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SPIRITUAL PRACTICES AND THE ACQUISITION OF *'ILM LADUNNI* AT PONDOK PESANTREN TAUHID AL BAJURI: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF AL-GHAZALI

[*]Ahmad Yani Fathur Rohman[1], Muhammad Qomarul Huda[2]
[1,2]Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia
[*]Email: ahmadyanifr@iainkediri.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the forms, meanings, and processes of spiritual practices in relation to the acquisition of *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge) at Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri, and analyzes their relevance to Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework. The study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological orientation to explore lived experiences and interpretations of spiritual practices within the pesantren context. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with key participants, and documentation of institutional practices. The findings show that spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, *khalwat*, *riyadhah*, and *tafakkur* function as structured processes of self-discipline and inner purification. These practices are understood as preparatory stages for receiving knowledge, closely associated with the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs*. The process of acquiring *'ilm ladunni* is interpreted as a gradual transformation involving stages of *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*, through which the heart (*qalb*) becomes receptive to deeper forms of understanding. The study further indicates that the distinction between *'ilm kasbi* and *'ilm ladunni* is reflected in practice as a complementary relationship rather than a dichotomy. Intellectual learning provides a conceptual foundation, while spiritual discipline contributes to the formation of inner readiness. These findings demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework continues to operate within contemporary pesantren education, where knowledge is experienced as both learned and lived.

Keywords: *'Ilm Ladunni, Spiritual Practices, Pesantren, Al-Ghazali, Islamic Epistemology*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bentuk, makna, dan proses praktik spiritual dalam upaya memperoleh *'ilm ladunni* di Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri, serta mengkaji relevansinya dengan kerangka epistemologi Al-Ghazali. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan orientasi fenomenologis untuk memahami pengalaman hidup dan interpretasi praktik spiritual dalam konteks pesantren. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan informan kunci, serta dokumentasi praktik kelembagaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik spiritual seperti *dhikr*, *khalwat*, *riyadhah*, dan *tafakkur* berfungsi sebagai proses terstruktur dalam pembentukan disiplin diri dan penyucian batin. Praktik tersebut dipahami sebagai tahap persiapan untuk menerima pengetahuan yang lebih dalam dan berkaitan erat dengan konsep *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Proses memperoleh *'ilm ladunni* dimaknai sebagai proses bertahap yang melibatkan tahapan *takhalli*, *tahalli*, dan *tajalli*, di mana

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hati (*qalb*) menjadi lebih siap menerima pemahaman yang lebih mendalam. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan antara *'ilm kasbi* dan *'ilm ladunni* tidak dipahami sebagai dikotomi, melainkan sebagai hubungan yang saling melengkapi. Pembelajaran intelektual memberikan dasar konseptual, sementara disiplin spiritual membentuk kesiapan batin. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi Al-Ghazali masih relevan dalam praktik pendidikan pesantren kontemporer, di mana pengetahuan tidak hanya dipelajari, tetapi juga dialami.

Kata Kunci: *'Ilm Ladunni, Praktik Spiritual, Pesantren, Al-Ghazali, Epistemologi Islam*

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A. Introduction

The rapid development of modern science has significantly influenced how knowledge is defined and classified, often creating a distinction between empirical reality and metaphysical dimensions. Empirical knowledge is generally understood as knowledge derived from sensory observation and systematic methods used to explain observable phenomena (Soetriono & Hanafie, 2007). In contrast, metaphysical knowledge refers to realities that cannot be directly perceived through the senses. This distinction has contributed to the dominance of empirical and rational approaches within modern scientific paradigms, where knowledge is frequently measured based on its verifiability and practical utility.

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, however, the concept of knowledge extends beyond empirical and rational boundaries. The term *'ilm* (knowledge) in Arabic carries a broader meaning that includes both external and internal dimensions of knowing (Al-Attas, 1995). While in English the term "science" often refers to natural sciences, Islamic epistemology does not strictly separate knowledge into empirical and non-empirical categories (Nasr, 1989). Scholars such as Ahmad Tafsir (2009) and Soetriono and Hanafie (2007) distinguish between knowledge as empirical awareness and knowledge as a structured, rational, and meaningful understanding. This distinction highlights that knowledge in Islam involves not only cognition, but also purpose and value.

The rise of positivism, particularly through the work of Auguste Comte, reinforced the idea that human knowledge develops toward a stage where empirical science becomes the primary standard of truth (Comte, 1974). This paradigm has shaped modern thought in a way that often excludes metaphysical and spiritual dimensions. As noted by Mumford (1952), modern humans are increasingly defined through scientific inquiry rather than religious or transcendental understanding. Within this framework, knowledge is frequently detached from its spiritual foundations. In contrast, Islamic scholars maintain that knowledge cannot be separated from the nature of the human being as a unity of body and soul. Al-Farabi describes humans as rational beings composed of both animal and intellectual elements (Al-Fārābī, 1985), while Al-Ghazali emphasizes

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the integration of the physical body (*jism*) and the spiritual soul (*ruh*) as inseparable components of human existence (Al-Ghazali, 2002).

From this perspective, the human being is understood as possessing both external and internal faculties of knowing. Psychological discussions in Islamic thought often describe the human soul in terms of *cipta*, *rasa*, and *karsa* (cognitive, affective, and volitional dimensions), which together shape human awareness and action (Poerwadarminta, 1996). In addition, Mudhary (1992) explains the presence of two centers of awareness: the external mind, which processes sensory information, and the internal or spiritual consciousness, which processes inner knowledge. This distinction is also reflected in the Qur'anic indication that human beings possess the potential to access deeper dimensions of knowledge through divine permission (QS. Ar-Rahman [55]: 33). According to al-Razi (1990), the term *sulthān* in this verse refers to a form of comprehensive power, including the capacity for inner knowledge.

Within the Sufi tradition, one of the highest forms of knowledge is known as *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge), which is understood as knowledge granted directly by God without mediation through formal learning processes (Rohman, 2024; Wekke et al., 2018). This form of knowledge is associated with inner illumination and is accessible to those who undergo spiritual purification. For many scholars, *'ilm ladunni* represents the culmination of the epistemological journey, where knowledge is no longer limited to rational processes but emerges through spiritual experience and proximity to God.

Imam Al-Ghazali offers one of the most influential formulations of this epistemological framework. In works such as *al-Risalah al-Ladunniyyah* and *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he explains that knowledge is not solely the result of intellectual effort, but also a light (*nur ilahi*, divine light) that is placed in the heart of a purified individual (Al-Ghazali, 1988; 2002). He distinguishes between knowledge acquired through effort (*'ilm kasbi*) and knowledge granted directly by God (*'ilm ladunni*), while maintaining that both forms of knowledge are interconnected. For Al-Ghazali, the heart (*qalb*, spiritual center) plays a central role in receiving higher knowledge, particularly when it has been purified through spiritual discipline.

Despite the richness of this epistemological framework, contemporary academic discussions tend to focus more on textual and philosophical interpretations rather than examining how these concepts are practiced in real-life educational settings. Studies on Sufism often emphasize theoretical analysis, while fewer explore how spiritual epistemology is embodied in institutional contexts. This gap is particularly evident in research on Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), where intellectual and spiritual education are integrated within daily practice.

Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri in Bakung, Udanawu, Blitar presents a relevant context for examining this issue. The pesantren emphasizes a balance between intellectual learning and spiritual discipline through practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *khalwat* (spiritual retreat), and *tafakkur* (contemplation). These practices are

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understood as pathways toward deeper forms of knowledge that go beyond rational inquiry. Within this setting, knowledge is not only studied but also experienced as part of a broader spiritual process.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the forms and meanings of spiritual practices in the effort to acquire *'ilm ladunni* at Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri and to examine their relevance to Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework. The study focuses on how these practices are carried out, how they are understood by the participants, and how they relate to the integration of intellectual and spiritual dimensions of knowledge. Through this approach, the study seeks to clarify how classical Islamic epistemology continues to be articulated within contemporary educational practice.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological orientation to explore the meanings and experiences associated with spiritual practices in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri, as well as their relation to *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge) within the epistemological framework of Al-Ghazali. A qualitative design is considered appropriate because the study seeks to understand lived religious experiences, internal meanings, and spiritual interpretations that cannot be reduced to numerical measurement. In line with Moleong (2017), this approach allows the researcher to examine social and religious phenomena as they are experienced by participants within their natural setting. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical design, aiming not only to describe observable practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *khalwat* (spiritual retreat), *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline), and *tafakkur* (contemplation), but also to interpret their meanings in relation to Al-Ghazali's epistemological concepts.

This research is conducted as a field study at Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri in Bakung, Udanawu, Blitar. The data consist of primary and secondary sources. Primary data are obtained through direct observation of spiritual activities and in-depth interviews with key participants, including the *kiai* (religious leader), spiritual instructors, and selected students who actively engage in spiritual practices. Secondary data are derived from classical and contemporary literature, particularly the works of Al-Ghazali such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, and *al-Risalah al-Ladunniyyah*, as well as relevant studies in Sufism and Islamic epistemology. Data collection is carried out through three main techniques: participant observation to capture the structure and atmosphere of spiritual practices, in-depth interviews to explore participants' interpretations and experiences, and documentation of institutional records and written materials related to spiritual instruction.

Data analysis follows an interactive model adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994), involving data reduction, data display, and interpretive conclusion drawing. The analysis is conducted continuously throughout the research process to ensure consistency between empirical findings and theoretical interpretation. The researcher focuses on identifying patterns of meaning, recurring themes, and conceptual connections between

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observed practices and Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework, particularly in relation to the processes of spiritual purification and the reception of knowledge. To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study relies on careful interpretation of participant narratives and the use of multiple data sources. This approach allows the study to present a coherent understanding of how spiritual practices are experienced, interpreted, and positioned as pathways toward *'ilm ladunni* within the pesantren context.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Forms of Spiritual Practices in the Pesantren

Spiritual practices at Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri are structured as a central component of the educational process, shaping not only religious discipline but also the internal orientation of knowledge. The findings show that the core practices consist of *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *khalwat* (spiritual retreat), *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline), and *tafakkur* (contemplation). These practices are not treated as supplementary rituals, but as formative processes through which students cultivate inner readiness for receiving knowledge. In the pesantren context, spiritual discipline is embedded in daily routines and reinforced through collective activities such as *mujahadah*, creating a structured environment where spiritual training becomes inseparable from learning.

From an empirical standpoint, these practices function as observable forms of disciplined behavior. At the same time, their significance lies in how they are interpreted by participants as processes of self-regulation and inner transformation. This aligns with studies on Sufi pedagogy, which emphasize that spiritual exercises are designed to cultivate moral discipline and inward awareness rather than merely ritual compliance (Mahdany et al., 2025). In a similar vein, research on pesantren education shows that the integration of Sufistic values shapes learning orientation, moral development, and disciplined spiritual practice in pesantren settings (Mahdany et al., 2025). Within this framework, knowledge is approached as something that requires ethical preparation and spiritual readiness.

The meaning of these practices becomes clearer when viewed through the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). The practices are understood as stages in preparing the heart (*qalb*, the spiritual center) to become receptive to higher forms of knowledge. This interpretation is consistent with Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework, in which knowledge is closely tied to the condition of the inner self and is ultimately received through inner illumination rather than intellectual effort alone (Wekke et al., 2018). In this sense, repetition, discipline, and collective ritual are not merely religious obligations, but epistemological processes that shape how knowledge is accessed and internalized.

Further support can be found in recent discussions on pesantren epistemology, which argue that Islamic boarding schools represent a form of practical knowledge system where learning is rooted in the integration of spiritual formation, moral discipline, and

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educational practice rather than abstract cognition alone (Mahdany et al., 2025). This perspective helps explain why spiritual practices in the pesantren are closely linked to the formation of knowledge. The process of engaging in *dhikr*, *riyadhah*, and *tafakkur* gradually transforms the students' orientation, allowing them to perceive knowledge as something that emerges through disciplined experience rather than intellectual accumulation alone.

In relation to Al-Ghazali's distinction between *'ilm kasbi* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge), these practices function as preparatory stages that cultivate inner readiness. Studies on *'ilm ladunni* emphasize that such knowledge is not obtained through formal instruction but is associated with disciplined spiritual exercise, devotion, and inner purification (Rohman, 2024; Wekke et al., 2018). This finding resonates with the observed practices in the pesantren, where students are guided to engage in continuous spiritual exercises as a means of shaping the conditions necessary for receiving deeper forms of knowledge. Thus, the forms of spiritual practices observed in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri can be understood as part of an integrated epistemological process. They operate simultaneously as religious practices, pedagogical methods, and pathways toward inner transformation. Through these practices, knowledge is not only transmitted but also cultivated as a lived experience, reflecting the ongoing relevance of Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework within contemporary pesantren education.

2. Meanings of Spiritual Practices among Santri

Spiritual practices in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri are not only performed as structured religious routines but are also interpreted by participants as meaningful processes of inner transformation. The findings indicate that practices such as *dhikr*, *khalwat*, *riyadhah*, and *tafakkur* are understood as deliberate efforts to purify the self and regulate inner disposition. These practices are closely associated with *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), which is perceived as a necessary condition for attaining deeper forms of knowledge. Within the pesantren environment, spiritual discipline is therefore not separated from the pursuit of knowledge, but rather functions as its foundation.

The data suggest that knowledge is understood as inseparable from the state of the heart (*qalb*, the spiritual center). Spiritual practices are seen as processes that gradually refine inner awareness, allowing individuals to become more receptive to subtle forms of understanding. This resonates with studies on Sufi experiential learning, which show that knowledge in Sufi traditions is constructed through disciplined practice, ethical formation, and sustained reflection rather than through cognitive acquisition alone (Knysh, 2017). In this sense, the meaning attributed to spiritual practices extends beyond ritual observance and enters the domain of epistemology, where knowing is linked to being.

The findings also suggest that students perceive spiritual practices as a means of aligning intention (*niyyah*) and behavior. Repetitive practices such as *dhikr* and

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mujahadah are not viewed as mechanical acts, but as continuous efforts to stabilize inner focus and reduce distractions. Research on Islamic spiritual psychology supports this interpretation, indicating that structured devotional practices contribute to emotional regulation, moral awareness, and spiritual sensitivity (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). Within the pesantren context, these dimensions are experienced collectively, reinforcing a shared understanding that knowledge requires inner discipline and sincerity.

A deeper layer of meaning emerges in the way students relate spiritual practices to the concept of knowledge itself. The findings show that knowledge is not perceived merely as information to be acquired, but as something that unfolds through experience and inner readiness. This perspective is consistent with contemporary discussions on embodied knowledge in Islamic education, where learning is understood as a process that integrates cognition, practice, and spirituality (Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2013). In this framework, spiritual practices function as a medium through which knowledge is internalized and lived, rather than simply understood at a conceptual level.

The interpretation of spiritual practices as pathways toward knowledge also reflects an implicit alignment with Al-Ghazali's epistemological thought. His emphasis on the purification of the heart as a prerequisite for receiving knowledge is echoed in the participants' understanding of their daily practices. Studies on Al-Ghazali's epistemology highlight that the acquisition of higher knowledge depends on the transformation of the self and the cultivation of inner clarity (Griffel, 2009). This connection suggests that the meanings constructed by the students are not isolated interpretations, but are situated within a broader intellectual tradition that links spirituality and knowledge.

Thus, the meanings of spiritual practices among santri at Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri can be understood as part of a lived epistemology in which knowledge is experienced as a gradual unfolding rather than a direct acquisition. Spiritual discipline shapes how students perceive knowledge, themselves, and their relationship with the divine. These findings reinforce the idea that in the pesantren context, knowledge is not only transmitted through teaching, but also cultivated through sustained spiritual engagement.

3. The Process of Acquiring *'Ilm Ladunni*

The process of acquiring *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge) in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri is understood as a gradual spiritual progression rather than an instantaneous event. The findings indicate that this process is closely associated with structured stages of inner transformation, commonly articulated through the sequence of *takhalli* (emptying the self from negative traits), *tahalli* (adorning the self with virtuous qualities), and *tajalli* (the unveiling of divine illumination). These stages are not presented as abstract concepts, but are embedded in daily spiritual practices and lived experiences within the pesantren.

The initial stage, *takhalli*, is reflected in practices aimed at self-discipline and the reduction of worldly attachments. Activities such as *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline),

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fasting, and controlled routines are interpreted as efforts to detach from desires that may obstruct inner clarity. This stage aligns with broader discussions in Sufi studies, where purification is seen as a necessary starting point for any form of higher knowledge (Knysh, 2017). Within the pesantren, this process is not understood as withdrawal from reality, but as a reorientation of the self toward a more disciplined and conscious mode of being.

The second stage, *tahalli*, involves the cultivation of positive qualities such as sincerity, humility, patience, and devotion. The findings show that practices like *dhikr* (remembrance of God), night prayers, and communal rituals function as mechanisms for reinforcing these virtues. Through repetition and guided instruction, students gradually internalize ethical and spiritual values that shape their orientation toward knowledge. This process resonates with studies on character formation in Islamic education, which highlight the role of repeated practice and moral discipline in shaping both behavior and cognition (Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2013). In this stage, knowledge begins to be experienced not only as understanding, but as an ethical disposition.

The final stage, *tajalli*, is understood as the point at which the heart (*qalb*) becomes receptive to deeper forms of insight. This stage is understood as a condition in which understanding emerges with clarity and certainty, often described in terms of inner illumination (*nur ilahi*, divine light). While this experience is not framed as a constant state, it is perceived as the result of sustained spiritual discipline. Contemporary discussions on Islamic epistemology suggest that such forms of knowledge are closely linked to states of heightened awareness and spiritual receptivity rather than analytical reasoning (Griffel, 2009; Wekke et al., 2018). In this sense, *tajalli* represents not a break from knowledge, but a transformation in how knowledge is accessed and experienced.

The relationship between these stages reflects a coherent process in which spiritual practice functions as a preparatory pathway toward knowledge. The findings indicate that *'ilm ladunni* is not understood as something that can be pursued directly, but as something that emerges when the necessary conditions have been fulfilled. Studies on experiential knowledge in religious traditions support this view, emphasizing that higher forms of understanding often arise through sustained engagement, discipline, and transformation of the self (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). Within the pesantren context, this process is guided, structured, and reinforced through collective practice, ensuring that spiritual development remains connected to everyday life.

This process also reflects Al-Ghazali's distinction between *'ilm kasbi* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm ladunni*, where the latter is not achieved through intellectual accumulation but through the purification and readiness of the inner self. The findings suggest that these two forms of knowledge are not perceived as contradictory, but as interconnected. Intellectual learning provides a foundation, while spiritual discipline creates the conditions for deeper understanding. This integration highlights how the process of acquiring *'ilm ladunni* is embedded within both educational practice and

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spiritual formation, reinforcing the relevance of Al-Ghazali's epistemology in the contemporary pesantren setting.

4. Epistemological Interpretation in Light of Al-Ghazali

The findings of this study indicate that spiritual practices in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri are not only religious routines but also constitute an epistemological framework through which knowledge is understood and experienced. The integration of *dhikr*, *riyadhah*, *khalwat*, and *tafakkur* reflects a model of knowing that places the transformation of the self at the center of the learning process. Knowledge is approached as something that emerges through inner readiness, rather than solely through intellectual accumulation. This orientation closely aligns with Al-Ghazali's epistemology, in which knowledge is inseparable from the condition of the heart (*qalb*) and its capacity to receive illumination.

Al-Ghazali conceptualizes knowledge as a form of unveiling (*kashf*), where truth becomes apparent through the purification of the inner self. This perspective is reflected in the way students interpret their spiritual practices as preparatory stages for receiving deeper understanding. Studies within Islamic epistemology in Indonesian scholarly contexts support this interpretation, showing that knowledge in the tradition of Al-Ghazali is rooted in the integration of intellectual effort, educational formation, and spiritual discipline (Anhar, 2013; Rohman, 2024). Within this framework, rational inquiry remains important, but it is not sufficient on its own to reach higher levels of understanding.

The distinction between *'ilm kasbi* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge) becomes particularly relevant in interpreting the findings. The pesantren setting demonstrates that these two forms of knowledge are not treated as opposing categories, but as interconnected processes. Formal learning provides structure and conceptual understanding, while spiritual practice prepares the inner condition necessary for deeper insight. This relationship is consistent with research on Islamic knowledge systems, which emphasizes that epistemology in Islam involves the integration of formal learning, moral discipline, and inner transformation (Mahdany et al., 2025; Wekke et al., 2018). In this sense, knowledge is not only constructed but also received.

The role of the heart (*qalb*) as a center of knowledge is also evident in the findings. Spiritual practices are consistently interpreted as efforts to refine the inner self so that it becomes capable of perceiving truth more clearly. This reflects Al-Ghazali's assertion that the heart functions as a mirror that must be polished in order to reflect divine light. Contemporary studies in Islamic educational thought highlight that moral and spiritual formation remains central in shaping educational and epistemological orientation in the Al-Ghazalian tradition (Anhar, 2013; Mahdany et al., 2025). The emphasis on inner clarity suggests that knowledge is understood as a qualitative transformation rather than a quantitative accumulation.

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The findings further indicate that the process of knowing involves a shift from discursive reasoning to experiential awareness. Knowledge is described within the *pesantren* context as something that becomes evident through practice and reflection, rather than through abstract reasoning alone. This aligns with recent discussions of Al-Ghazali's mystical and spiritual thought that emphasize the experiential dimension of knowledge and spiritual states (Furqon & Busro, 2017; Rohman, 2024). In this context, *kashf* is not interpreted as a mystical anomaly, but as a form of insight that emerges through disciplined engagement with both knowledge and practice.

These interpretations demonstrate that the epistemological model reflected in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri is consistent with Al-Ghazali's framework of knowledge. The integration of intellectual learning and spiritual discipline creates a holistic approach in which knowledge is both learned and experienced. This model challenges the separation between rational and spiritual epistemologies, showing that both dimensions can coexist within a unified system of understanding. The findings thus confirm that Al-Ghazali's epistemological thought remains relevant in contemporary Islamic educational contexts, particularly in institutions that maintain a strong tradition of spiritual practice.

5. Pesantren as a Site of Spiritual Epistemology

The findings of this study suggest that Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri can be understood as a setting in which knowledge is not only transmitted through formal instruction but also shaped through sustained spiritual practice. The integration of activities such as *dhikr*, *riyadhah*, *khalwat*, and *tafakkur* reflects a pattern in which learning is closely connected to the transformation of the self. Knowledge is approached as something that develops through discipline, reflection, and inner readiness, rather than through intellectual effort alone.

This pattern indicates that the pesantren functions as a practical environment where epistemological principles are enacted in daily life. The distinction between *'ilm kasbi* (acquired knowledge) and *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge), as discussed in Al-Ghazali's thought, is not treated as a theoretical dichotomy but as a complementary process. Formal learning provides conceptual structure, while spiritual practice contributes to the formation of inner conditions that support deeper understanding. This relationship is consistent with previous discussions on Islamic epistemology, which emphasize the integration of educational, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the process of knowing (Anhar, 2013; Mahdany et al., 2025; Wekke et al., 2018).

The role of the heart (*qalb*) as a center of knowledge is also reflected in how students interpret their learning experience. Spiritual practices are understood as efforts to refine inner awareness, allowing knowledge to be perceived with greater clarity. In this context, the pesantren does not position knowledge as an accumulation of information, but as a process that involves ethical formation and spiritual discipline. This orientation

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aligns with studies on Islamic education and Al-Ghazali's educational thought that highlight the importance of moral and spiritual development (Anhar, 2013; Mahdany et al., 2025).

At the same time, the findings do not suggest that intellectual reasoning is replaced by spiritual experience. Instead, both dimensions are maintained in a complementary relationship. Students continue to engage with formal learning while also participating in structured spiritual practices. This indicates that the epistemological model observed in the pesantren is not exclusive or oppositional, but integrative. Knowledge is formed through the interaction between learning, practice, and reflection, allowing both rational and experiential dimensions to coexist within the same framework.

Thus, the pesantren can be viewed as a site where spiritual epistemology is practiced in a concrete and structured manner. The findings show that Al-Ghazali's epistemological ideas are not only preserved as theoretical constructs, but are also reflected in everyday educational practice. This does not represent a new theoretical model, but rather demonstrates how an established epistemological framework continues to operate within a contemporary institutional context.

D. Conclusion

This study has shown that spiritual practices in Pondok Pesantren Tauhid Al Bajuri function as an integral part of the process through which knowledge is understood and experienced. Practices such as *dhikr*, *khalwat*, *riyadhah*, and *tafakkur* are not limited to ritual activities, but are interpreted as structured efforts to purify the self and prepare the inner condition for receiving knowledge. In this context, knowledge is approached as something that develops through discipline, reflection, and sustained engagement rather than through intellectual effort alone.

The findings also indicate that the process of acquiring *'ilm ladunni* (divinely bestowed knowledge) is understood as a gradual progression that involves stages of self-transformation, commonly expressed through *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. These stages are embedded in the daily life of the pesantren and are experienced as part of a continuous process of spiritual formation. Knowledge is therefore perceived not only as something to be learned, but as something that emerges through inner readiness and experiential engagement. In relation to Al-Ghazali's epistemology, the study demonstrates that the distinction between *'ilm kasbi* and *'ilm ladunni* is reflected in practice as a complementary relationship rather than a dichotomy. Formal learning provides a conceptual foundation, while spiritual discipline contributes to the development of inner clarity. This integration highlights the role of the heart (*qalb*) as a central element in the process of knowing, where knowledge is closely tied to the condition of the self.

These findings suggest that the pesantren represents a context in which epistemological principles are not only discussed but also enacted in everyday practice. The study does not propose a new theoretical framework, but shows how an established epistemological tradition continues to operate within a contemporary educational setting.

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This indicates that the integration of intellectual and spiritual dimensions of knowledge remains relevant in shaping a holistic approach to learning in Islamic education.

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