

# Knowledge in The Perspective of Islamic Religion: A Qualitative Study of The Thought of Imam Al-Ghazali Scholars

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## Abstract

*This study Science from an Islamic perspective is not only understood as the result of rationality and scientific methods, but also includes moral, spiritual, and transcendental dimensions that are oriented towards the recognition and devotion to Allah SWT. The problem that arises in the development of modern science is the dichotomy between religious science and general science which has an impact on scientific fragmentation and value crisis in Islamic education. This article aims to examine the concept of science as well as the view of the integration of religious science and general science according to Imam Al-Ghazali as a criticism of the dichotomy of science. This study uses a literature study method with a qualitative approach, with primary data sources in the form of works of Imam Al-Ghazali such as Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din and Risalah al-Laduniyyah, as well as secondary data sources in the form of relevant books and scientific articles. The results of the study show that Imam Al-Ghazali views knowledge as a means of getting closer to Allah, which must be based on ethical and moral values. The division of knowledge into the categories of fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah as well as shari'iyah and 'aqliyyah is not intended as a dichotomous separation, but as a functional classification based on its usefulness and priority for the life of the ummah. Al-Ghazali emphasized that religious science and general science are complementary to each other, where reason requires the guidance of revelation and revelation requires understanding of reason. Thus, Imam Al-Ghazali's thought affirms the importance of the integration of knowledge within the framework of monotheism as the foundation for the development of holistic Islamic science and education that is relevant to the challenges of the globalization era.*

**Keyword :** Science, Islam, Integration of Knowledge, Dichotomy of Knowledge, Imam Al-Ghazali

## Introduction Section

In general, science is defined as knowledge that is systematically structured, logical, and can be tested through scientific methods to explain natural and social phenomena. In an Islamic perspective, science has a broader dimension than just scientific rationality, but it also includes moral, spiritual, and transcendental aspects oriented towards the recognition of the Creator.

Science is not only related to worldly aspects, but is also a way to achieve spiritual understanding and get closer to Allah SWT. However, in the course of history, a phenomenon known as the dichotomy of science emerged, namely the separation between religious science and general science, which is considered by many academics to be one of the causes of the decline of Islamic civilization.

The development of science in the history of Islamic civilization shows very complex and profound dynamics. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the peak of the glory of the Abbasid Empire, science was seen as an inseparable unity between the religious and rational dimensions. Islam has since its inception emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge, just as the first revelation that came down affirmed the commandment to read and think (Widodo & Mujib, 2025).

Education is very necessary, especially in today's human life, in the era of globalization which is characterized by the occurrence of rapid and complex changes, both regarding changes in values and structures related to human life. So it can be said that education is an absolute need that must be fulfilled throughout life, without education it is very impossible for humans to live and develop in line with the changing times.

Imam al-Ghazali apart from being an expert scholar in the field of religion, his view on education can be said to be very complete, not only emphasizing Islamic religious values, but also professional in terms of science. Al-Ghazali's opinion on education does not demand the role of students to obey the teacher under any circumstances, but is obliged to obey as long as it does not contradict Allah's commands. On the other hand, Al-Ghazali also demanded that teachers be professional and always guard against things that Allah forbids, because teachers are role models for their students (PUTRA, 2017).

Although many studies on religion and science and the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali have been made, there are still a number of gaps and weaknesses in the research that require further attention. Most of the previous research was

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normative-descriptive, which only discussed the concept of science according to Al-Ghazali without relating it in depth to the dichotomy of science in the context of contemporary education. In addition, there is still a lack of qualitative research that specifically examines the integration of rational, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the concept of science according to Imam Al-Ghazali. Based on these conditions, the focus of this research is directed to the study of Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the relationship between religion and science in an Islamic perspective.

This research focuses on the understanding of the concept of science according to Imam Al-Ghazali which includes the rational, moral, and spiritual dimensions, as well as his views on the integration between religious science and general science as a form of criticism of the dichotomy of science.

The purpose of this research is to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between religion and science in an Islamic perspective based on the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali. In particular, this study aims to describe the concept of science according to Imam Al-Ghazali from an Islamic perspective and analyze his views on the relationship between religion and science, including his rejection of the dichotomy of science.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative research approach based on library research. The primary data source consists of the original works of Imam Al-Ghazali, which serve as the main reference for analyzing his views on religion and science. In addition to primary sources, this study also utilizes secondary data in the form of books, scientific articles, academic journals, and other relevant literature related to the research topic.

Library research is considered an appropriate and essential method for exploring Imam Al-Ghazali's thought, particularly in relation to the discourse on religion and science. Through a qualitative approach, researchers are able to examine a broad range of written materials, including classical texts, contemporary scholarly works, and historical documents, in order to identify, interpret, and analyze Al-Ghazali's contributions to Islamic intellectual tradition. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of concepts, arguments, and philosophical frameworks found within the literature (Abdurrasyid et al., 2024).

The process of selecting sources in this study is conducted using several key criteria. Sources are chosen based on their relevance to the research focus, specifically those that discuss Al-Ghazali's ideas on science and knowledge. In addition, priority is given to sources with strong academic credibility, such as peer-reviewed journals and books published by reputable academic publishers. The authority of the author is also taken into consideration, with preference given to scholars who are recognized experts in Islamic philosophy and Al-Ghazali's thought. Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of sources are taken into account to ensure that the selected materials can be reliably examined by the researcher.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Biography of Imam Al-Ghazali**

According to the opinion, "Ghazali" is taken from the word "Ghazalah" which is the name of al-Ghazali's birthplace. The name is sometimes pronounced "al-Ghazzali" this term comes from the word "Ghazal" meaning a yarn spinner, because al-Ghazali's father's job was a woollen yarn spinner. Al-Ghazali is known by the nickname Hujjatul Islam, because of his broad views and insights in various disciplines of Religion (Artika et al., 2023).

Imam Al-Ghazali, whose full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali ath-Thusi Ash-Shafi'i, was born in 450 H/1058 AD in the city of Thus, Khurasan which is now the territory of Iran. He is known as one of the most influential Islamic thinkers in the history of classical Islamic intellectuals. The title "Hujjatul Islam" pinned on him shows the level of appreciation of scholars for the breadth of his knowledge. He grew up in a simple family, but his father was also a Sufi who was also very concerned about the education of his children. After his father's death, Al-Ghazali and his brothers were cared for by his father's friend who was also a Sufi. From his father's best friend, Al-Ghazali and his brother were educated about worship and noble morals. However, after Al-Ghazali's father's inheritance began to run out, Al-Ghazali and his brother were entrusted to a free madrasah to continue their journey to seek knowledge. This is where Al-Ghazali began his journey in search of knowledge and met many great Islamic scholars and took wisdom and lessons from each of his scientific journeys (Nurdiana, 2025).

If traced from the course of Islamic history, even though al-Ghazali's life period was still in the classical period (650-1250 AD), it had entered a period of decline or clearly a period of disintegration (1000-1250 AD). Politically, the power of the Islamic government, which at that time was under the power of the Abbasid Dynasty, was very weak and retreated due to the occurrence of prolonged and unresolved internal conflicts. In his childhood Imam al-Ghazali studied with Ahwad bin Muhammad ar-Radzikani in hus then studied with Abi Nashr al-Ismaili in Jurjani and finally he returned to hus again. On another occasion, it was told that on his way home, he was stopped by a group of robbers who then robbed them of their property and necessities. The robbers seized Imam al-Ghazali's bag containing books on philosophy and science that he was fond of. Then Imam al-Ghazali hoped that they would be willing to return his bag, because he wanted to get the various kinds of knowledge contained in the book. The robbers felt pity and pity for him, and they returned the

books to him. It is also said that after that he became very diligent in studying his books, understanding the knowledge contained in them and trying to practice them. In fact, he put his books in a special safe place (Zaini & Zaini, 1902).

### **The Concept of Science According to Imam Al-Ghazali**

Al-Ghazali taught that science is a way to get closer to Allah, not just a collection of facts. Science is seen as a means of understanding God's creation with holy intentions. This view integrates the dimensions of spirituality and worldly knowledge in scientific pursuits. For Al-Ghazali, scientific knowledge must be based on religious ethical and moral values, creating harmony between science and religion. This concept invites us to see science as a means that deepens our understanding of the world while enhancing the spiritual and ethical dimensions of the exploration of knowledge, giving broader meaning to our intellectual journey (Selvia, 2024).

The concept of integration of religious science and world science, as emphasized by Imam Al-Ghazali, has profound implications in the modern era. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of combining religious knowledge and world science to achieve a holistic understanding of man and his purpose. This view is relevant in addressing the complexity of the challenges facing modern society. In "Ihya Ulum al-Din" ("Revival of the Religious Sciences"), Al-Ghazali stated the need to combine religious knowledge with world science, where religious science provides moral and ethical guidance in applying the world's sciences, while world science provides a broader understanding of the universe that reflects the greatness of God. Evidence in support of this view can be found in the Qur'an:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me." (QS. Adz-Dzariyat, 51:56)

This verse shows that the purpose of man's creation was to worship Allah. The integration of religious science and world science creates a deeper understanding of how humans can utilize knowledge to achieve spiritual and worldly goals at the same time.

The nature of man who distinguishes himself from Allah's creatures by the existence of his ratio and intuition in thinking so as to find a better way of life with a process aimed at the hereafter, then a human being has a demand to seek knowledge as a support for life to understand the Divine Kalam as in the Word of Allah which means: "It is not appropriate for the believer to go all (to the battlefield). Why not go from each of them some people to deepen their knowledge of religion and to warn his people when they have returned to him, so that they can take care of themselves. In order to achieve Islamic education, Imam Al-Ghazali hopes to instill noble morals in the students and clearly through educators as expressed by Imam Al-Ghazali. Imam Al-Ghazali likened an educator who has a goal in his educational concept through educators for his students by keeping his students away from all evil and evil, because the distance students are from evil, it will make society (Teen Kamaliya, 2015).

Imam Al-Ghazali was a great scholar that Islam had throughout its history. He is classified as a scholar and also an Islamic thinker who is very successful in pouring his writings into a work (Rahmadani, 2023).

The study of the classification of al-Ghazali knowledge is based on two main sources, namely The book of knowledge from *Ihya* and *Al-risalat al-laduniyah*. In these works, alGhazali mentions four different classification systems, namely the division of knowledge into theoretical and practical parts, the division of knowledge into knowledge presented (*hudhuri*) and knowledge achieved (*hushuli*), the division of religious (*al-ulum al-sya'riah*) and intellectual (*al-ulum al-aqliyah*) sciences, the division of knowledge into *fard ain* (obligatory for all individuals) and *fard kifayah* (obligatory on the *ummah*). The study of the basics of the hierarchy of al-Ghazali science consists of three discussions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations (Joseph, 2024).

### **Imam Al-Ghazali's view of the integration of religious science and general science, as a critique of the dichotomy of science.**

To examine the integration of knowledge in Al-Ghazali's view, we will first get to know the epistemology and classification of knowledge put forward by the phenomenal figure. In the book *Risalah Al Laduniyyah* as explained by epistemology, science is divided into two sources of excavation. First, the source of *insaniyyah*. This means that Al-Ghazali believed that human beings with the power of reason and the structure of their senses can acquire knowledge. Second, the source of *rabbaniyyah*. This type of source as explained by Al-Ghazali does not result from sensory thoughts and efforts, but from knowledge that is directly given by Allah either through inspiration or revelation as it has been conveyed to His prophets and messengers (Karo-karo et al., 2024).

Al-Ghazali, through his monumental work *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, emphasized the revival of religious sciences in the midst of the rapid influence of Greek philosophy. He divides knowledge into *fardhu 'ain* and *fardhu kifayah*, as well as distinguishing between *sharia science* (worship, law, morals) and *sharia ghairu science* (medicine, engineering, mathematics). Despite making categorizations, AlGhazali assesses science based on its benefits for human life and its closeness to Allah. Knowledge that brings goodness and supports devotion to God is seen as praiseworthy, while knowledge that is misleading or useless is categorized as despicable. Thus, the division of knowledge is not a form of dichotomy, but an emphasis on the dimension of utility. Thus, the dichotomy of knowledge that emerges in the modern tradition of Muslim thought is more a product of the influence of Western secularization than of the intellectual treasures of Islam itself. Islamic epistemology, as described by Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, and al-Attas, instead teaches the integration of knowledge within the framework of monotheism, where all knowledge is directed to get closer to Allah and build a just, balanced, and civilized civilization (Atikah, 2025).

The birth of the dichotomy of science in Islamic history is rooted in the complex interaction between the Islamic scientific tradition and outside influences, especially Greek philosophy and Western education. Initially, the division of

knowledge was only intended as a neutral classification, as Al-Ghazali did with the categorization of fardhu 'ain, fardhu kifayah, as well as shari'iyah and 'aqliyyah science. However, over time, this classification turned into an absolute separation that created a gap between religious science and general science. Factors such as Al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophy, political policies during al-Makmun's time, and the entry of Western secular education through colonialism deepened the separation. As a result, the Islamic scientific tradition that was originally integrative has stagnated and lost competitiveness (Atikah, 2025).

In his work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali classifies knowledge into two main categories, namely the science of fardhu 'ain and the science of fardhu kifayah. Religious sciences such as faith, worship, and morals are included in fardhu 'ain, while rational and empirical sciences such as medicine, mathematics, agriculture, and social administration are included in fardhu kifayah. This division is not to dichotomize knowledge, but to show its function and priorities in the lives of the people. Al-Ghazali categorically rejects views that denigrate general science or rational science. He stated that worldly sciences become reprehensible not because of their substance, but when they are separated from moral values and the purpose of the hereafter. On the contrary, general knowledge is used for the benefit of the ummah and is intended because Allah is actually worth worship.

Islamic religious science and general science do have a kind of dichotomy, but it must be understood that there is a certain purpose in the dichotomy of these sciences. For example, dichotomizing science into religious science (religion) and intellectual science (general) is carried out with the intention of simplifying the classification of science into the categories of Fardlu ain science and fardlu kifayah science. However, Al-Ghazali does not view religious science and general science as contradictory. Because, the two complement each other. The limitation of reason as a source of general knowledge requires the guidance of Wahyu which is the source of Islamic religious knowledge. Likewise, the limitations of Revelation require the interpretation of the intellect (Wanida & Anwar, 2024).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of a qualitative study of Imam Al-Ghazali's thought, it can be concluded that science from an Islamic perspective is an inseparable unit between the rational, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Imam Al-Ghazali views knowledge not just as a means to understand empirical reality, but as a way to get closer to Allah SWT and realize the benefits of mankind. Therefore, ethical and moral values are the main foundation in the development and application of science.

The division of knowledge carried out by Imam Al-Ghazali into the categories of fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah, as well as shari'iyah and 'aqliyyah science, is not intended as a form of dichotomy between religious science and general science. The classification is a methodological effort to place knowledge according to its functions, priorities, and usefulness in life. Religious science and general science are seen as complementary, where reason plays an important role in understanding revelation, while revelation becomes a moral and spiritual guide for the use of reason.

Imam Al-Ghazali's thought also shows a strong critique of the dichotomy of science that is developing in the modern educational tradition. According to him, the separation of knowledge from divine values and morals actually gave birth to a scientific crisis and the decline of civilization. The integration of knowledge within the framework of monotheism is a conceptual solution to build an Islamic education system that is holistic, balanced, and relevant to the challenges of globalization.

Thus, Imam Al-Ghazali's thought remains of strong relevance in the context of education and the development of contemporary science. The integration of religious science and general science as formulated by Al-Ghazali can be used as a philosophical and epistemological foundation in formulating an Islamic education paradigm that is not only oriented towards the mastery of knowledge, but also on the formation of students' character, morals, and spiritual awareness.

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