**The Elements of Islamic Parenting Value for Moral and Academic Outcomes in the Youth Generation by Al-Ghazālī**

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# Abstract

This study examines the foundational principles of parenting as articulated by al-Ghazālī, and in doing so, it raises a critical question; what does it mean to educate the moral and intellectual capacities of the youth in a way that is both spiritually rooted and pedagogically sound? While it draws upon al-Ghazālī’s well-known ethical and philosophical framework, it moves beyond mere exposition to consider how concepts such as compassion, discipline, reflective reasoning, and spiritual cultivation are interwoven in shaping the moral and academic formation of the young. This paper advocates for a holistic approach to parenting that not only enriches children’s moral compass but also enhances their academic success. Based on a qualitative methodology involving documentary analysis and interviews, a coherent set of parenting values that are not only theoretically rich but also pedagogically actionable were identified. Content analysis method was conducted using ATLAS.ti version 25 software. The findings indicate the effective ideal elements of Islamic parenting for moral and academic outcomes by al-Ghazālī according to *Ayyuhal Walad* are very structured and can potentially be used as a guide for the younger generation. The incorporation of al-Ghazālī’s parenting values can lead to the development of well-rounded individuals capable of contributing positively to society. Furthermore, al-Ghazālī’s broader intellectual legacy inspired the embedding of spiritual and ethical dimensions within parenting.

**Keywords:** Islamic Parenting, Value, Moral, Academic Outcomes, al-Ghazālī.

## INTRODUCTION

The Islamic view of parenting cannot be separated from the larger concern for family integrity and social continuity. The etymology offered by Kamus Dewan Bahasa (2002) that “skills” are tied to capability and fluency, and “parenting” refers to the traits and functions of parents which is not merely terminological but expressive of a deeper configuration of human roles within moral economies. Parenting, in this sense, is not an isolated act but a formative enterprise wherein the values of personality, morality, character, and cultural situatedness are inscribed and transmitted (Iwaniec & Sneddon, 2002).

The notion that parenting might be confined to the provision of physical needs is, in this context, already a conceptual reduction. What Mariam Abd Majid et al. (2023) draw attention to is the more expansive semantic field in which parenting becomes an educative enterprise; an inculcation of worth, of self-regard, of the capacity to act meaningfully within a moral order. In Islamic thought, this is not separable from a teleological horizon. The concept of *al-falāḥ* refuses any simple binary between the worldly and the otherworldly. Instead, it designates a form of integrated flourishing, where ethical formation and intellectual guidance are directed simultaneously at the demands of the present world (*dunyā*) and the hereafter (*ākhirah*). In this frame, the parent is not simply the administrator of the child’s well-being but is recast as a bearer of tradition, a transmitter of dual knowledge systems (al-Ghazālī 2000; Ibn Khaldun 2002).

According to Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, behavior is shaped not in abstraction but in proximity. Parents and guardians serve as immediate models whose conduct is absorbed through repetition and mimetic identification (Whiting et al., 1988). That moral formation is not incidental but intentional lies at the core of the Islamic pedagogical tradition, where instruction is neither abstract nor deferred. Moral cultivation is enacted through direct address, reiterated through ritual, and embodied in the example of the parent. Active parental involvement is important in positively impacting academic achievement, character formation and personality development (Irfan & Sain, 2024; Madyawati et al., 2023; Nauli et al., 2019).

A study by Jannah (2023) shows that education based on Islamic parenting has a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviors presented by Islamic teachings. The book *Ayyuhal Walad* written by al-Ghazālī discusses morality and ethics. That al-Ghazālī was not merely a theologian but an architect of intellectual and moral order is widely acknowledged (Abdullah, 2020; Iqbal, 2013). His educational theory, as stated plainly, is the labor of removing *akhlāq madhmūmah* (blameworthy traits) and replacing them with *akhlāq maḥmūdah* (praiseworthy traits) (al-Ghazālī, 1999). For al-Ghazālī, the soul is no incidental feature of human life. It is the axis of inner vitality, the locus of both moral formation and metaphysical orientation. Al-Ghazālī frames the soul as a spiritual substrate whose integrity must be vigilantly preserved and ritually purified (Norhashimah Yahya et al., 2020). Within this paradigm, faith functions as a dynamic force to shape the self and producing a lineage characterized by virtue, devotion, and moral clarity (Norhashimah Yahya et al., 2018).

The cultivation of Islamic parenting values warrants renewed urgency in light of the rising challenges confronting Malaysian youth. As the principal agents of societal continuity and transformation, the younger generation constitutes both the promise and the peril of a nation’s future (Rohana & Norhasni, 2016). Amid the accelerations of modernization and the ubiquity of digital life, a discernible erosion of ethical grounding among the youth has come to the fore. Instances of delinquency, diminished commitment to educational values, overdependence on digital media, and fragmented family environments, as noted by Wan Abdul Fatah Wan Ismail et al. (2022), reflect the deeper ruptures within the pedagogical structures that are meant to guide and sustain them (Azyyati, 2017).

The issue of moral decay among youth is a major threat to achieving progress and national development. Noornajihan and Ab. Halim Tamuri (2013) suggests that systemic failure, whether institutional or national, begins with a compromised individual moral core. Arwansyah Kirin (2024) further clarifies that the breakdown of moral formation among the youth signals the limits of current educational approaches, both formal and informal. Areta (2021) outlines the manifestations ranging from social deviance to ethical numbness as recurring patterns that reveal pedagogical inadequacy.

Therefore, the study of the elements of parenting values according to Islam is a necessary intervention to produce proactive parents. This study aims to examine, with methodological clarity, the parenting values outlined in *Ayyuhal Walad*, particularly its 24th counsel, to assess how these can be reactivated in contemporary contexts. The objective is to enable the formation of youth who are intellectually sound and morally upright. It may thus be concluded that a nurturing and value-oriented environment plays a pivotal role in shaping children’s success and cultivating exemplary character (Abdul Munir Ismail et al., 2016).

Within the Islamic tradition, education occupies a position of great esteem, as it seeks to develop the full spectrum of human potential through the integration of moral refinement and intellectual growth (Abid Nurhuda, 2023). As Safinah Ismail et al. (2024) emphasize, mastery of parenting knowledge is essential for parents in fulfilling their educational responsibilities and achieving familial objectives. Accordingly, this study is positioned to assist parents in imparting Islamic values to their children, thereby enabling a more constructive engagement with the challenges of contemporary society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review refers to the researcher’s examination of previous studies to obtain important information. Sources used for the literature review include journals, academic books, exegesis texts, and others.

### The Concept of Superior Parents According to An Islamic Perspective

A study by Safinah Ismail et al. (2024) entitled “Practice of Parenting Knowledge Among Muslim Parents in Malaysia” examine critical elements of parenting knowledge among Muslim parents in Malaysia. This study was conducted qualitatively based on a semi-structured interview on 20 Muslim parents. The research seeks to identify four key elements integral to parenting practices. The collected data were analyzed thematically using ATLAS.ti 23 software. The findings reveal four essential components in parenting knowledge; a continuous effort to acquire new knowledge, the adoption of parenting styles that diverge from those of earlier generations, the pursuit of expert guidance on family issues, and a tendency toward less extensive preparation.

### The Essence of Education in The *Ayyuhal Walad*

Next, according to Muhammad Husain (2022), the study entitled “Methods of Moral Education in the Book of Ayyuha Al-Walad by Al-Ghazālī” focuses on the elements used to shape the personality of children based on the book *Ayyuhal Walad*. This study was carried out to explore the thinking patterns of al-Ghazālī in forming excellent Muslim families in this world and the hereafter. It was conducted qualitatively using the methodology of library reading and documentary study. For data analysis, the study employed content analysis, and the data collection technique was documentation. The findings showed that al-Ghazālī used several methods to implement moral values, namely advice, telling exemplary stories, refraction, and *targhib wa tarhib*. All these methods are linked to the hereafter and the relationship with Allah SWT.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative design, deemed suitable for analysis based on the book *Ayyuhal Walad* (Cresswell, 2014). It uses a documentary analysis approach and primary data is obtained through structured face-to-face interviews to identify effective ideal elements regarding Islamic parenting values for the moral and academic outcomes of youth. Secondary sources comprise documentary materials, including the content of *Ayyuhal Walad* and published articles related to Islamic parenting concepts according to al-Ghazālī. The data collection method is designed to achieve results aligned with the study’s objectives (Awang, 2001). Data analysis is conducted using content analysis via ATLAS.ti software version 25. Content analysis is defined as an objective and systematic explanation of information contained in written texts (Naqiayah Mansor, 2018).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The *Ayyuhal Walad* written by al-Ghazālī serves as his response to a letter from a student struggling with doubts during their pursuit of knowledge. The text was originally composed in Persian and later was translated into Arabic. Alongside *Khulashoh Attashonnifi*, *Ayyuhal Walad* is one of two works by Al-Ghazālī translated into Arabic. The book is named *Ayyuhal Walad* because nearly every new paragraph begins with this phrase. There are 25 pieces of advice from al-Ghazālī contained in this book to his student. This highlights a teacher’s responsibility that goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. It includes guiding students toward clarity, nurturing their emotional and moral development, and fostering both character and academic achievement (Leli Romdaniah, 2023).

The concept of morality presented by al-Ghazālī in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* focuses more on the attitude of a Muslim or a servant who upholds ethical conduct in relation to God, the self, and others. In the context of today’s competitive global world, both moral integrity and academic achievement for each individual are priorities in shaping the young generation toward constructive and meaningful direction. Ibn Khaldun (1406M) emphasized that education inherently involves both knowledge and character formation. Similarly, al-Ghazālī stated in the book *Ihya’ Ulum al-Din*, volume three, that a complete person combines sound knowledge with high morality because he is able to get closer to God and contribute to the well-being of society. Al Ghazālī’s 24th advice in *Ayyuhal Walad*, which outlines four key actions, was chosen as the main point in this study.

The four key elements in al-Ghazālī’s 24th advice in *Ayyuhal Walad* are: (1) evaluating one’s relationship with God (*ḥablum min Allāh*), (2) treating others as one would treat oneself, (3) ensuring that acquired knowledge refines the heart and purifies the soul, and (4) refraining from accumulating worldly wealth beyond what is sufficient for a year’s sustenance.

Figure ‎0.1 Four key elements in Al-Ghazālī’s 24th advice in Ayyuhal Walad

### Evaluating one’s relationship with God (ḥablum min Allāh)

In *Ayyuhal Walad*, al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of evaluating one’s relationship with God by focusing on the spiritual bond known as *ḥablum min Allāh*. According to al-Ghazālī, this advice highlights the deep connection between a servant and their Lord. It urges Muslim, especially the youth, to reflect on their conduct and sense of devotion toward Allah SWT. The true position of man is as a servant of Allah and a servant must have high respect, obedience and manners towards his Lord by carrying out all of Allah’s commands and abandoning all of His prohibitions (Al-Ghazālī, 505H). Al-Ghazālī also used the technique of analogy of the relationship between master and servant in the book *Ayyuhal Walad* to make it easy for readers to understand.

This advice presented by al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of a person evaluating his relationship with Allah SWT through the analogy of a master and a servant. If a person does not like the behavior of his servant who is negligent, disrespectful or refuses to obey, then the same behavior is even more inappropriate for humans to do towards God who is the true master (Al-Ghazālī, 505H). This element is significant in the morals and academics guidance for today's youth. Morally, it nurtures a deep sense of servitude and muraqabah, which is the awareness that Allah SWT is always watching, and helps develop moral values like honesty, trust, obedience, and responsibility. These traits are essential in confronting the current social and moral challenges faced by young people. As Shaik Abdullah Hassan et al. (2020) point out, a Muslim of noble character is one who upholds strong relationships with both Allah SWT and fellow human beings.

In the academic context, when an individual realizes that seeking knowledge is part of devotion to Allah, then the learning process is no longer seen as a mere burden but becomes part of daily worship that must be done with full discipline, seriousness, and sincerity. When a strong relationship with Allah SWT becomes the foundation of a person’s life, it nurtures a generation of youth who excel academically and uphold good character which is a balance between spiritual and worldly demands (Selamah Maamor et al., 2021).

### Treating others as one would treat oneself

The explanation of the second element from al-Ghazālī’s book *Ayyuhal Walad* states that every action involving others should be guided by love and compassion, which is treating others the way one would want to be treated. Al-Ghazālī advises that a person should use themselves as the standard when dealing with others. This concept is reinforced by the saying of the Prophet Muhammad SAW; “No one’s faith is complete until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (Hadith narrated by al-Bukhari & Muslim), which transposes personal sentiment into a broader framework of communal obligation.

This advice emphasizes the nature of love, empathy, and kindness as outlined by al-Ghazālī in the book *Ayyuhal Walad*, where it can not only form social relationships but also have a significant impact on the formation of moral values and academic achievements of the younger generation. The instruction to treat others as one would wish to be treated functions as a pedagogical principle that fosters the internalization of virtues such as respect, responsibility, and sincerity across all actions (Al-Ghazālī, 2018). These virtues, while not always explicitly foregrounded, operate as critical underpinnings for the construction of a learning environment that is simultaneously positive and supportive. The outcome is a generation of young people who experience affirmation, understanding, and increased motivation to realize their fullest capacities.

Recent studies have indicated that when moral formation is grounded in love and empathy, the results are not merely ethical but demonstrably educational. Youth who are nurtured within this framework tend to exhibit a heightened capacity for self-discipline, sustained perseverance, and a noticeably affirmative orientation toward learning, traits which, unsurprisingly, correlate with improved academic performance (Ab Halim Tamuri & Ahmad Munawar Ismail, 2021; Aemy Liza Minhat & Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2023). Therefore, the integration between Islamic moral values ​​as outlined by al-Ghazālī with current educational strategies is seen as important in producing a young generation that is not only excellent from an academic perspective, but also has commendable morals.

### Ensuring that acquired knowledge refines the heart and purifies the soul

Next, al-Ghazālī explains in his book *Ayyuhal Walad* a subtle yet profound distinction between knowledge that entangles the intellect in endless disputation; *fiqh*, *khilāf*, *uṣūl*, *kalām*, and knowledge that penetrates the heart, polishes the soul, and draws the seeker inward, toward sincerity and the divine presence. He urges the student to cultivate *murāqabah al-qalb*, a vigilant attention to the heart, as a more urgent and personal calling. In this book, Al-Ghazālī also states that it is important for a servant of God to beautify the heart and intentions for Allah SWT in every action. Such knowledge, which refines the self and aligns intention with the will of God, is not a matter of communal sufficiency (*farḍ kifāyah*), but an individual obligation (*farḍ ‘ayn*), pressing and non-transferable. To beautify one’s inner state and direct one’s actions solely for the sake of Allah is, in al-Ghazālī’s estimation, not merely virtuous but necessary. Therefore, it is important for Muslim individuals to focus on knowledge that really has an impact on the formation of personality and spirituality (Al-Ghazālī, 2018).

Al-Ghazālī’s educational philosophy does not begin with the curriculum, nor end with examination scores. It begins, rather unsettlingly, with the heart. This advice shows that an educational approach that emphasizes the purification of the soul is the foundation for noble characters, which in turn contributes to the academic excellence of the youth generation. Al-Ghazālī emphasized that the main purpose of seeking knowledge is to improve the heart and draw us closer to Allah, not just to acquire theoretical or debatable knowledge (Al-Ghazālī, 2018). Norliza Hamzah and Hidayat Abdullah (2021) demonstrate that when Islamic values are integrated into education, students are not only more ethically grounded, but they also show enhanced personal balance and academic discipline. Therefore, al-Ghazālī’s approach that emphasizes internal self-development through knowledge that educates the soul is significant in producing a balanced generation of youth in terms of personality and intellect.

### Refraining from accumulating worldly wealth beyond what is sufficient for a year’s sustenance

In *Ayyuhal Walad*, al-Ghazālī offers a striking piece of counsel; do not gather more worldly wealth than what is needed to eat for a single year. On the surface, it may sound like a practical guideline. But beneath it lies a deeper ethic, one that values restraint, simplicity, and conscious detachment from material excess. In illustrating this, al-Ghazālī recounts a telling story; the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would leave only a day’s or a day and a half’s worth of food for a wife of strong faith, while a longer provision was reserved for one whose faith was weaker (Al-Ghazālī, 2018). This practice shows more than modesty and reflects a person’s dependence on Allah SWT as well as the strength of their faith. It highlights how spiritual strength shapes one’s attitude toward the world because a believer chooses to meet basic needs rather than accumulate excess wealth as an expression of trust in Allah SWT.

This advice values simplicity and asceticism which also reflects the spiritual and moral approach in shaping the identity of individual Muslims. This concept is very relevant in shaping the morals of today’s youth generation, especially in facing the challenges of materialism and increasing social pressure. The simplicity and dependence on Allah SWT emphasized in the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW provide a solid foundation for the formation of a pure personality. A study by Wan Suhana et al. (2020) found that a moral education approach based on Islamic values can improve students’ academic achievement through the development of self-discipline and intrinsic motivation. This shows that the practice of asceticism is not only able to build noble morals but also contributes to students’ academic performance because they will be more focused, disciplined, and not easily distracted by material temptations. Therefore, the integration of spiritual values as outlined by al-Ghazālī needs to be implemented in the education system to produce youth who are excellent in terms of morals and academics.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals the elements of Islamic parenting values presented by al-Ghazālī through the book *Ayyuhal Walad* as an important guide in the development of morals and improving academic performance among the youth generation. Elements such as a spiritual relationship with Allah SWT, the nature of love and empathy for fellow human beings, purification of the heart through knowledge and the value of moderation have been identified as a strong foundation in building superior personalities and intellectual excellence. This study supports a holistic approach to education and parenting that balances worldly and afterlife demands. Therefore, the empowerment of these values in family and educational institutions is important to produce a generation of youth who are not only academically excellent, but also have noble morals and are able to contribute positively to society.

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**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to report regarding the present study.

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