, character education often lacks a strong philosophical and pedagogical foundation.⁴ In this context, revisiting the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic educational thought offers an alternative that is both value-rich and culturally relevant for strengthening character education.⁵

Classical Islamic scholars, particularly Imam Al-Ghazali, have made significant contributions in laying the foundations of education oriented toward ethics and character formation.⁶ Al-Ghazali is not only known as a prominent theologian and philosopher but also as an educator who placed great emphasis on *adab* and moral cultivation for students.⁷ One of his works relevant in this regard is *Minhajul Muta'allim* (The Path of the Student), a text that provides practical and spiritual guidance for learners in seeking knowledge with proper attitude and sincere intention. In this work, Al-Ghazali envisions holistic education that harmoniously integrates the heart, intellect, and behavior.⁸

Several previous studies have examined character education values in classical Islamic texts. Anida Yufa Lutfiani, for example, studied *Minhajul Muta'allim* by Al-Ghazali and emphasized student ethics and its relevance to modern education.⁹ Nuriyana Laili analyzed *Adabul 'Alim wal Muta'allim* by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, which contains character values related to students' attitudes toward themselves, teachers, lessons, and books.¹⁰ Much. Maftuhul Fahmi and Rahmatullah examined *Wadza'if al-Muta'allim* by KH. Zainal Abidin Munawwir and identified three main areas of character values relevant to the Islamic Education curriculum.¹¹ Meanwhile, Abdul Rahman et al. studied *At-Tibyān fi Adabi Hamalatil Qur'an* by Imam al-Nawawi, highlighting discipline, honesty, and responsibility for Qur'an memorizers.

² Judijanto et al., *Pendidikan Abad 21: Menyambut Transformasi Dunia Pendidikan Di Era Society 5.0*.

³ Imam Anas Hadi, "Pentingnya Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Lembaga Formal," *Jurnal Inspirasi* 3, no. 1 (2019).

⁴ Atikah Mumpuni, *Integrasi Nilai Karakter Dalam Buku Pelajaran: Analisis Konten Buku Teks Kurikulum 2013* (Deepublish, 2018).

⁵ Abdul Gaffar Haris, "Revitalisasi Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam Klasik Dalam Konteks Pendidikan Indonesia Masa Kini Menumbuhkan Pendidikan Islam Yang Berbasis Nilai Dan Karakter," *Mandarras: Jurnal Studi Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (2024): 74–89.

⁶ Indriani Kurniawati et al., "Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Tentang Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Dan Pembentukan Karakter: Relevansinya Untuk Masyarakat," *Tamshiyah: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan Dan Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 2 (2023): 57–72.

⁷ ERFAN HABIBI et al., "Pemikiran Pendidikan Imam Al Ghazali Dalam Kitab Ihya'Ulumiddin," *EDUSHOPLA: Journal of Progressive Pedagogy* 2, no. 1 (2025).

⁸ Imam Al-Ghazali, *Minhajul Muta'allim* (Daral Taqwa, 2010).

⁹ Lutfiani Anida Yufa, "Etika Menuntut Ilmu Dalam Kitab Minhajul Muta'allim Karya Imam Al-Ghazali" (UIN Prof. KH Saifuddin Zuhri, 2023).

¹⁰ Laili Nuriyana, "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Kitab Adabul 'Alim Wal Muta'allim Karya KH. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari," preprint, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2015.

¹¹ Much Maftuhul Fahmi and Rahmatullah Rahmatullah, "Analisis Kitab Wadzaif Al-Muta'allim: Studi Relevansi Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Dengan Materi Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Piwulang: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 5, no. 1 (2022): 24–42.

These studies demonstrate that classical Islamic literature is rich in character values that remain relevant for contemporary education.¹²

However, most previous studies remain descriptive in nature and focus primarily on textual identification of moral values without systematically linking them to Indonesia's national character education framework. Few have attempted to integrate classical values from *Minhajul Muta'allim* with the eighteen national character values in an analytical and contextual manner. In addition, earlier research tends to emphasize individual ethics or learning etiquette but does not yet develop an applicable model of character education for modern educational institutions based on the integration of Islamic and local cultural values.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to analyze the character values embedded in *Minhajul Muta'allim* by Imam Al-Ghazali with reference to Indonesia's eighteen national character education values. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative analytical framework that explicitly bridges classical Islamic ethics with modern character education standards. Through this approach, the study not only identifies moral values but also proposes a philosophical, contextual, and applicable model of character education for contemporary Islamic institutions.

In terms of significance, this study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on character education by incorporating classical Islamic perspectives into the modern education framework rooted in national policy. Practically, its findings are expected to serve as a reference for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the moral and spiritual dimensions of education through a more authentic and culturally relevant approach.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the method of content analysis to explore the character education values contained in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim*. The focus of the research is directed toward an in-depth interpretation of the text to understand moral and ethical messages that are relevant to the 18 character education values established by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. This approach allows the researcher to systematically examine classical texts in order to reveal their underlying meanings and assess their relevance to the context of modern character education.¹³

The sources of data in this study consist of primary data in the form of the *Minhajul Muta'allim* manuscript, and secondary data in the form of books, scholarly journals, and articles relevant to the themes of character education and Al-Ghazali's thought. The analysis process is carried out in two main stages: first, coding of text excerpts that contain character values; second, categorization of these excerpts according to the classification of the 18 national character values. The results are then organized thematically to provide a comprehensive picture of how these values are internalized within Al-Ghazali's perspective on student education.¹⁴

¹² Abdul Rahman et al., "Analisis Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Dalam Kitab At-Tibyan Fi Adabi Hamalatil Qur'an," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 04 (2023).

¹³ Sugiyono, *Metodologi Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D*. (Alfabeta, 2013).

¹⁴ Imam Al-Ghazali, *Minhajul Muta'allim*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Character Values in *Minhājul Muta'allim*

Through textual analysis of *Minhājul Muta'allim*, this study will identify the core character values developed by Al-Ghazali and compare them with the framework of national character education in Indonesia.

1. Religious Value

Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhājul Muta'allim* places the religious value as the primary foundation in the educational process. For Al-Ghazali, seeking knowledge is not merely an intellectual activity but an act of worship that is closely tied to a student's spiritual relationship with Allah SWT.¹⁵ This is reflected in his advice

فليكن أول سعيك إصلاح السرائر وإزالة الفساد عن الضمائر فإن العلم عبادة القلب
 “Let your first effort be the purification of the inner self and the cleansing of the heart from corruption,
 for knowledge is the worship of the heart.”

This quotation explains that before embarking on the intellectual journey, one must first purify the soul from spiritual ailments such as ostentation (*riyā*), arrogance (*takabbur*), and worldly attachment. According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge will not bring blessings unless it is accompanied by sincerity of intention and purity of heart. This shows that spirituality is an essential element in the formation of the ideal student character in Islam. The religious attitude taught in this work is also reflected in the proper etiquette (*adab*) toward knowledge, teachers, and parents. A student is obliged to respect the teacher not only because of his role as an instructor, but also as a mediator of Allah's guidance. Al-Ghazali explicitly mentions that students will not obtain the blessings of knowledge if they are arrogant toward their teachers or belittle the learning process.¹⁶

The value of religiosity is further reinforced through recommendations such as praying before studying, maintaining ablution, and increasing acts of worship as part of the spiritual preparation in the pursuit of knowledge. This concept aligns with the principles of Indonesia's national character education, which places religiosity as the foremost value—aiming to shape learners into individuals who are faithful, pious, and noble in character.¹⁷ Thus, *Minhājul Muta'allim* not only teaches the technical aspects of learning but also instills the awareness that the pursuit of knowledge is part of worship to Allah SWT. The religious value in this text functions as the foundational element in shaping noble character, which becomes the primary provision for students in both academic and social life.

2. Honesty Value

The value of honesty in *Minhājul Muta'allim* is strongly emphasized through the insistence on sincerity of intention in seeking knowledge. Imam Al-Ghazali stressed that the primary goal of learning is to practice knowledge, not to seek recognition, praise, or worldly interests. In one of his important statements, he declared:

فليكن قصدك من التعلم العمل دون الرياء والمباهاة والمماراة والجدال

¹⁵ Imam Al-Ghazali, *Minhājul Muta'allim*.

¹⁶ Feni Karya Utami et al., “Etika Peserta Didik Dalam Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Saat Ini,” preprint, Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Curup, 2025.

¹⁷ Kholida Zuhairroh, “Internalisasi Pendidikan Karakter Religius Dalam Kitab Ayyuhal Walad Karya Imam Al-Ghozali Dan Implementasinya Pada Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Era Digital,” preprint, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2021.

"Let your purpose in learning be to put it into practice, not for ostentation, self-pride, argumentation, or dispute."

This quotation serves as the main foundation for the value of honesty, as it directs students to preserve the purity of their hearts and intentions. Honesty here does not only refer to speech and action, but also to the inner sincerity of purpose that underlies the pursuit of knowledge. A student must regard knowledge as a means to draw closer to Allah and to refine character, not as an instrument for gaining social status or power.¹⁸ In the context of national character education, honesty is vital for shaping a generation with integrity. Al-Ghazali understood that dishonesty in the process of seeking knowledge would cause great harm, both to the student personally and to society at large. Knowledge acquired with corrupted intentions could become a source of misguidance and destruction, as highlighted in many classical Islamic writings.

Therefore, honesty according to Al-Ghazali is not only moral but also spiritual. A student must be honest with himself, with the knowledge he learns, and with his Lord. This shows that character education in Islam is always grounded in a deep inner dimension, not merely in outward behavior. By cultivating sincere and honest intentions, students will grow into individuals who are responsible, pure-hearted, and ready to carry the trust of knowledge properly and beneficially.

3. The Value of Tolerance

The value of tolerance in *Minhajul Muta'allim* is reflected in Imam al-Ghazali's teachings that students should always respect fellow seekers of knowledge and never consider themselves superior to others. Tolerance here is not only a matter of social attitude but also of scholarly conduct, such as accepting differences of opinion, schools of thought, and approaches to learning. Al-Ghazali emphasized:

وإياك أن تحتقر أحدا من زملائك في التعلم

"Do not belittle any of your companions in the pursuit of knowledge."

This statement clearly shows that in the learning process, a student must cultivate mutual respect. It is strictly prohibited to demean fellow learners merely because of their background, abilities, or differing views. This value is crucial in the academic world, where cross-idea interaction and discussion are integral to enriching knowledge.¹⁹ Al-Ghazali also reminded students not to be fanatical about their own opinions but to remain open to others' views, as long as they do not deviate from the truth. In this sense, tolerance becomes an academic attitude that every seeker of knowledge must embody. It fosters an inclusive learning environment, free from hostility and full of brotherhood.

From the perspective of national character education, tolerance is a key indicator of building harmonious social life amid diversity. Through this teaching, Al-Ghazali guides students to be not only intelligent in knowledge but also wise in interaction. He envisioned learners who are humble, capable of dialogue, and appreciative of differences as a blessing and a source of intellectual richness in the Muslim community. Thus, tolerance in *Minhajul Muta'allim* is not merely a slogan but a refined attitude born from the recognition of human limitations and the acknowledgment that knowledge belongs to Allah alone, not confined to one group or individual. This value is vital in today's

¹⁸ Karya Utami et al., "Etika Peserta Didik Dalam Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Saat Ini."

¹⁹ Diana Ariswanti Triningtyas, *Konseling Lintas Budaya* (CV. Ae Media Grafika, 2019).

educational context, where students must learn to live in diversity without feeling threatened by differences.

4. The Value of Discipline

In *Minbājul Muta'allim*, discipline is regarded as a prerequisite for intellectual and spiritual success. Imam al-Ghazali stressed strict time management, consistency, and perseverance in the learning process:

واغتتم أوقات عمرك وأقبل على شأنك واشتغل بتحصيل علمك ليلا ونهارا

"Take advantage of your lifetime, focus on your affairs, and occupy yourself with acquiring knowledge day and night."

This message underscores that students must adopt a measurable academic work ethic: creating schedules, maintaining continuity, and avoiding distractions that erode focus. Discipline here does not merely mean punctuality or compliance with formal rules but has a deeper dimension: *istiqāmah* in sustaining a rhythm of learning, preserving the purity of the heart from negligence, and consistently observing the etiquettes of seeking knowledge (such as beginning with prayer, maintaining ablution, and honoring teachers).

Within the framework of the 18 national character values, discipline serves as a foundation for other values—honesty, hard work, curiosity—since without strong self-management, all these virtues easily collapse. For al-Ghazali, "counting" time is part of moral responsibility; wasting time is a betrayal of the trust of knowledge.²⁰ Thus, discipline in *Minbājul Muta'allim* is not merely an administrative habit but a spiritual act of obedience: to order one's time is to order the heart, and to order the heart is a prerequisite for the blessings of knowledge.

5. The Value of Hard Work

Imam al-Ghazali gave great emphasis to the value of hard work in the pursuit of knowledge. He strongly criticized laziness, regarding it as the chief obstacle to both academic and spiritual success. In *Minbājul Muta'allim*, he stated:

ولا تكسل ولا تغفل فإن العلم لا ينال براحة الجسد

"Do not be lazy and do not be heedless, for knowledge cannot be attained through physical comfort."

This quote shows that the pursuit of knowledge demands earnestness and sacrifice—of energy, time, and personal comfort. Al-Ghazali taught that knowledge is noble, and to attain it requires serious struggle. Students must be willing to wake up early, resist drowsiness while reading, fight boredom in memorization, and persist despite difficulties. This value of hard work aligns with the principles of national character education, which encourage learners to be persistent, resilient, and enduring in the face of academic challenges. For al-Ghazali, failure in learning is rarely due to a lack of intelligence but more often the result of laziness and procrastination.²¹

In his view, hard work is not merely physical effort but also involves the labor of the heart and intention. A dedicated learner constantly strives to understand deeply, seek meaning, and refuse to settle for superficial knowledge. In this sense, al-Ghazali aimed to shape learners who are diligent not only outwardly but also inwardly—for true success in knowledge is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the

²⁰ Muhammad Yaumi, *Pendidikan Karakter: Landasan, Pilar & Implementasi* (Prenada Media, 2016).

²¹ M Choerul Abrori, "Konsepsi Pendidikan Karakter Islam Dan Barat (Studi Komparasi Pemikiran Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Thomas Lickona)," preprint, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung (Indonesia), 2023.

sincerity of one's struggle. Thus, *Minhājul Muta'allim* provides a strong model that hard work is a moral responsibility towards knowledge and a reflection of a learner's earnestness in attaining the blessing and benefit of what they learn.

6. The Value of Creativity

Although *Minhājul Muta'allim* was written in the medieval context, the value of creativity remains evident in Imam al-Ghazali's advice that students should not confine themselves to a single branch of knowledge, but continuously broaden their horizons and deepen their understanding. He emphasized the importance of intellectual openness and interdisciplinary exploration:

لا تقتصر على فن واحد من العلوم فإن العلوم يعضد بعضها بعضا

"Do not limit yourself to only one field of knowledge, for the sciences strengthen one another."

This statement highlights that a student should have the spirit of exploring knowledge across various disciplines and should not be satisfied with only one perspective or approach. In practice, this requires creativity in thinking, the ability to connect ideas, and the courage to try new approaches in understanding issues. Creativity in this context is not limited to creating something entirely new, but also involves the ability to develop, modify, and expand existing knowledge. Imam al-Ghazali did not intend for students to be passive memorizers, but rather active thinkers who develop their intellect and derive deeper meanings from every lesson. In national character education, creativity is defined as the ability to think outside the box, solve problems in original ways, and generate useful ideas. *Minhājul Muta'allim* encourages this through the spirit of self-development and lifelong learning.²²

Thus, the value of creativity according to al-Ghazali is a driving force toward both depth and breadth of knowledge. He aimed to shape a generation of learners who are not only able to read and receive knowledge but also interpret, critique, and contribute intellectually. Creativity, therefore, becomes a pathway for students to enliven knowledge and make it relevant in real life.

7. The Value of Independence

The value of independence in *Minhājul Muta'allim* is strongly emphasized as an essential part of character formation. Imam al-Ghazali taught that students should not overly depend on others but should have the will and personal initiative in seeking knowledge. He said:

كن حريصا على نفسك لا تعتمد على غيرك واشتغل بما ينفعك

"Be earnest with yourself, do not depend on others, and occupy yourself with what benefits you."

This statement carries a powerful message that independence is not merely about studying alone but about mental readiness and personal responsibility in the learning process. Al-Ghazali wanted students not to simply wait for instructions but to be proactive in expanding their knowledge, searching for reading materials, managing study time, and setting their own goals. In national character education, independence reflects the ability to make decisions, manage activities, and complete tasks without constant

²² Mahfud Mahfud, "Berpikir Dalam Belajar; Membentuk Karakter Kreatif Peserta Didik," *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsab: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 1 (2017).

reliance on others. This is highly relevant to modern education, where students are expected to become independent learners responsible for their own progress.²³

Al-Ghazali also warned that excessive dependency can weaken one's spirit and distance them from success. Thus, he encouraged students to build self-confidence, strengthen determination, and nurture internal motivation. By instilling this value, *Minhājul Muta'allim* shapes individuals who are resilient, intellectually and spiritually independent, and prepared to face challenges in their pursuit of knowledge. In this way, independence according to al-Ghazali is not merely an individualistic attitude but an expression of maturity that defines a true learner. This attitude guides students to keep moving forward without always waiting for external direction, while maintaining focus and purpose in their lifelong quest for knowledge.

8. The Value of Democracy

The democratic value in *Minhājul Muta'allim* is reflected in the openness toward discussion, dialogue, and scholarly consultation aimed at seeking truth rather than victory or domination. Imam al-Ghazali guided students to maintain proper etiquette in discussions, especially when interacting with peers:

إذا جالست العلماء فكن مستفيدا منهم وإذا جالست الأقران فليكن مدار بحثك معهم على الحق لا على الغلبة
"When you sit with scholars, seek benefit from them. And when you sit with peers, let your discussion be centered on truth, not on overcoming one another."

This statement illustrates that in the world of learning, every individual has the right to express their opinions, engage in dialogue, and ask questions—as long as it is within the framework of etiquette and the proper pursuit of truth. Discussion should not be used to silence or dominate others but to cultivate understanding and nurture wisdom. The democratic value intended by al-Ghazali also includes respect for others' opinions, readiness to listen, and the ability to express ideas without belittling others. This creates space for students to develop openness, tolerance, and objectivity in learning. In national character education, democracy is essential in shaping citizens who value dialogue, uphold togetherness, and can live peacefully in diversity. Such an attitude is crucial in fostering a healthy and productive educational environment.²⁴

Thus, *Minhājul Muta'allim* teaches that a democratic learning atmosphere produces students who are not only intellectually capable but also socially and emotionally mature. They learn that truth does not always come from one side and that differences of opinion are a blessing when managed with ethics and mutual respect.

9. The Value of Curiosity

Imam al-Ghazali strongly emphasized the importance of curiosity as the driving force in the pursuit of knowledge. According to him, strong curiosity is the beginning of deep understanding and the path to attaining true knowledge. In *Minhājul Muta'allim*, he said:

أكثر من السؤال فإن السؤال مفتاح العلم
"Ask many questions, for questioning is the key to knowledge."

²³ Muhammad Sobri, *Kontribusi Kemandirian Dan Kedisiplinan Terhadap Hasil Belajar* (Guepedia, 2020).

²⁴ Gede Agus Siswadi and Kusuma Putri, "Pendidikan Perdamaian Berlandaskan Nilai-Nilai Pancasila Dalam Membangun Fondasi Pendidikan Untuk Kemanusiaan Di Tengah Keberagaman," *Vidya Sambita: Jurnal Penelitian Agama* 10, no. 1 (2024): 63–72.

This quote shows that students are encouraged to be active in questioning, seeking clarification, and not being satisfied with passively receiving information. Asking questions is not a sign of weakness but an expression of intellectual courage and earnestness in fully understanding knowledge. Curiosity in this context involves various aspects: the desire to gain comprehensive understanding, to explore new topics, and to remain open to learning experiences from different sources. Imam al-Ghazali encouraged students not only to ask teachers but also to read, reflect, and engage in dialogue with fellow learners. In national character education, curiosity drives lifelong learning. Students with curiosity are more active, creative, and intrinsically motivated to grow. This character is essential in shaping a generation of learners who are adaptive and innovative.²⁵

Thus, *Minhajul Muta'allim* establishes curiosity as the core trait of a true learner. A seeker of knowledge without the drive to question, inquire, and seek deeper understanding is like an empty vessel that cannot be filled. Imam al-Ghazali wanted every student to develop a thirst for knowledge, as this is the starting point of all intellectual achievement.

10. The Value of National Spirit

Although *Minhajul Muta'allim* does not explicitly discuss nationalism as understood in the modern context, values aligned with the spirit of nationalism can be found in al-Ghazali's teachings about defending truth and contributing to the welfare of society. Knowledge, according to him, is not for personal gain but must be used to build a just and dignified community. One significant message that reflects this spirit is:

اجعل علمك سبيلا لخدمة الناس وإصلاح أحوالهم

"Make your knowledge a means to serve people and improve their condition."

This message emphasizes that students must not be selfish in their pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge should be used as a tool to uphold truth, establish justice, and build a better society. In the Indonesian context, this aligns with the spirit of nationalism: love for one's homeland, expressed through service and real contributions to social life. National spirit in character education involves pride in being part of the nation, willingness to contribute to the country, and commitment to preserving unity. This value is crucial in shaping learners who have a sense of belonging to their nation and who do not lose their identity in the face of globalization.²⁶

Through this teaching, al-Ghazali indirectly encourages students to become agents of social change who bring positive impact to society. This spirit does not emerge from slogans alone but from the awareness that knowledge is a trust to be used for defending truth, rejecting injustice, and upholding the collective aspirations of the community and nation.²⁷ Thus, *Minhajul Muta'allim* teaches a national spirit rooted in the moral and social responsibility of students toward their community and nation. This makes character education not only personal but also socio-political in a constructive sense.

²⁵ Muhammad Azhar and Hakmi Wahyudi, "Motivasi Belajar: Kunci Pengembangan Karakter Dan Keterampilan Siswa," *Uluwwul Himmah Educational Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1–15.

²⁶ Ni Putu Suwardani, "*Quo Vadis*" Pendidikan Karakter: Dalam Merajut Harapan Bangsa Yang Bermartabat (Unhi Press, 2020).

²⁷ Titi Savitri Prihatiningsih, "Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Nilai Kebangsaan Untuk Menghasilkan Dokter Yang Berakuntabilitas Sosial," *Menggali Pondasi Karakter Bangsa Dengan Semangat*, 2021, 50.

11. The Value of Love for the Homeland

The value of love for the homeland in *Minhajul Muta'allim* is not explicitly mentioned using modern terms such as *watban* (homeland), yet its essence is deeply present in Imam Al-Ghazali's encouragement to students to make their knowledge a means of providing social benefit and improving societal conditions. Love for the homeland in this perspective is reflected in concern for the social environment, responsibility to build society, and commitment to public welfare. One of the messages that reflects this spirit is:

العلم بلا عمل لا ينفع والعمل الذي لا يعود نفعه على الناس ناقص

"Knowledge without action is of no benefit, and action that does not bring benefit to people is incomplete."

Within this framework, students are encouraged not to stop at personal achievement, but to direct their knowledge toward improving social conditions. This represents a substantive form of love for the homeland: realizing a more just, civilized, and dignified society through real contributions of knowledge. In the context of national character education, love for the homeland is defined as a willingness to sacrifice, loyalty to the nation, and active participation in social life and development. *Minhajul Muta'allim* teaches that such love is demonstrated through real contributions, not mere words or symbolism.²⁸

Al-Ghazali does not encourage students to detach themselves from social realities, but rather instills the moral responsibility that a scholar is a servant of the community, and his knowledge must have a positive impact on the society in which he lives. In this sense, love for the homeland is understood as loyalty to the community and nation through service and efforts to improve social conditions. Thus, the value of love for the homeland in *Minhajul Muta'allim* emerges as social awareness and collective responsibility. Al-Ghazali intended knowledge to be an instrument of struggle and empowerment, and a tangible expression of love for one's society and country of origin.

12. The Value of Appreciating Achievement

In *Minhajul Muta'allim*, Imam Al-Ghazali instills the value of appreciating achievement by urging students to respect scholars, teachers, and intellectual figures who have contributed to the world of education. This respect is not only personal but also directed toward their scholarly works and contributions. He stated:

من لا يحترم العلماء لا يذوق لذة العلم

"Whoever does not respect scholars will not taste the sweetness of knowledge."

This quotation emphasizes that appreciating the achievements of others, especially in the field of knowledge, is a prerequisite for obtaining the blessings and benefits of learning. A student who shows reverence for teachers and predecessors will not only find ease in understanding knowledge but will also receive spiritual blessings in the learning process. In the context of national character education, the value of appreciating achievement includes recognizing the successes of others, giving proper appreciation for their efforts, and not belittling even the smallest accomplishment.²⁹

²⁸ Nur Tri Atika et al., "Pelaksanaan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Membentuk Karakter Cinta Tanah Air," *Mimbar Ilmu* 24, no. 1 (2019): 105–13.

²⁹ Suwardani, "Quo Vadis" Pendidikan Karakter: Dalam Merajut Harapan Bangsa Yang Bermartabat.

Minbājul Muta'allim teaches that such appreciation fosters respect and also motivates individuals to strive harder for excellence.

From Al-Ghazali's perspective, valuing achievement also prevents students from arrogance and from belittling others. He teaches that every achievement is the result of struggle and sacrifice, and thus deserves respect and should serve as an example. Even among peers, students are encouraged to learn from one another's strengths and not harbor envy toward others' successes. Therefore, *Minbājul Muta'allim* places appreciation of achievement as part of scholarly ethics. Valuing achievement not only demonstrates noble character but also cultivates a healthy academic culture, where every success is seen as inspiration rather than a threat. This value is crucial in today's education to nurture supportive, humble individuals focused on self-improvement.

13. The Value of Friendship and Communication

In *Minbājul Muta'allim*, Imam Al-Ghazali gives great attention to the etiquette of interaction among students. He encourages relationships built on noble character, friendship, and good communication. According to him, a conducive learning atmosphere depends greatly on harmonious relationships among students. Al-Ghazali said:

صحبة الأقران بحسن الخلق تزيد في الفهم وسوء الخلق يحرم البركة

"Keeping the company of peers with good character increases understanding, while bad character deprives one of blessings."

This statement shows that good social relations not only build emotional closeness but also support academic progress. Courtesy, mutual respect, and positive communication form part of the ideal character of a student according to Al-Ghazali. He advises students to avoid hostility, discourteous debate, and hurtful speech, as these destroy the blessings of knowledge. In the framework of national character education, the value of friendship and communication is essential to create a healthy, inclusive, and cooperative learning environment. Students who can communicate well will find it easier to collaborate, resolve conflicts, and foster a comfortable atmosphere in study groups.³⁰

Al-Ghazali also reminds that behavior in social relations reflects the depth of knowledge and the quality of a person's manners. A good student is not only judged by intellectual ability but also by how they treat peers, speak politely, and foster harmonious cooperation. Thus, the value of friendship and communication in *Minbājul Muta'allim* is an integral aspect of scholarly ethics that supports academic success and the formation of noble character. Hence, Al-Ghazali's message is highly relevant today, especially in fostering students who are not only intelligent but also empathetic, communicative, and capable of building healthy and productive social relations.

14. The Value of Love for Peace

In *Minbājul Muta'allim*, Imam Al-Ghazali strongly emphasizes the importance of maintaining peace in the learning environment. He firmly prohibits all forms of quarrels, hostility, and futile debates that do not lead to the pursuit of truth. Love for peace here means refraining from conflicts that damage brotherhood and incite hatred among students. The book states:

إياك والجدال فإنه يقسي القلب ويجلب الشحنة

³⁰ Fahrur Rozi et al., "Strategi Pendidikan Karakter Untuk Siswa Sekolah Dasar Dalam Mewujudkan Tujuan SDG 4: Pendidikan Berkualitas," *PT. Penerbit Naga Pustaka*, 2024.

“Avoid futile debates, for they barden the heart and bring enmity.”

This statement affirms that debating without manners or simply to win an argument undermines the learning atmosphere. Al-Ghazali wanted students to maintain inner calm, gentleness in speech, and avoid provocative attitudes that cause division. In national character education, the value of love for peace includes maintaining peace with oneself, with others, and with the environment. Students who love peace will seek to resolve conflicts through dialogue, avoid violence, and uphold harmony in social interactions. This value is crucial in Indonesia’s diverse cultural and religious context.³¹

In *Minhajul Muta’allim*, love for peace is also a prerequisite for the blessing of knowledge. Knowledge cannot flourish in a heart filled with hatred and tension. Therefore, Al-Ghazali urged students to cultivate calmness, patience, and humility in dealing with differences. Thus, love for peace in Al-Ghazali’s perspective is not merely passive avoidance of conflict but active engagement in building peaceful relationships in social and academic contexts. This value is vital in shaping a generation of students who are peaceful in thought, gentle in speech, and harmonious in action.

15. The Value of Love for Reading

In *Minhajul Muta’allim*, Imam Al-Ghazali greatly stresses the importance of reading as an inseparable part of learning. He encourages students to expand their readings, deepen understanding, and not be satisfied with merely listening to teachers’ explanations. Reading is regarded as one of the main keys to success in learning. He said:

الكتاب هو جليسك في الوحدة ومرشدك في الظلمة

“A book is your companion in solitude and your guide in darkness.”

This quotation illustrates that reading is not only a learning activity but also a means of cultivating deep thinking, inner maturity, and guidance in life. Al-Ghazali wanted to instill an intellectual habit of independence and continuity through close interaction with literature. He emphasized that students must make books their best companions—always present in solitude and faithfully providing guidance when reason falters. In the context of national character education, the value of love for reading fosters lifelong learning, strengthens literacy culture, and develops critical thinking skills. Students who love reading will possess broader understanding, sharper reasoning, and better readiness in facing academic and social challenges.³²

Al-Ghazali also pointed out that knowledge acquired solely through memorization without deep understanding from reading will quickly fade and fail to leave a mark on the soul. Therefore, reading is considered the primary means of absorbing knowledge meaningfully. Thus, the value of love for reading in *Minhajul Muta’allim* is not just a study habit but a foundational character trait of every true student. Al-Ghazali taught that love for books and reading leads to wisdom, protects from misguidance, and guides toward beneficial and blessed knowledge.

16. The Value of Caring for the Environment

Although the term “environment” in its modern ecological sense is not explicitly mentioned, *Minhajul Muta’allim* contains values related to environmental care, particularly

³¹ Neysa Fausta et al., “Pengaruh Nilai Cinta Damai Terhadap Perilaku Peserta Didik Di Sekolah,” *Ainara Journal (Jurnal Penelitian Dan PKM Bidang Ilmu Pendidikan)* 5, no. 3 (2024): 386–90.

³² Djepri E Hulawa, “Literasi Abad 21 Dalam Perspektif Islam Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pembentukan Kompetensi Dan Kualitas Karakter Peserta Didik,” preprint, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2021.

in the emphasis on cleanliness of the individual and the place of study. Imam Al-Ghazali stressed that cleanliness is part of a student's manners, reflecting inner order and respect for knowledge. He stated:

نظف ثوبك ومكان درسك فإن ذلك من تمام الأدب

"Keep your clothes and study place clean, for that is part of perfect manners."

This statement means that a clean and tidy learning space creates a conducive atmosphere for study and reflects a disciplined, responsible student personality. Al-Ghazali understood that the physical environment affects the quality of learning and spirituality. In national character education, the value of caring for the environment includes not only maintaining classroom and school cleanliness but also conserving nature, saving energy, and reducing waste. These principles are fostered through small yet consistent habits such as proper waste disposal, maintaining books and school facilities, and loving orderliness.³³

Through such advice, Al-Ghazali nurtures students to be clean both outwardly and inwardly. Cleanliness of learning space, clothing, and body symbolizes spiritual and intellectual readiness to receive knowledge. Neglecting cleanliness reflects a lack of respect for knowledge and the learning process. Thus, the value of caring for the environment in *Minhajul Muta'allim* emerges as part of scholarly ethics integrated with spiritual awareness. Environmental care is not merely a social obligation but a reflection of faith and virtue in a true student. This shows that classical Islamic education has long instilled ecological awareness in simple yet meaningful ways, highly relevant for today's education.

17. The Value of Social Care

Imam Al-Ghazali in *Minhajul Muta'allim* instills awareness that true knowledge is that which benefits others. He encourages students not only to focus on personal intellectual growth but also to be attentive to the needs and conditions of society. He stated:

خير العلم ما نفع وخير الناس من نفع الناس بعلمه

"The best knowledge is that which is beneficial, and the best people are those who benefit others with their knowledge."

This statement affirms that the essence of knowledge is social benefit. Students must not stop at personal learning but should cultivate strong social concern—engaging in community service, helping others, and using their knowledge to solve societal problems. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, knowledge without social concern loses its blessing. In national character education, social care includes empathy, concern for peers, social solidarity, and active involvement in humanitarian activities. Students with this character grow into individuals who are not apathetic, can work collaboratively, and act as solutions within their communities.³⁴

³³ Deva Arshinta Anggraeni Putri and Raden Roro Nanik Setyowati, "Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Peduli Lingkungan Pada Siswa Kelas VII Di Sekolah Berwawasan Lingkungan SMPN 1 Sumberrejo Kabupaten Bojonegoro," *Journal of Civics and Moral Studies* 8, no. 2 (2023): 81–95; Oktio Frenki Biantoro and M. Akhsanudin, "The Concept of Islamic Education for Early Childhood as an Effort to Cultivate Morals," *Al-Munawwarah: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2025): 57–66, <https://doi.org/10.38073/almunawwarah.v1i1.2521>.

³⁴ Wenselinus Nong Kardinus, "Implementasi Program Pendidikan Karakter Untuk Membangun Sikap Kepedulian Sosial," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pendidikan IPS* 16, no. 1 (2022): 31–40.

Al-Ghazali also taught that knowledge is a trust that must be shared. Concealing knowledge or refusing to share its benefits betrays the mission of scholarship. Hence, good students must always think about how their knowledge can meet communal needs and improve social conditions. Thus, *Minhājul Muta'allim* shapes students who excel academically while also being socially minded, empathetic, and committed to public welfare. Social concern is, for Al-Ghazali, a true measure of educational success, as knowledge that does not foster service to society is dry and lifeless. This value is vital in cultivating learners who contribute meaningfully to societal and national development.

18. The Value of Responsibility

Responsibility is one of the main pillars of character education, and this receives strong emphasis in *Minhājul Muta'allim*. Imam Al-Ghazali stressed that seeking knowledge is a trust that must not be neglected. Students must realize that every learning activity is not just an academic routine but a moral and spiritual responsibility toward God, teachers, parents, and society. He stated:

فالعلم أمانة عظيمة لا يجوز التفريط فيها ومن قصر فقد خان الأمانة

“Knowledge is a great trust that must not be neglected; whoever is careless has betrayed that trust.”

This statement holds profound meaning. A student who is not diligent in study, wastes time, or fails to apply knowledge properly has betrayed his responsibility. Al-Ghazali wanted to instill awareness that success in learning is not merely about passing exams or gaining degrees but about how well students fulfill their responsibilities in both process and purpose. In national character education, responsibility includes diligence in carrying out tasks, consistency in meeting obligations, and courage in being accountable for actions and results. Students with this character grow into disciplined, honest, and trustworthy individuals in both academic and social settings.³⁵

Al-Ghazali also emphasized that responsibility extends beyond the learning process to the application of knowledge. Students are required to uphold etiquette, avoid misusing knowledge, and continuously practice and teach it to others. This represents complete responsibility according to him—responsibility in process, outcome, and sustainability of knowledge. Thus, *Minhājul Muta'allim* places responsibility as a core value of student character. By understanding knowledge as a trust, students are encouraged to become diligent, reliable, and conscious individuals who play a vital role in building themselves and their communities. This value lays the foundation for excellent character, highly relevant in facing the challenges of education and global life today.

Implications of the Values in *Minhājul Muta'allim* for Contemporary Education

Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhājul Muta'allim* remains highly relevant to modern education, which faces challenges of moral decline, individualism, and spiritual crisis. The character values he outlined provide a reorientation of educational goals—not merely academic achievement or social status, but drawing closer to Allah, self-improvement, and contributing to society.

The implication is that curricula should integrate ethical and spiritual values throughout the entire learning process, not only in religious subjects.³⁶ Education must also

³⁵ Muhammad Yasin, “Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Disiplin, Tanggung Jawab Dan Rasa Hormat Di Min 05 Bandar Lampung,” preprint, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2018.

³⁶ Imam Al-Ghazali, *Minhājul Muta'allim*.

cultivate honesty, responsibility, discipline, and an active, independent learning culture. Teachers serve as ethical and spiritual role models, while assessment systems should value process and integrity, not just final results.³⁷ The values of tolerance, peace, and openness to differences are essential for building inclusive education. Likewise, reading culture, curiosity, independence, and social responsibility should be strengthened through participatory learning, community projects, and service activities.³⁸

Al-Ghazali also emphasized appreciating achievement and love of homeland, which foster national pride and collaboration. Thus, the values in *Minhajul Muta'allim* align with Indonesia's national education framework, even though they originated in a medieval context. Integrating these classical values does not require radical reform but can begin with simple steps: how teachers interact with students, how students approach knowledge, and how institutions evaluate learning success. Applied sincerely, Al-Ghazali's teachings can provide a strong foundation to address the challenges of modern education.³⁹

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the character education values contained in Imam Al-Ghazali's *Minhajul Muta'allim* are highly relevant and applicable in the context of contemporary education. Analysis of the text reveals an integration of moral, spiritual, and intellectual values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, curiosity, diligence, and social responsibility. These values are not presented as abstract concepts, but rather as practical principles that guide ethical behavior, learning orientation, and social engagement of students. Through in-depth interpretation of the text, it becomes evident that Al-Ghazali's philosophy of education places character formation as a top priority, alongside intellectual achievement and societal contribution.

The findings also show that the 18 national character values developed in the Indonesian education curriculum are substantially aligned with the ethical principles in *Minhajul Muta'allim*. Each value from tolerance and creativity to patriotism corresponds with the moral framework emphasized by Al-Ghazali. This demonstrates that classical Islamic texts are not outdated legacies but timeless sources of wisdom that can serve as foundations for holistic character development. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on sincerity in learning, respect for teachers, and the use of knowledge for social benefit underscores the inseparability of moral integrity from intellectual achievement. This synthesis highlights the importance of reintegrating ethical and spiritual teachings into modern educational curricula.

In its contribution to the development of educational psychology, this study offers a model of character education rooted in local culture while embodying universal values. It expands the discourse on education by bridging classical Islamic educational thought with contemporary character-building strategies. The values drawn from *Minhajul Muta'allim* can serve as guidelines for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in shaping students who are not only cognitively intelligent but also morally upright and socially oriented. Therefore, this research not only reaffirms the pedagogical value of classical texts but also makes a practical contribution to the development of educational psychology, particularly in fostering character through an integrated moral-cognitive approach.

³⁷ Dur Brutu et al., "Integrasi Nilai Filsafat Pendidikan Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Jambura Journal of Educational Management*, 2023, 442–53.

³⁸ Wirda Ningsih and Zalisman Zalisman, *Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) Dalam Konteks Global* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2024).

³⁹ Madhar Madhar, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Tarqiyatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 3, no. 2 (2024): 115–26.

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