



**THE ESSENCE OF PATIENCE IN IMAM AL-GHAZALI'S PERSPECTIVE:
AN ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL ANALYSIS IN *IHYA' ULUM AL-DIN***

**Muhibbul Subhi¹, *M. Nasir², Ismu Ridha³, Samwil⁴, Mirza Adia Nova⁵,
Fathayatul Husna⁶**

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Universitas Teuku Umar Meulaboh, Indonesia

*Email: m.nasir@utu.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines the essence of patience (*sabr*) from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali through an ethical-spiritual analysis in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. The background of this research is based on the increasing moral crisis, psychological pressures, and weakening self-control in modern life, making the concept of patience highly relevant to be reexamined as a foundation for the development of human morality and spirituality. This study aims to analyze the nature of patience according to Al-Ghazali, its various forms, and its relevance to modern life. The research employs a qualitative approach using the library research method. Primary data are derived from *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, while secondary data are obtained from various books, journals, and relevant scholarly works. Data analysis is conducted through content analysis and descriptive-qualitative methods. The findings reveal that patience, according to Al-Ghazali, is not merely a passive attitude in accepting trials, but rather an active ethical-spiritual force in controlling desires, maintaining obedience to God, and facing hardships with steadfast faith. Al-Ghazali classifies patience into several forms: patience in obedience, patience in avoiding sins, patience in facing calamities, and patience in dealing with worldly pleasures. The concept of patience is also closely related to *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), moral formation, and the spiritual journey toward closeness to Allah. In the modern context, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience remains relevant as an ethical and spiritual solution to moral crises, psychological pressures, instant culture, and social conflicts in contemporary society. Therefore, patience in Al-Ghazali's perspective serves as an essential foundation for character building, mental resilience, and spiritual balance in human life.

Keywords: Patience, Imam Al-Ghazali, Ethical Spiritual, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas hakikat sabar dalam perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali melalui analisis etika-spiritual dalam kitab *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada meningkatnya krisis moral, tekanan psikologis, dan lemahnya pengendalian diri dalam kehidupan modern sehingga konsep sabar menjadi relevan untuk dikaji kembali sebagai fondasi pembentukan akhlak dan spiritualitas manusia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hakikat sabar menurut Al-Ghazali, bentuk-bentuk sabar, serta relevansinya terhadap kehidupan modern. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*). Sumber data primer berasal dari kitab *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, sedangkan data sekunder diperoleh dari berbagai buku, jurnal, dan karya ilmiah yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan melalui metode *content analysis* dan analisis deskriptif-kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sabar menurut Al-Ghazali bukan sekadar sikap pasif menerima cobaan, tetapi merupakan kekuatan etika-spiritual yang aktif dalam mengendalikan hawa nafsu, menjaga ketaatan,



dan menghadapi musibah dengan keteguhan iman. Al-Ghazali membagi sabar ke dalam beberapa bentuk, yaitu sabar dalam ketaatan, sabar dalam menjauhi maksiat, sabar menghadapi musibah, dan sabar terhadap kenikmatan dunia. Konsep sabar juga memiliki hubungan erat dengan tazkiyat al-nafs (penyucian jiwa), pembentukan akhlak, dan perjalanan spiritual manusia menuju kedekatan dengan Allah. Dalam konteks modern, konsep sabar Al-Ghazali relevan sebagai solusi etika dan spiritual dalam menghadapi krisis moral, tekanan psikologis, budaya instan, serta konflik sosial masyarakat kontemporer. Dengan demikian, sabar dalam perspektif Al-Ghazali merupakan fondasi penting bagi pembentukan karakter, ketahanan mental, dan keseimbangan spiritual manusia.

Kata Kunci: Sabar, Imam Al-Ghazali, Etika Spiritual, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*

A. Introduction

Patience (*ṣabr*) is one of the fundamental teachings in Islam that encompasses ethical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions simultaneously. In modern life, human beings are confronted with various social problems such as moral crises, psychological pressures, increasing individualism, and weakening self-control in dealing with life's challenges. These phenomena indicate that modern society experiences not only a material crisis but also a spiritual crisis that affects emotional instability and social behavior. In this context, the concept of patience becomes highly relevant to be reexamined as a foundation for the formation of morally and spiritually mature personalities. Imam Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, places patience as one of the important *maqāmāt* in humanity's spiritual journey toward closeness to Allah. Al-Ghazali states that "*al-shabru nisfu al-iman*" (patience is half of faith), because through patience a person is able to maintain obedience, avoid sinful acts, and face calamities with steadfastness of soul (Marcella Nur Safitri, 2025).

Academically, studies on patience have been widely conducted from various perspectives, including Sufism, Islamic education, and Islamic psychology. Previous studies generally position patience as an important moral value in shaping character and human mental resilience. For example, Misbachul Munir's study in the *Spiritualis* journal explains that, according to Al-Ghazali, patience constitutes a spiritual *maqām* that requires spiritual discipline and control over human desires (Misbachul Munir, 2020). Other studies highlight the relevance of patience in Islamic counseling and mental health. Yulia Agustin, for instance, explains that patience in Al-Ghazali's thought is closely related to the development of good behavior and the enhancement of piety. In addition, recent studies demonstrate that Al-Ghazali's concept of patience remains relevant in addressing the problems of modern life, including psychological pressures and the social challenges of contemporary society (Sariah Sariah et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most of these studies remain normative-descriptive and have not specifically analyzed the essence



of patience as an integral ethical-spiritual system in Al-Ghazali's thought within *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*.

This study aims to analyze the essence of patience from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali through an examination of *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, focusing on its ethical and spiritual dimensions. This study argues that, according to Al-Ghazali, patience is not merely a passive attitude of accepting trials, but rather an active ethical-spiritual force that controls human desires and maintains consistency in obedience to Allah. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali explains that patience is the soul's ability to remain steadfast in facing the impulses of desire and the pressures of life. He writes that patience is "the steadfastness of religious motivation in confronting the impulses of lustful desires" (Ragil Ana Rokhmatin, 2025). Therefore, patience occupies a central position in the formation of morality and the spiritual journey of humankind.

Studies concerning the concept of patience in Islam generally reveal several major research tendencies. First, studies that view patience as a moral and ethical teaching within the normative Islamic perspective. Second, studies that examine patience from the perspective of Islamic psychology and mental health. Third, studies that investigate patience within the Sufi tradition as part of spiritual *maqāmāt*. These three tendencies indicate that patience is not merely a theological concept, but is also closely connected to character formation, mental resilience, and human spirituality (Misbachul Munir, 2020).

The first tendency positions patience as an ethical and moral virtue that every Muslim should possess. Studies within this category generally employ a normative approach by referring to Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions concerning the virtues of patience. Patience is understood as the ability to restrain oneself from sinful acts, remain steadfast in worship, and endure life's trials with perseverance. Patahillah's research, for example, explains that patience functions to create a more just, peaceful, and wise social life (Patahillah, 2014). Such studies contribute significantly to Islamic character education, yet they generally remain descriptive and have not elaborated deeply on the philosophical-spiritual dimensions of patience.

The second tendency examines patience from the perspective of Islamic psychology and mental health. Within this approach, patience is understood as a mechanism for emotional control and self-resilience in confronting life's pressures. Recent studies show that patience is highly relevant to psychological stability and individuals' ability to cope with social stress (Sariah Sariah et al., 2025). In the modern context, patience is viewed as a form of spiritual coping that helps individuals maintain inner peace and optimism in life. However, studies in this field tend to emphasize therapeutic and psychological aspects rather than the ethical-spiritual dimensions elaborated by Al-Ghazali.

The third tendency studies patience from the perspective of Sufism and humanity's spiritual journey. In the Sufi tradition, patience is regarded as one of the important *maqāmāt* in the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). Misbachul Munir explains that, according to Al-Ghazali, patience is not merely enduring suffering,



but rather the soul's ability to remain consistent in obedience and in controlling human desires (Misbachul Munir, 2020). Other studies also indicate that Al-Ghazali views patience as the foundation of noble morality and the path toward closeness to Allah (Meliyanti Aida, 2021). Nevertheless, these studies still tend to discuss patience in general terms and have not specifically examined the ethical-spiritual construction of patience in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* comprehensively.

Based on previous studies, several weaknesses can still be identified. First, most studies remain normative and descriptive, and therefore have not provided an in-depth analysis of the essence of patience as an ethical-spiritual system. Second, studies in Islamic psychology tend to focus on therapeutic aspects and emotional control without deeply connecting them to the process of soul purification. Third, Sufi studies on patience generally discuss its position as a spiritual *maqām* without elaborating on the relationship between patience, morality, and human spiritual transformation in Al-Ghazali's thought. Furthermore, studies that specifically make *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* the primary object of analysis concerning the ethical-spiritual dimensions of patience remain relatively limited (Marcella Nur Safitri, 2025).

Based on this evaluation, the present study is directed toward examining the essence of patience from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective, focusing on the ethical-spiritual dimensions within *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. The distinction of this study lies in its attempt to integrate ethical, spiritual, and self-control aspects in understanding Al-Ghazali's concept of patience. This study does not merely view patience as a moral attitude or a psychological therapy, but as a spiritual force that shapes the integrity of the human soul in the process of drawing closer to Allah. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a new contribution to the development of Sufi and Islamic ethical studies, while also demonstrating the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thought to the moral and spiritual problems of modern society.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. Library research is a research method that utilizes literature review as the primary source for obtaining research data and information. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is used to understand phenomena in depth through descriptive and interpretative data analysis (Sugiyono, 2019). Meanwhile, library research is conducted by examining various written sources such as books, journals, documents, manuscripts, and other scholarly works relevant to the research topic. In this study, the researcher focuses on examining the essence of patience (*sabr*) from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali through an ethical-spiritual analysis contained in the book *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. The approaches employed are philosophical and Sufi approaches because this study examines Al-Ghazali's moral and spiritual thought regarding patience as part of the process of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the formation of human character.



The object of analysis in this study is the concept of patience discussed by Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, particularly aspects related to the essence of patience, the levels of patience, the relationship between patience and faith, as well as the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Islam. In Al-Ghazali's thought, patience is understood not merely as the ability to endure hardship, but also as a spiritual strength in controlling human desires and drawing oneself closer to Allah SWT. Therefore, this study not only describes the textual meaning of patience but also analyzes the moral and spiritual values embedded within it.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data are obtained directly from the book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali, especially the sections discussing patience and moral development. Meanwhile, the secondary data are derived from various supporting sources such as books on Sufism, scientific articles, academic journals, undergraduate theses, master's theses, and dissertations discussing Al-Ghazali's thought as well as the concept of patience in Islam. According to Lexy J. Moleong, data sources in qualitative research may take the form of written documents analyzed to obtain deeper meaning and understanding of a phenomenon (Lexy, 2019). The type of data used in this study is qualitative data in the form of narratives, ideas, concepts, and interpretations related to the research topic.

The data collection techniques employed in this study are documentation study and literature study. The researcher collected various references related to the concept of patience from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali and then conducted an in-depth reading of these sources. The stages of data collection were carried out by identifying data sources, classifying the data based on thematic discussions, and recording important sections relevant to the research focus. In addition, the researcher also examined recent scientific journals to strengthen the analysis and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the ethical-spiritual dimensions of patience in Islam. This documentation technique is important because library research relies on the researcher's ability to process and interpret data from various written sources systematically and objectively.

The data analysis in this study employs content analysis and descriptive-qualitative analysis methods. Content analysis was conducted by examining the textual content of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* in order to identify the main concepts regarding patience according to Imam Al-Ghazali. Subsequently, the data were analyzed descriptively by explaining the meaning, values, and relevance of the concept of patience in human spiritual life. According to Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, qualitative data analysis is carried out through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Mathew B. Miles, 2014). In this study, data reduction was conducted by selecting data relevant to the research focus, then the data were systematically presented to facilitate understanding, and finally conclusions were drawn regarding the essence of patience from Al-Ghazali's perspective and its relevance to the formation of Islamic ethics and spirituality.



C. Results and Discussion

1. The Essence of Patience According to Imam Al-Ghazali

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, patience (*sabr*) constitutes one of the fundamental pillars in the cultivation of human morality and spirituality. In his monumental work, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali explains that patience is the soul's ability to remain steadfast in carrying out religious obligations while restraining desires that contradict the teachings of the Sharia. In his view, patience does not merely signify enduring suffering, but also encompasses the ability to exercise self-control in all aspects of spiritual and moral life. Al-Ghazali defines patience as the steadfastness of religious motivation in confronting the impulses of worldly desire. He states:

“Patience is the firmness of religious motivation in confronting the impulses of desire.” (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, n.d., p. 58)

This definition demonstrates that the essence of patience, according to Al-Ghazali, lies in the internal struggle of human beings to control themselves. Within every individual exist two opposing forces: the impulse of religion (*bā'its al-dīn*) and the impulse of desire (*bā'its al-hawā*). Religious motivation directs humans toward obedience and salvation, whereas worldly desire tends to lead them toward worldly pleasures and sinful acts. Therefore, patience becomes a spiritual strength that enables individuals to allow religious motivation to prevail over their desires.

This concept indicates that patience, from Al-Ghazali's perspective, is neither a passive attitude nor a form of resignation to circumstances. Rather, patience represents an active struggle to maintain psychological stability and moral consistency. This is consistent with Al-Ghazali's view that human beings cannot attain the rank of the righteous without patience. According to him:

“A servant cannot reach Allah except through patience.” (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, n.d., p. 60)

This statement highlights the central position of patience in the spiritual journey of human beings toward closeness to Allah SWT. In Al-Ghazali's Sufi framework, patience is regarded as a *maqām* (spiritual station) that must be possessed by every *sālik* (spiritual wayfarer). A person who lacks patience will easily be dominated by desires, emotions, and worldly temptations, thereby making it difficult to attain moral perfection.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali categorizes patience into several forms. First, patience in obedience to Allah. This form of patience relates to steadfastness in consistently performing acts of worship and righteous deeds. According to Al-Ghazali, obedience requires struggle because human beings naturally incline toward laziness and comfort. Therefore, individuals who are able to maintain consistency (*istiqāmah*) in worship demonstrate a high degree of patience.

Second, patience in avoiding sinful acts. This type of patience concerns the ability to control desires and passions. In Al-Ghazali's view, humans are constantly confronted with worldly temptations that may lead them into sin. Consequently, the ability to restrain



oneself from what Allah has prohibited is regarded as an essential form of patience in spiritual development.

Third, patience in facing calamities and life's hardships. Al-Ghazali explains that worldly life is a place of trial, and thus human beings cannot escape difficulties, loss, and suffering. In dealing with such trials, individuals are required to preserve firmness of heart and remain content with Allah's decree. Such an attitude constitutes patience in confronting affliction.

Al-Ghazali's conception of patience is also closely connected with the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). According to him, patience serves as an important means of cleansing the heart from reprehensible traits such as anger, envy, greed, and despair. Through patience, individuals are able to control their emotions, thereby attaining inner tranquility and spiritual purity. In this context, patience functions not only as a moral attitude but also as a method of spiritual education. Moreover, Al-Ghazali places patience as an inseparable component of faith. He cites the statement of scholars that:

“Patience in relation to faith is like the head in relation to the body.” (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, n.d., p. 62)

This expression indicates that patience plays a decisive role in determining the quality of one's faith. Without patience, faith becomes vulnerable when confronted with the trials of life. Patience therefore serves as an indicator of spiritual strength and the depth of a Muslim's faith.

The thoughts of Imam Al-Ghazali concerning patience have attracted considerable attention from contemporary scholars. One study discussing the concept of patience from Al-Ghazali's perspective is the article by Hensa Ilham Intan Lutfi Primalita and Alfina Hidayah entitled “Konsep Sabar dalam Perspektif al-Ghazali dan Implementasinya pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19.” The study explains that patience, according to Al-Ghazali, possesses a strong psychological dimension because it is associated with the human capacity to control desires, maintain emotional stability, and strengthen mental resilience in facing life's pressures (Salleh et al., 2022).

Another study conducted by M. Amin Syukur states that Al-Ghazali's concept of patience emphasizes a balance between the outward and inward dimensions of human existence (M. Amin Syukur, 2004, p. 89). Patience is not merely the passive acceptance of suffering, but also involves effort, endeavor, and trust in Allah (*tawakkul*). In this regard, Al-Ghazali views patience as an active attitude that gives rise to both mental and spiritual resilience.

The essence of patience according to Al-Ghazali is also closely related to *ma'rifatullah* (gnosis or knowledge of Allah). The deeper a person's understanding of Allah, the greater his or her level of patience. This is because those who truly know Allah realize that every event in life contains divine wisdom. Such awareness produces serenity of heart and the ability to accept life's trials with sincerity and composure.



In social life, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience also carries significant ethical implications. A patient person is able to maintain harmonious relationships with others, avoid conflict, and control anger. Conversely, impatience often becomes the cause of hostility, violence, and moral corruption within society. Therefore, patience is not only an individual spiritual virtue but also a social value that is essential for creating a harmonious society.

It may therefore be understood that the essence of patience according to Imam Al-Ghazali is the strength of the soul in preserving religious motivation when confronted with desires, trials, and life's hardships. Patience constitutes the core of moral and spiritual development because through patience individuals are able to control themselves, preserve their faith, and draw closer to Allah SWT. In Al-Ghazali's perspective, patience is not limited to enduring suffering, but encompasses the entirety of human struggle in upholding religious and moral values throughout life.

2. Forms of Patience in Al-Ghazali's Perspective

In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Imam al-Ghazali explains that patience is not merely the ability to endure sadness or suffering, but rather a spiritual strength that emerges from firm faith in resisting the impulses of worldly desires. According to al-Ghazali, patience is one of the essential *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) in the spiritual journey of a servant toward Allah (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, n.d., p. 217). He positions patience as a fundamental foundation for the formation of morality and the attainment of spiritual perfection. In al-Ghazali's view, the essence of patience lies in the ability to maintain the supremacy of the religious impulse (*dā'ir al-dīn*) over the impulse of desire (*dā'ir al-hawā*) (Misbachul Munir, 2020). Al-Ghazali classifies patience into several forms based on the objects and conditions encountered by human beings. This classification demonstrates that patience is not limited to enduring calamities, but encompasses all aspects of human life, including obedience to Allah, avoidance of sin, and endurance in the face of trials.

a. Patience in Obedience (*ṣabr 'alā al-ṭā'ah*)

The first form of patience according to al-Ghazali is patience in carrying out acts of obedience to Allah. This form of patience is reflected in a person's ability to remain steadfast in worship despite facing difficulties, laziness, or worldly temptations. According to al-Ghazali, worship inherently requires inner struggle because human desires naturally incline toward laziness and temporary pleasures. Therefore, those who consistently maintain prayer, fasting, remembrance of Allah, and other righteous deeds are considered to practice patience in obedience (Ulum & Roziqin, 2021).

In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, al-Ghazali explains that patience in obedience must be present before, during, and after worship. Before worship, one must patiently purify intentions and avoid ostentation (*riyā'*). During worship, one must patiently preserve proper conduct and concentration. After worship, one must remain patient so as not to invalidate the deed through arrogance or the desire for human praise (Sariah et al., 2024). Thus, patience in obedience does not merely concern physical acts, but also involves

control of the heart and soul. This form of patience is crucial in spiritual life because human beings naturally seek ease and avoid hardship. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the path toward closeness to Allah cannot be attained without patience in fulfilling His commands. Consequently, the greater a person's patience in worship, the higher the quality of their spirituality.

b. Patience in Avoiding Sin (*ṣabr 'an al-ma'ṣiyah*)

The second form is patience in refraining from sinful acts. According to al-Ghazali, this type of patience is even more difficult than patience in enduring calamities because human beings must continuously struggle against desires that invite them toward sin. This patience is manifested in a person's ability to restrain themselves from prohibited acts despite having both the opportunity and strong inclination to commit them.

Al-Ghazali explains that human desires possess a strong tendency toward lust, anger, arrogance, and attachment to worldly life (Putri et al., 2025). Therefore, individuals who are able to guard their gaze, control their speech, restrain anger, and avoid oppression are regarded as possessing a high degree of spiritual patience. In al-Ghazali's Sufi perspective, the greatest jihad is not the struggle against external enemies, but rather the struggle against one's own desires.

Patience in avoiding sin is also closely related to the concept of *mujāhadah al-nafs*, namely the struggle against the negative inclinations of the soul. A person who is able to remain patient in abstaining from sinful acts will attain purity of heart and inner tranquility because they are not enslaved by their desires (Ramadhani et al., 2025). Al-Ghazali views the essence of noble character as the human capacity to control the negative impulses within oneself.

In the context of modern life, this form of patience is highly relevant. The temptations of materialism, hedonism, and easy access to various forms of immorality require considerable spiritual strength in order for individuals to protect themselves. Therefore, patience in avoiding sin becomes an important indicator of the quality of one's faith.

c. Patience in Facing Calamities (*ṣabr 'alā al-balā'*)

The third form is patience in facing calamities or life's trials. This is the most commonly recognized form of patience in society. According to al-Ghazali, calamities are tests given by Allah to measure the quality of a servant's faith. Patience in facing adversity is reflected in calmness, the absence of despair, moderation in complaining, and maintaining positive assumptions about Allah while enduring suffering (Hafiz & Nurfadillah, 2023).

Al-Ghazali explains that patient individuals realize that all events in this world occur by the will of Allah. Therefore, calamities are not viewed merely as punishments, but as means of purifying the soul and elevating spiritual rank. Those who remain patient in the face of trials will attain closeness to Allah because they are able to accept divine decree with contentment (*riḍā*) (Halim et al., 2022).

In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, al-Ghazali further emphasizes that sadness arising from calamities is a natural human response. However, the true measure of patience lies in one's ability to control oneself so as not to fall into despair or anger toward Allah. Thus, patience does not mean the absence of sorrow, but rather the ability to manage emotions in accordance with religious guidance (Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, n.d.).

Patience in facing calamities also gives rise to attitudes of trust in Allah (*tawakkul*) and optimism. Patient individuals believe that every trial contains wisdom and that Allah's help will come at the appropriate time. Such an attitude provides strong mental and spiritual resilience in confronting life's difficulties.

d. Patience in the Face of Worldly Blessings

In addition to the three primary forms above, al-Ghazali also discusses patience in dealing with worldly blessings. According to him, not all trials take the form of suffering; wealth, power, popularity, and health are likewise tests that require patience. Human beings often become negligent toward Allah when they enjoy worldly pleasures. Therefore, patience is required so that individuals do not become consumed by arrogance, luxury, and excessive attachment to worldly life (Chandra Nuruliana et al., 2025).

Patience in prosperity is reflected in simplicity, gratitude, and the ability to utilize blessings in accordance with the will of Allah. Patient individuals do not regard worldly life as the ultimate purpose of existence, but rather as a means of drawing closer to Allah (Hakim et al., 2024).

3. Critical Analysis of Al-Ghazali's Concept of Patience

The concept of patience (*sabr*) in the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali occupies a central position within the ethical and spiritual framework of Islam. In his monumental work, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali does not merely regard patience as a passive attitude in facing suffering, but rather as an active spiritual force that enables individuals to control their desires, strengthen faith, and maintain consistency in servitude to Allah. A critical analysis of Al-Ghazali's concept of patience demonstrates that his thought contains profound ethical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions that remain highly relevant in modern life.

Al-Ghazali defines patience as the soul's ability to endure in confronting the impulses of desire and the pressures of life in order to preserve religious guidance. He explains:

“Patience is the steadfastness of the religious impulse in confronting the impulse of lust.”

This definition indicates that patience, according to Al-Ghazali, is not merely emotional restraint, but an inner struggle between spiritual strength and human desire. From this perspective, patience possesses an active and dynamic character. Human beings are not only required to accept trials, but also to consciously exercise self-control in order to attain closeness to Allah.



This concept reflects the influence of the Sufi approach in Al-Ghazali's thought. He views human beings as creatures constantly engaged in a struggle between reason, the heart, and desire. Therefore, patience becomes the primary instrument for maintaining spiritual balance. In this context, patience is not merely an individual moral virtue, but also the foundation for the formation of the character of a true believer.

Al-Ghazali categorizes patience into several forms: patience in obedience, patience in avoiding sin, and patience in facing calamities. This classification demonstrates the comprehensive scope of the concept of patience in Islam. Patience in obedience requires consistency in worship despite its difficulties. Patience in avoiding sin relates to the ability to restrain one's desires. Meanwhile, patience in facing calamities refers to the capacity to accept Allah's decree with sincerity and openness. This division confirms that patience encompasses all dimensions of human life.

In Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Al-Ghazali writes:

“Patience in performing acts of obedience is more difficult than patience in facing calamities, because obedience demands continuous struggle against the desires of the self.”

This statement reveals the psychological depth of Al-Ghazali's thought. He understood that humanity's greatest challenge lies not merely in external suffering, but in the internal impulses of desire and passion. Consequently, patience becomes a form of *jihad al-nafs*, namely the struggle against one's own self.

Critically speaking, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience may be understood as an attempt to integrate *shari'a* and Sufism. During Al-Ghazali's era, tensions existed between the *fugaha*, who emphasized formal legal aspects, and the Sufis, who prioritized spiritual experience. Through the concept of patience, Al-Ghazali sought to bridge the two approaches. Patience is not only a moral obligation prescribed by Islamic law, but also a spiritual path toward *ma'rifatullah* (gnosis of God).

This is evident when Al-Ghazali connects patience with the *maqamat* in Sufism. He positions patience as one of the spiritual stations that a *salik* must pass through in order to attain closeness to Allah. According to him, without patience, a person cannot reach the stations of *tawakkul* (trust in God), *ridha* (contentment), and *mahabbah* (love of God). Thus, patience possesses a transformative function in human spiritual life.

Nevertheless, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience may also be critically analyzed within the context of modern society. His emphasis on accepting trials is sometimes interpreted fatalistically by certain communities. In practice, patience is often understood as passive resignation without effort to improve social conditions. However, Al-Ghazali himself did not intend such an understanding. He consistently emphasized the importance of human effort and struggle.

In his discussion of *tawakkul*, Al-Ghazali explains that human beings are obligated to strive before surrendering themselves to Allah. Therefore, patience in Al-Ghazali's perspective should be understood as moral steadfastness in facing difficulties, rather than



passive surrender to injustice or poverty. This interpretation is important so that the concept of patience is not used to legitimize oppressive social structures.

Moreover, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience bears strong relevance to modern psychological studies, particularly in discussions concerning emotional resilience and self-control. In contemporary psychology, self-control is regarded as an important factor in mental health and life success. Long before modern psychology emerged, Al-Ghazali had already emphasized the importance of controlling human desires through patience as a path toward inner tranquility.

Modern studies also demonstrate a relationship between religiosity and psychological resilience. In this context, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience may be viewed as a model of spiritual coping, namely a mechanism for dealing with life's pressures through a religious approach. Individuals who possess patience tend to cope with stress, loss, and suffering with greater emotional stability.

According to research conducted by M. Amin Abdullah, the concept of morality in Al-Ghazali's thought contains a strong psychological dimension because it emphasizes the formation of the soul through continuous spiritual training. This demonstrates that patience is not an innate character trait, but rather the result of spiritual education and self-discipline.

On the other hand, several modern scholars criticize Al-Ghazali's Sufi approach for being overly individual-oriented and for paying insufficient attention to social transformation. This criticism arises because Al-Ghazali's primary focus indeed lies in the moral development of individuals. However, when examined more deeply, the formation of patient and morally upright individuals actually becomes the foundation for creating a harmonious society. In Al-Ghazali's view, social corruption originates from the corruption of the human heart.

Al-Ghazali's concept of patience also reflects a balance between the outward and inward dimensions of Islam. He does not separate formal worship from spiritual development. Patience becomes evidence of one's sincerity in practicing religion. A patient person is not only capable of restraining emotions, but also possesses spiritual awareness that all trials originate from Allah and contain certain wisdom.

In the context of modern life, which is filled with pressure, materialism, and spiritual crises, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience remains highly relevant. Modern society frequently experiences anxiety, depression, and a loss of meaning in life due to excessively worldly orientations. The concept of patience offers a spiritual approach to attaining inner peace through strengthening the relationship between human beings and God.

4. The Relevance of the Concept of Patience in Modern Life

The concept of patience (*sabr*) formulated by Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* remains highly relevant to modern life. In contemporary society, which is characterized by rapid technological advancement, economic competition, social



pressure, and spiritual crises, patience is no longer understood merely as a passive attitude toward suffering. Rather, it functions as an ethical and spiritual strength that enables individuals to exercise self-control, maintain psychological balance, and preserve moral values amid the complexities of modernity. Al-Ghazali regarded patience as the capacity of the soul to restrain worldly desires and remain steadfast in upholding truth. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, he explains that patience constitutes one of the essential *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) for believers in their journey toward closeness to Allah.

According to Al-Ghazali, patience is closely related to the human ability to control desires and emotions. He states that the essence of patience is “the steadfastness of religious motivation in confronting the impulses of lust and desire.” This perspective is highly relevant in modern life, where instant gratification, consumerism, and hedonistic lifestyles have become increasingly dominant. The advancement of digital technology has accustomed people to obtaining everything quickly, thereby fostering impatience toward processes and gradual achievement. Consequently, many individuals experience anxiety, stress, and even depression when confronted with failure or delays in achieving life goals. In this context, Al-Ghazali’s concept of patience offers an ethical and spiritual solution capable of strengthening the mental resilience of modern individuals.

In the modern workplace, for example, intense competition often generates significant psychological pressure. Many individuals experience burnout due to high demands for productivity and performance. Patience, from Al-Ghazali’s perspective, teaches the importance of perseverance, consistency, and emotional control in facing life’s challenges. Patience does not signify surrender to circumstances; rather, it encourages individuals to continue striving optimally while maintaining inner tranquility. Thus, patience nurtures resilient individuals who are not easily discouraged.

Al-Ghazali also emphasized that patience must be accompanied by *tawakkul* (trust in Allah) and firm faith in divine wisdom. In modern materialistic societies, happiness is often measured solely through material achievements. When such expectations remain unfulfilled, individuals frequently encounter existential crises and spiritual emptiness. Al-Ghazali’s concept of patience directs humanity to recognize that worldly life is temporary and filled with trials. Therefore, individuals must possess steadfastness in confronting the uncertainties of life. This perspective is particularly relevant in light of the increasing prevalence of mental health disorders in modern society.

Contemporary scientific studies likewise demonstrate that patience is positively associated with psychological well-being. In the field of Islamic psychology, patience is understood as a form of emotional regulation, namely the ability to manage emotions in a healthy and constructive manner. Individuals who cultivate patience tend to control anger more effectively, reduce anxiety, and cope with social pressures more successfully. This understanding aligns with Al-Ghazali’s view that patience serves as a means of purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*).

Furthermore, the relevance of patience can also be observed in modern social life. The rise of social media has fostered a reactive culture in which individuals are easily



provoked, spread hatred, and engage in conflict merely because of differences of opinion. In such circumstances, patience becomes a crucial foundation for ethical communication and social harmony. Al-Ghazali taught that patience is not limited to enduring physical suffering; it also involves restraining anger, guarding one's speech, and avoiding actions that may harm others. These values are urgently needed amid growing social polarization and digital conflict in contemporary society.

Al-Ghazali's concept of patience is equally relevant in the context of character education. Modern educational systems face serious challenges, including moral degradation, weak discipline, and poor self-control among students. Contemporary education often prioritizes intellectual achievement over spiritual and moral development. However, according to Al-Ghazali, the primary objective of education is the cultivation of noble character (*akhlāq*). Patience plays a vital role in character formation because it trains individuals to become disciplined, diligent, and capable of self-restraint. Therefore, the concept of patience may serve as an important foundation for character education grounded in Islamic spirituality.

Within family life, patience also holds profound relevance. The increasing rates of divorce and domestic conflict in modern society are frequently caused by the inability of couples to control emotions and resolve problems maturely. Al-Ghazali regarded patience as a fundamental moral principle in social interactions, including within the family. Patience fosters the ability to understand one's spouse, restrain anger, and resolve conflicts wisely. Consequently, the implementation of patience in family life can strengthen household resilience and create harmonious relationships.

In the economic sphere, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience may also function as a critique of modern capitalism, which often encourages consumerism and greed. Al-Ghazali reminded humanity of the importance of controlling worldly desires in order to avoid excessive attachment to material possessions. He emphasized the values of simplicity and *qanā'ah* (contentment). This perspective remains highly relevant amid the increasing consumerist lifestyle promoted by media and digital industries. Through patience, individuals become capable of restraining excessive desires and managing wealth more wisely.

Another important relevance of Al-Ghazali's concept of patience can be seen in responding to modern global crises such as pandemics, social conflicts, and economic instability. These events demonstrate that, despite technological advancement, modern humanity remains psychologically and spiritually vulnerable. In times of crisis, patience becomes a moral strength that helps individuals endure hardship while maintaining optimism. Al-Ghazali taught that patience cultivates steadfast faith and hope in Allah's mercy. Therefore, patience is not merely an individual virtue but also possesses social and civilizational dimensions.

From an ethical and spiritual perspective, patience according to Al-Ghazali functions to establish balance between the physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Modernity often traps individuals in worldly orientations while neglecting their



spiritual needs. As a result, many experience inner emptiness despite material fulfillment. The concept of patience teaches individuals to accept the process of life with spiritual awareness and to avoid becoming enslaved by worldly ambition alone. In this way, patience serves as a means of attaining inner peace (*sakīnah*) and true happiness.

In conclusion, Al-Ghazali's concept of patience possesses broad relevance to modern life. Patience should not be understood merely as passive endurance of suffering, but rather as an ethical and spiritual strength that shapes mental resilience, self-control, and balance in human life. In modern societies marked by pressure, conflict, and spiritual crises, Al-Ghazali's understanding of patience offers a moral and spiritual solution that enables individuals to face life more wisely, peacefully, and meaningfully. His thought demonstrates that the spiritual values of Islam remain timeless and continue to provide profound answers to the problems of contemporary humanity.

D. Conclusion

The essence of patience (*sabr*) in the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali is not merely a passive attitude in accepting suffering, but rather an active ethical-spiritual force that enables individuals to control their desires, maintain consistency in obedience, and cultivate moral maturity. In *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, patience is positioned as one of the essential *maqāmāt* (spiritual stations) in the journey toward closeness to Allah. Al-Ghazali views patience as the capacity to preserve the impulses of religion amidst the pressures of worldly desires and the various trials of life. This study demonstrates that the concept of patience encompasses broad dimensions, including patience in obedience, patience in avoiding sinful acts, patience in facing calamities, and patience in dealing with worldly pleasures. Thus, the scholarly contribution of this research lies in its effort to explain patience as an integral ethical-spiritual system within Al-Ghazali's thought, rather than merely as a normative moral concept or a psychological therapy.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of studies in Sufism, Islamic ethics, and spiritual psychology by demonstrating that Al-Ghazali's concept of patience is closely related to *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), moral formation, and human mental resilience. Al-Ghazali's thought reflects a harmonious integration between *sharī'ah*, ethics, and Sufism, so that patience is understood not only within a ritual dimension, but also as a process of human spiritual transformation. From a methodological perspective, the use of a qualitative approach based on library research enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth reading of classical texts, particularly *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, thereby uncovering the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of patience comprehensively. The use of content analysis also facilitates a systematic and contextual interpretation of Al-Ghazali's thought, especially in relating the concept of patience to the realities of modern life.

This study also carries important practical implications for contemporary life, particularly in addressing moral crises, psychological pressures, instant culture, and weakened self-control within modern society. Al-Ghazali's concept of patience may



serve as a foundation for character education, spiritual development, and the strengthening of mental health based on Islamic values. In social life, patience functions to foster harmony, regulate emotions, and reduce social conflict, which continues to increase due to digital culture and modern individualism. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's thought remains highly relevant as an ethical-spiritual solution for strengthening both personal and social resilience. Future studies are expected to further develop the concept of patience through interdisciplinary perspectives, such as its relationship with positive psychology, Islamic character education, spiritual counseling, and contemporary mental health studies. In addition, empirical research concerning the implementation of Al-Ghazali's concept of patience in modern society is also important, so that the values of Sufism do not remain merely theoretical, but may be applied concretely within social life and Islamic education.

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