Smart Education and Instruction
Volume 1 Number 1 (2026) 65-84
DOI 10.58765/sei.v1i1.462

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https://jurnal.smartindo.org/index.php/sei

The Concept of the Ideal Teacher in the Thought of Imam Al-Ghazali and Its Relevance to the Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are not only required to have pedagogic skills and mastery of religious substances, but also show moral example, spiritual maturity, and the ability to build educational relationships with students. These demands are in line with the competency standards of teachers in Indonesia which include pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies. This research aims to describe the concept of the ideal teacher according to Imam Al-Ghazali and analyze its relevance to strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers in the context of contemporary education. The research uses a library *research* method with a qualitative-descriptive approach. Primary data is sourced from Al-Ghazali's works, especially *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and *Ayyuhā al-Walad*, while secondary data is obtained through books, scientific articles, and regulations that discuss Islamic educational thought and teacher competence. Data are analyzed using content analysis through the stages of identification, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that the concept of the ideal teacher according to Al-Ghazali includes sincerity in teaching, mastery and practice of knowledge, moral exemplary, compassion for students, patience, the ability to pay attention to differences in students' abilities, and guidance that is carried out wisely. These values are relevant to the professionalism of PAI teachers: attention to the condition of students related to pedagogic competence; sincerity, integrity, and exemplary are related to personality competence; compassion and educational communication are related to social competence; while the breadth of knowledge and harmony between science and charity strengthen professional competence. The concept of Al-Ghazali provides an ethical and spiritual foundation for the development of the professionalism of PAI teachers who do not stop at technical skills, but integrate academic, pedagogical, social, moral, and religious competencies. This view is also consistent with studies

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that place teachers in the perspective of Al-Ghazali as guides of the educational process, moral coaches, advisors, motivators, and role models for students.

Keywords: ideal teacher; Imam Al-Ghazali; teacher professionalism; Islamic religious education; teacher competence.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality of individuals across intellectual, social, and moral dimensions. Within this process, teachers constitute a determining element, as their responsibilities extend beyond the transmission of knowledge to include guiding students' personal development. This position is particularly significant in the teaching of Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam, PAI), since PAI teachers are responsible not only for developing students' religious understanding but also for guiding them in applying Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Consequently, the success of PAI instruction cannot be assessed solely through cognitive achievement or mastery of subject matter; it must also be reflected in the cultivation of faith, piety, noble character, and students' sense of social responsibility.(Suryadi, 2021)

PAI teachers today face increasingly complex demands. Social changes, the development of digital technology, the rapid flow of information, and various moral issues in the student environment require teachers to be not only competent in conveying religious materials. These conditions can create a gap between the cognitive mastery of religious materials and the appreciation and practice of them in students' behavior. In such a situation, PAI teachers do not play a sufficient role as material presenters, but are required to present contextual learning, build educational relationships, and show consistent examples in school life.(Erni, n.d.) Teachers also need to be able to be guides, counselors, motivators, and role models in dealing with students' real problems. In this context, PAI learning must be directed to form students' ability to understand, appreciate, and implement Islamic values wisely.Therefore, the personal quality of teachers and consistency between the knowledge conveyed and the behavior displayed are fundamental needs in religious education.

Juridically, the professionalism of teachers in Indonesia has gained a clear foundation through Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The regulation stipulates that teachers' competencies include pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies.(Indonesia, 2005) Pedagogic competence is related to the

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ability to manage students' learning; personality competencies require a person who is steady, noble, wise, authoritative, and worthy of being an example; social competence is related to the ability to communicate and interact effectively; while professional competence is related to the mastery of subject matter broadly and deeply. These four competencies are the formal foundation in the coaching and development of the teaching profession in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, the professionalism of PAI teachers cannot be limited to fulfilling administrative standards, academic qualifications, certifications, or technical learning proficiency. PAI teachers have religious and moral responsibilities attached to their professional duties. They not only teach the concepts of faith, morals, fiqh, the Qur'an-Hadith, and the history of Islamic culture, but also become figures whose behavior can be observed, imitated, and used as a reference by students. Therefore, the professionalism of PAI teachers needs to include mastery of knowledge, educational ability, personality maturity, ethical commitment, and spiritual awareness. The applicable teacher competency standards also emphasize the importance of pedagogic, personality, social, and professional dimensions as an inseparable unit.

One of the Muslim thinkers who seriously pays attention to the position, duties, and ethics of teachers is Imam Imam Al-Ghazali. In his educational thinking, teachers occupy a noble position because they carry out the mandate to guide people out of ignorance towards knowledge, goodness, and closeness to Allah SWT. Imam Al-Ghazali does not view teaching activities as just a job to obtain material rewards, but as scientific and moral devotion that has a ukhrawi orientation. Education for Imam Al-Ghazali is basically related to the formation of the soul, the development of useful knowledge, the practice of knowledge, and the development of students' morals.(Alwizar, 2014)

The concept of the ideal teacher in Imam Al-Ghazali's thought includes a number of interrelated qualities, including sincerity in teaching, breadth and depth of knowledge, good morals, compassion for students, patience, the ability to understand the differences in students' abilities, and willingness to be role models in daily behavior. Teachers are encouraged to treat students like their own children, guide gradually, and correct students' mistakes in a gentle, non-embarrassing, and oriented manner towards moral improvement.(Syahrizal, 2022) In addition, Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized the harmony between knowledge and charity, because the incompatibility between the teacher's advice and behavior can reduce the authority of education and weaken the process of instilling values in students.

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Various previous studies have discussed Imam Al-Ghazali's educational thoughts, especially regarding moral education, the purpose of Islamic education, and the relevance of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in character formation. However, studies that specifically link the concept of the ideal teacher of Imam Al-Ghazali with the four dimensions of the professionalism of PAI teachers—pedagogical, personality, social, and professional—are still important to be developed systematically. This study uses *the library research method* to analyze the works of Imam Al-Ghazali and related scientific literature. The research aims to describe the concept of the ideal teacher according to Imam Imam Al-Ghazali and explain its relevance for strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers in the context of contemporary education. The analysis is expected to expand the understanding that the professionalism of PAI teachers is an integration between academic competence, pedagogic skills, moral exemplary, good social relations, and spiritual orientation.(*Eksplorasi Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Islam melalui Kajian Literatur*, n.d.)

At the empirical level, PAI teachers in Indonesia face increasingly complex challenges along with the rapid development of digital technology and social change. Teachers are required not only to master religious materials, but also to be able to adapt to the use of digital tools, manage interactive learning, and maintain scientific authority in the midst of the rapid flow of information. However, various studies show that there is still a gap between regulatory expectations and the reality in the field, such as low digital literacy of teachers, limited access to quality learning resources, and resistance to teaching method innovation. This condition has the potential to weaken the effectiveness of PAI learning and reduce teachers' ability to instill spiritual-moral values in depth.(Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2024)

On the one hand, the standards of professionalism of PAI teachers have been regulated normatively through Law Number 14 of 2005 and teacher competency standards that include four main dimensions. On the other hand, educational practices in the field show that many teachers still focus on administrative achievement and mastery of cognitive materials, while the dimensions of exemplarity, spiritual depth, and humanistic educational relations have not been fully internalized. This phenomenon raises a fundamental question: the extent to which the concept of the ideal teacher in Imam Al-Ghazali's thought can be a normative and inspirational foundation to strengthen the professionalism of PAI teachers, especially in facing the challenges of the digital era and the crisis of students' character.("Integrasi Ilmu Dan Amal Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam: Krisis Etika Dan Degradasi Karakter," 2025)

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Based on the background and formulation of the problem, this study aims to: (1) systematically describe the concept of the ideal teacher according to Imam Imam Al-Ghazali based on his main works, especially Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn and Ayyuha al-Walad; (2) analyze the relevance of the concept to the four dimensions of PAI teacher professionalism, namely pedagogic, personality, social, and professional; and (3) formulate conceptual implications for strengthening the PAI teacher profession in the context of contemporary education. Through these objectives, the research is expected to bridge Islamic classical thought with the needs of the development of today's teacher profession.

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the treasures of Islamic educational thought by integrating the concept of the ideal teacher Imam Al-Ghazali into the professional discourse of contemporary PAI teachers. In practice, the results of the research can be a reference for educational institutions, LPTK, and teacher training organizers in designing professional development programs that not only emphasize the technical-pedagogical aspect, but also the spiritual, ethical, and exemplary dimensions. Furthermore, this research is also expected to inspire PAI teachers to reflect again on their roles as mursyid, wa'idz, and mudzakir—figures who not only teach, but also guide, advise, and remind with real examples.("Profesionalisme Guru PAI Perspektif Imam Ghazali: Studi Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin," 2024)

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses theQualitativewith the type of literature research (*Library Research*). This approach was chosen because the focus of the research is not to measure the behavior or competence of PAI teachers directly in the field, but to examine, understand, and interpret Imam Imam Al-Ghazali's ideas regarding the concept of the ideal teacher and its relevance to the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. Literature research allows researchers to collect, review, compare, and synthesize various written sources related to Imam Al-Ghazali's educational thoughts, teacher ethics in Islam, and regulations and theories of teacher professionalism. The character of this research is descriptive-analytical, namely describing the main concepts in the text and then analyzing their conceptual relationship with the professional needs of contemporary PAI teachers. Relevant literature studies are used in the study of Islamic education because they rely on the sources of books, scientific articles, documents, and

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classical works, with researchers playing an active role in interpreting and compiling scientific arguments based on available textual data.(Abdurrahman, 2024)

Research data sources are divided into primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are in the form of works by Imam Imam Al-Ghazali which contain views on science, education, morals, the relationship between teachers and students, and the moral responsibility of educators. The main works used are *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, especially the section that discusses the virtues of knowledge, teaching manners, learning manners, and moral development; and *Ayyuha al-Walad* which contains Imam Al-Ghazali's advice on the unity of knowledge, charity, sincerity, and personality formation. Research can also use other relevant works of Imam Al-Ghazali, such as *Mīzān al-'Amal*, *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, and *Fatihat al-'Ulum*, insofar as these sources support an explanation of the ethics, educational goals, and ideal character of an educator. The use of primary sources is intended to ensure that the interpretation of the concept of the ideal teacher remains based on the original thought of Imam Al-Ghazali, not solely from the interpretation of contemporary authors.("Konsep Kompetensi Guru Dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru Dan Dosen," n.d.)

Meanwhile, secondary data sources consist of Islamic education books, national and international journal articles, results of previous research, scientific proceedings, relevant theses or dissertations, and laws and regulations documents regarding the teaching profession in Indonesia. Secondary sources are used to enrich the context of analysis, clarify terms, and compare Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts with the conception of teacher professionalism today. The main normative document used is Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, especially provisions regarding teacher competence. The law explains that teachers are required to have pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies; these four competencies are an analytical framework to see the relevance of the concept of Imam Al-Ghazali's ideal teacher to the professionalism of PAI teachers in Indonesia. In addition, secondary sources are selectively selected based on the relevance of the topic, the credibility of the publisher or journal, the clarity of the author, the novelty of the discussion, and the suitability of the research objectives.("Konsep Kompetensi Guru Dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 Tentang Guru Dan Dosen," n.d.)

To maintain the validity of the data, the research applied source triangulation and theoretical triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information from Imam Al-Ghazali's primary work with books, journal articles, and previous research that discussed his educational thoughts. Theoretical triangulation was carried out by

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combining the concept of Imam Al-Ghazali's Islamic education with the theory of teacher professionalism and the provisions of teacher competence that apply in Indonesia. In addition, the researcher conducted repeated readings of the main sources so that the interpretation was not separated from the context of Imam Al-Ghazali's thought as a whole. With this procedure, the results of the research are expected to be able to produce an accurate and systematic understanding of the concept of the ideal teacher according to Imam Imam Al-Ghazali, as well as offer a conceptual formulation for strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers who are not only oriented to technical abilities, but also to morality, spirituality, exemplary, and moral responsibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of literature research show that the concept of the ideal teacher in the thought of Imam Imam Al-Ghazali is not only related to teaching skills or mastery of knowledge, but is a unity between spiritual orientation, breadth of knowledge, practice of knowledge, moral maturity, compassion for students, and social responsibility. In the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali, teachers are figures who carry out noble duties because they play a role in guiding humans from ignorance to knowledge, from despicable morals to praiseworthy morals, and from worldly tendencies to closeness to Allah SWT. Therefore, teachers cannot be understood solely as educational workers, but as moral and spiritual guides who carry out scientific mandates. This position makes the personal quality of teachers have a great influence on the success of the educational process, especially in PAI learning which is oriented towards understanding, appreciation, and practicing Islamic values.

Based on the study of the ideas of Imam Al-Ghazali in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and *Ayyuha al-Walad*, several main characteristics of the ideal teacher are found: sincerity in teaching, compassion for students, exemplary in charity, the ability to convey knowledge gradually, attention to differences in students' abilities, politeness in correcting mistakes, and breadth of mastery of knowledge. The study of teacher ethics according to Imam Al-Ghazali also shows that an educator is encouraged to treat students as their own children, teach with the intention of gaining the pleasure of Allah, follow the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and guide students through a gentle approach and not embarrassing them. Thus, the ideal teacher in Imam Al-Ghazali's thought is not a teacher who only succeeds in conveying material, but a teacher who is able to present knowledge as a way of forming the soul and morals.(Zuhdi & Nugroho, 2022)

Sincerity and Spiritual Orientation

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The first character that underlies all the duties of teacher according to Imam Imam Al-Ghazali is sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). Teaching must be understood as a form of devotion to Allah SWT, not just a means of obtaining praise, popularity, social status, or material gain. This orientation does not mean that Imam Al-Ghazali rejects the need for teachers for a decent income, but rather emphasizes that the deepest goal of educational activities should not stop at worldly interests. Sincerity makes teachers aware that knowledge is a mandate that needs to be conveyed correctly and used for the benefit of students.

In the Book *of Ayyuha al-Walad*, Imam Al-Ghazali emphasizes that knowledge without charity does not provide perfect benefits. He likens knowledge to a tree and charity to its fruit; it is not enough for a person to accumulate knowledge if it is not manifested in concrete actions. This principle has an important meaning for PAI teachers because the material taught—such as faith, worship, morals, and social responsibility—basically requires proof of practice. Teachers who teach honesty, discipline, politeness, and responsibility must show these values in their attitude when interacting with students, colleagues, parents, and the school community.(Al-Ghazali, n.d.)

The relevance of sincerity to the professionalism of PAI teachers is mainly seen in personality competence. Professionalism is not only characterized by diplomas, educator certificates, or administrative abilities, but also by moral integrity and consistency. PAI teachers who have a spiritual orientation will be better able to interpret work as a mandate, maintain a commitment to the quality of learning, and avoid behavior that is contrary to the values taught. In practice, this orientation can be seen through teacher discipline, honesty in assessment, responsibility for tasks, fair attitude to all students, and willingness to improve themselves continuously.

Affection and Educational Relationships

The results of subsequent analysis show that Al-Ghazali placed compassion (*Raḥmah*) as an important principle in the relationship between teacher and student. The ideal teacher does not treat students as objects of learning, but as individuals who need to be directed, maintained, and developed according to their respective potentials. In Al-Ghazali's thought, teachers are encouraged to show sympathy and empathy, treat students like their own children, and have concern for their moral and spiritual safety. This principle shows that education is not enough to be carried out through the delivery of material, but requires a humane and educational relationship.(Muhammad et al., 2024)

This affection is also reflected in the way teachers handle students' mistakes. Al-Ghazali does not advocate harsh, open, or embarrassing reprimands for students.

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Instead, mistakes need to be corrected with advice, good language, a persuasive approach, and a goal of improvement. Excessive reprimand has the potential to create fear, hurt, rejection, or loss of trust in students. Conversely, polite coaching can encourage students to understand their mistakes without losing self-esteem. Al-Ghazali's study of teacher ethics emphasizes that teachers should guide students to abandon bad habits suggestively and compassionately, not through aggressive actions or embarrassing criticism.(Muhammad et al., 2024)

This principle is very relevant to the pedagogic and social competence of PAI teachers. In the pedagogic aspect, teachers need to understand the character, needs, stages of development, initial abilities, and learning barriers of students. In the social aspect, teachers are required to build effective communication, empathy, and respect for the diversity of students' backgrounds. In the context of today's schools, for example, when students show undisciplined behavior or express opinions rudely in the digital space, PAI teachers do not adequately provide repressive punishments. Teachers need to conduct dialogues, find the background of the problem, give advice proportionately, and direct students to take responsibility for their actions. This approach reflects moral education that emphasizes internal awareness, not just obedience due to fear of sanctions.(Syahrizal, 2022)

Exemplary knowledge and charity

Another central concept is the harmony between knowledge and charity. Al-Ghazali emphasized that teachers should not convey teachings that are contrary to their own behavior. The mismatch between words and actions can reduce the teacher's authority and weaken the influence of education. In the educational process, students learn not only through verbal explanations, but also through observation of attitudes, habits, moral choices, and the way teachers deal with problems. Therefore, teacher behavior is often a "living curriculum" that is easier for students to grasp and imitate than theoretical explanations alone.("Concept of Islamic Education Psychology in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din," n.d.)

A study of Al-Ghazali's thought states that teachers need to practice the knowledge conveyed and not show behavior that is contrary to their teachings. Teachers who explain the importance of maintaining verbal communication, for example, must get used to polite communication. Teachers who teach cleanliness and discipline in worship need to show discipline in attendance, learning preparation, and implementation of religious obligations. Teachers who instill the value of honesty must carry out

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assessments objectively and avoid discrimination against certain students. This example is what makes the value of PAI present concretely in students' daily experiences.(*Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Tentang Konsep Etika Pendidik*, n.d.)

In relation to teacher professionalism, example especially strengthens personality competence. Law Number 14 of 2005 views competence as a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that must be possessed, lived, and mastered by teachers in carrying out professional duties. Teachers are also required to have pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies as a unit. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, the personality dimension cannot be separated from the moral and spiritual qualities of teachers.("Etika Interaksi Guru Dan Murid Menurut Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali," 2017) Therefore, the professionalism of PAI teachers needs to be developed not only through training in teaching methods or certification, but also through character development, self-reflection, strengthening professional ethics, and habituating the practice of Islamic values in the school environment.

Gradual and Adaptive Learning

Al-Ghazali also emphasized the importance of teachers conveying knowledge gradually according to the level of understanding of students. Teachers should not impose material that is beyond the student's ability, because this can cause boredom, confusion, and even reduce interest in learning. Learning needs to start from simple things to more complex discussions; from basic understanding to analysis; and from value introduction to appreciation and practice. This gradual principle shows that Al-Ghazali has paid attention to differences in students' abilities, learning readiness, and psychological development.("A Professional and Ideal Educator, in Imam Ghazali's View," n.d.)

The relevance of these principles to the pedagogic competence of PAI teachers is very strong. PAI teachers need to design learning based on students' characteristics, learning outcomes, the context of their lives, and their level of thinking development. The teaching of faith, morals, jurisprudence, the Qur'an-Hadith, and the history of Islamic culture cannot be done uniformly and in one direction. Elementary school students, for example, need concrete illustrations, exemplary stories, guided worship practices, and simple habituation. Students at the secondary level can be invited to analyze social phenomena, connect Islamic teachings with digital media issues, reflect on values, and discuss argumentatively and politely.(Safitri, 2022)

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An adaptive approach is also important in the digital era. Students today obtain religious information from various platforms, such as social media, short videos, search engines, online forums, and artificial intelligence applications. This situation requires PAI teachers to have the ability to choose trusted sources, explain the material contextually, and guide students to tabayyun on religious information.("Profesionalisme Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam," n.d.) Teachers can use digital media to strengthen learning, but they still need to ensure that technology is used as a means of education, not just a presentation tool. Thus, Al-Ghazali's idea of learning according to students' abilities can be developed into differentiated, critical, interactive, and morality-oriented PAI learning.

Relevance to professionalism

Normatively, the professionalism of teachers in Indonesia rests on four main competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. This framework is also used in various contemporary discussions about the PAI teacher profession. The results of the analysis show that Al-Ghazali's concept of the ideal teacher does not contradict the framework of professionalism, but can actually deepen the ethical and spiritual dimensions needed in its implementation. Al-Ghazali provides a value basis for professionalism so that it does not stop at compliance with formal standards, learning administration, or improvement of technical skills.(*Characteristics of Teacher Professional Competence in Imam Al-Ghazali's Perspective*, n.d.)

The concept of the ideal teacher of Al-Ghazali	Main meanings	Relevance to the competence of PAI teachers
Sincerity and orientation to Allah	Teaching as a mandate and devotion, not merely a means of worldly interests	Strengthening personality competencies through integrity, responsibility, and ethical commitment
Knowledge practiced	Alignment between the material taught and the teacher's behavior	Strengthening personality and professional competence through exemplary and scientific credibility
Love for students	Treat learners with empathy and care	Strengthening pedagogic and social competence
Step-by-step guidance	Adapting materials, methods, and learning	Strengthening pedagogic competence

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The concept of the ideal teacher of Al-Ghazali	Main meanings	Relevance to the competence of PAI teachers
	demands to students' abilities	
Gentle rebuke	Correct mistakes without embarrassing or demeaning students	Strengthening social, pedagogical, and personality competencies
Mastery of true knowledge	Teachers are required to understand the material in order to be able to direct students appropriately	Strengthen professional competence
Not fanatical in the field of science	Respect other disciplines and avoid condescending attitudes towards teachers or other subjects	Strengthening social and professional competence

Pedagogic competence in Al-Ghazali's perspective is not enough to be interpreted as the ability to create teaching modules, determine methods, or prepare assessments. Pedagogic competence must include the ability to understand students as individuals with intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. PAI teachers need to develop learning that can connect religious knowledge with students' real experiences. For example, material on honesty is not only conveyed through definitions and postulates, but can be linked to the practice of honesty when doing assignments, using digital sources, avoiding plagiarism, and interacting ethically on social media.("Problematika Pembelajaran PAI Di Era Digital: Integrasi Teknologi Dan Strategi Pembelajaran," 2025)

Personality competence is the strongest dimension in Al-Ghazali's concept. PAI teachers are required to have emotional stability, noble morals, maturity, authority, discipline, and spiritual awareness. However, this dimension should not be understood as limited to a good personal image in front of students. The teacher's personality must be seen in the consistency between intentions, speeches, decisions, and actions. According to Al-Ghazali, a professional teacher is a teacher who continues to do muhasabah, improve morals, expand knowledge, and protect himself from behavior that

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can damage the dignity of the educator profession.("Konsep Guru Ideal Perspektif Al-Ghazali Dalam Kitab Ihya' 'Ulumuddin," 2023)

In the social dimension, the concept of Al-Ghazali directs teachers to build relationships full of respect and affection. This is relevant for PAI teachers who interact with students from various family conditions, academic ability levels, characters, and social experiences. Teachers must be able to communicate wisely, not easily label negatively, not demean students who are slow to understand lessons, and be able to cooperate with parents and school residents. A humanistic social attitude will strengthen a safe, inclusive school climate, and support the formation of students' character.(Syahrizal, 2022)

Professional competence is related to mastery of materials, scientific structure, the ability to develop teaching materials, update insights, and the appropriate use of information technology. Contemporary studies on teacher competence emphasize that mastery of materials, development of learning materials, continuous professional development, and the use of information and communication technology are important parts of professional competence. In the framework of Al-Ghazali, mastery of knowledge must not produce intellectual arrogance, but must give birth to humility, wisdom, and usefulness. PAI teachers need to continue to update their insights into Islam, pedagogy, and digital literacy in order to be able to respond to students' questions in an argumentative, moderate, and responsible manner.

Implications of strengthening PAI teachers

The findings of this study imply that the professional development program of PAI teachers needs to be designed integratively. The program not only focuses on mastering learning technology, preparing teaching tools, assessments, or improving academic qualifications, but also needs to contain strengthening spirituality, professional ethics, exemplary, and the ability to build educational relationships. The development of PAI teacher competencies that only emphasizes technical aspects risks producing teachers who are procedurally capable, but do not necessarily have moral and spiritual depth in carrying out their duties.(Tafsir, 2014)

Educational institutions, LPTK, professional organizations, and teacher training providers can develop coaching programs that include the study of the works of education scholars, reflection on professional ethics, learning assistance, learning community, and evaluation of teacher examples. PAI teachers also need to be encouraged to make self-reflection part of sustainable professional development. This reflection can

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be done through regular evaluation of how to communicate with students, suitability between materials and behaviors, objectivity in assessment, teaching readiness, and the ability to use digital media in an educational and responsible manner.(Muhaimin, 2012)

Thus, Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts remain strongly relevant in strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers in the contemporary era. Its relevance does not lie in the literal application of classical ideas, but in the actualization of its basic values: sincere, knowledgeable, charitable, moral, loving students, and guiding wisely. This concept emphasizes that professional PAI teachers are teachers who are able to combine pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competencies with an orientation of devotion to Allah SWT. This integration is important so that PAI learning not only produces students who understand Islamic teachings cognitively, but also have character, moral awareness, and the ability to practice Islamic values responsibly in personal and social life.(Zainuddin, 1991)

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the concept of the ideal teacher in the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali is a concept of education that is comprehensive and not limited to the teacher's ability to convey subject matter. According to Al-Ghazali, the ideal teacher is an educator who has sincerity in carrying out his duties, the breadth and depth of knowledge, the harmony between knowledge and charity, noble morals, compassion for students, patience, and the ability to guide students wisely and gradually. Teachers not only function as conveyors of knowledge, but also as spiritual guides, moral coaches, counselors, and role models in the lives of students. Thus, the success of education is not only measured through cognitive mastery of knowledge, but also through the formation of personality, moral awareness, and the practice of Islamic values in daily life. The concept is in line with Al-Ghazali's affirmation that science must produce charity and that educators need to show consistency between the values taught and the behavior displayed.("Kompetensi Profesional Guru: Konsep, Pengembangan, Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Kualitas Pendidikan," 2026)

The results of the analysis also show that Al-Ghazali's idea has strong relevance to the four dimensions of professionalism of PAI teachers in Indonesia, namely pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competence. The principles of gradual learning, understanding of the condition of students, and gentle coaching are related to strengthening pedagogic competence. Sincerity, integrity, example, and the practice of knowledge strengthen personality competencies. Compassion, polite communication,

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and the ability to build humanistic educational relationships are related to social competence. Meanwhile, the demands of correct mastery of knowledge, sustainable development of insights, and responsibility in conveying religious teachings strengthen professional competence. This framework is in line with Law Number 14 of 2005 which places pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies as elements that teachers must have in carrying out their professional duties.(Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2005)

In the context of contemporary education, Al-Ghazali's thinking can be used as a basis for strengthening the professionalism of PAI teachers in the midst of digital technology developments, social changes, and challenges in shaping students' character. The professionalism of PAI teachers should not stop at the fulfillment of academic qualifications, certifications, learning administration, or mastery of technology, although all of these aspects remain important. Professionalism needs to be built as an integration between academic competence, pedagogic skills, digital literacy, morals, spiritual awareness, and real examples. Therefore, educational institutions, LPTK, and teacher training providers need to design professional development programs that combine improving technical competencies with strengthening professional ethics, spiritual reflection, character building, and exemplary practices. With this approach, PAI teachers are expected to be able to carry out their role as professional educators as well as moral-spiritual figures who guide students to become knowledgeable, moral, and responsible individuals.("Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam: Analisis Konseptual Terhadap Pendidikan Islam," n.d.)

Implications and Recommendations

This study emphasizes that strengthening the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers cannot only be directed at improving academic qualifications, certification, mastery of materials, preparation of teaching tools, and skills in using learning technology. All of these aspects are still important, but they need to be accompanied by the development of personality dimensions, ethics, spirituality, and exemplary. The concept of the ideal teacher of Imam Al-Ghazali shows that the quality of PAI teachers lies in the integration of knowledge, charity, sincerity, compassion, patience, and moral responsibility towards students. The theoretical implication of this study is that the professionalism of PAI teachers needs to be understood more comprehensively, namely as a combination of pedagogic, personality, social, and professional competencies with an orientation of devotion to Allah SWT. The framework is in line with the provisions of teacher competence in Law Number 14 of 2005, but Al-

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Ghazali's thinking strengthens the ethical and spiritual dimensions that are not always covered in depth in the administrative indicators of teacher professionalism.

On a practical level, educational institutions need to make the role model of teachers part of the school culture. Principals, supervisors, and education managers can design PAI teacher development programs that not only focus on evaluating learning administration, but also on developing integrity, educational communication, student mentoring skills, and reflection on professional ethics. These programs can be realized through routine study activities on educator ethics, empathic communication training, educational case reflection forums, learning supervision that assesses teacher-student interactions, and PAI teacher learning communities. This approach is important so that the values of compassion, politeness, justice, and harmony between science and charity do not stop at the level of discourse, but are present in the daily professional behavior of teachers.

For the Education Personnel Education Institute (LPTK), the results of this research can be the basis for strengthening the content of Islamic education philosophy, teacher professional ethics, character education, and educator spirituality in the educational curriculum of prospective teachers. Students of prospective PAI teachers need to be equipped not only with the competence to prepare teaching modules, learning strategies, assessments, and mastery of religious materials, but also the ability to conduct muhasabah, build humanist communication, understand the diversity of students, and display examples in the real and digital spaces. Al-Ghazali's study on the need for compassion for students, gradual teaching, and the compatibility between science and charity can be used as a basis for values to form the professional identity of prospective PAI teachers.

In the face of the development of digital technology, PAI teachers are recommended to improve digital literacy critically and benefit-oriented. The use of technology should not only be used to convey material through presentations or video media, but also to foster students' ability to choose credible religious sources, understand media ethics, conduct tabayyun on information, and avoid the spread of content that contains hatred, hoaxes, or non-moderate religious understanding. Al-Ghazali's principle of useful knowledge and the obligation to practice knowledge can be actualized through PAI learning that connects religious values with real problems, such as academic honesty, online communication ethics, social concern, respect for differences, and responsibility in using digital media.

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Further research is recommended to expand this study through field research in elementary schools, high schools, madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and universities. Empirical research can examine how the concept of the ideal teacher Al-Ghazali is understood and implemented by PAI teachers in learning activities, character development, the use of digital media, and communication with students and parents. In addition, future research can use case study approaches, phenomenology, surveys, or classroom action research to measure the influence of teacher exemplary and spirituality strengthening programs on students' learning motivation, religious character, discipline, or social behavior. It is also important to develop instruments to identify indicators of ideal teachers based on Al-Ghazali's thinking so that the concept can be applied more operationally in the training, supervision, and evaluation of the professionalism of PAI teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses gratitude to the presence of Allah SWT. for His grace, help, and convenience so that the article entitled "The Concept of the Ideal Teacher in the Thought of Imam Al-Ghazali and Its Relevance to the Professionalism of Islamic Religious Education Teachers" can be completed. The author, Moh. Ilyas, realizes that the preparation of this article is part of an academic effort to enrich the study of Islamic education, especially regarding the importance of strengthening spiritual values, ethics, morals, and exemplary conduct in developing the professionalism of Islamic Religious Education teachers.

The author, Moh. Ilyas, would like to express sincere gratitude to the supervisors, colleagues, and all parties who have provided input, direction, support, and constructive criticism throughout the process of preparing this article. Appreciation is also extended to the authors, translators, editors, publishers, and journal managers whose works have been used as reference sources in this literature research. The contributions of these various parties have greatly assisted the author in deepening the understanding of Imam Al-Ghazali's educational thought and its relevance to the contemporary dynamics of PAI teacher professionalism.

The author, Moh. Ilyas, realizes that this article still has limitations, particularly because the research is conducted using a literature-review approach and has not yet been supported by empirical data from the learning practices of PAI teachers in schools or madrasas. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly expected to improve this study in future research. The author hopes that this article will provide

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benefits for PAI teachers, prospective teachers, educational institutions, LPTK, and Islamic education researchers in developing teacher professionalism grounded in knowledge, morals, exemplary conduct, and spiritual orientation.

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