



Educational Qualifications Of Du'at: An Analysis Of Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1917-1996) Thought

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Abstract

This article examines the da'wah thought of Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1917–1996) by emphasizing the importance of integration between the classical Islamic scientific tradition and the approach of modern science in shaping the intellectual competence of da'ī (preachers). Al-Ghazālī criticized the religious education system that tended to be textualistic and narrow in scope, and proposed a multidisciplinary, rational, and progressive model of da'wah. The main purpose of this paper is to evaluate the epistemological relevance of al-Ghazālī's ideas in the context of contemporary da'wah challenges. With a qualitative approach based on library research, data was collected from al-Ghazālī's works and relevant secondary literature. The results of the study show that al-Ghazālī places intellectual formation as the main axis of the success of da'wah, by demanding that the da'ī master not only Islamic texts, but also philosophy, sociology, psychology, economics, natural sciences, and the history of human civilization. The main contribution of this article lies in the articulation of an integrative da'wah model that rejects the dichotomy between religion and science, as well as suggesting a redefinition of da'ī competence in a global landscape. The practical implications of this thinking lead to the importance of reforming the da'wah education curriculum that is adaptive to the complexity of the times.

Artikel ini mengkaji pemikiran dakwah Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1917–1996) dengan menekankan pentingnya integrasi antara tradisi keilmuan Islam klasik dan pendekatan ilmu modern dalam membentuk kompetensi intelektual para da'ī (juru dakwah). Al-Ghazālī mengkritik sistem pendidikan agama yang cenderung tekstualistik dan sempit dalam cakrawala, serta mengusulkan suatu model dakwah yang multidisipliner, rasional, dan progresif. Tujuan utama tulisan ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi relevansi epistemologis gagasan al-Ghazālī dalam konteks tantangan dakwah kontemporer. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis kajian pustaka (library research), data dikumpulkan dari berbagai karya al-Ghazālī dan literatur sekunder yang relevan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa al-Ghazālī menempatkan pembentukan intelektual sebagai poros utama keberhasilan dakwah, dengan menuntut para da'ī menguasai tidak hanya teks keislaman, tetapi juga filsafat, sosiologi, psikologi, ekonomi, ilmu alam, dan sejarah peradaban manusia. Kontribusi utama artikel ini terletak pada artikulasi model dakwah integratif yang menolak dikotomi antara agama dan ilmu pengetahuan, serta menyarankan redefinisi kompetensi da'ī dalam lanskap global. Implikasi praktis dari pemikiran ini mengarah pada pentingnya reformasi kurikulum pendidikan dakwah yang adaptif terhadap kompleksitas zaman.

A. INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the reform of contemporary Islamic thought, al-Ghazālī (Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, 1917–1996) emphasized the importance of intellectual formation for *du'āt* (preachers) which was not only based on the Islamic scientific tradition, but also included modern disciplines. He criticized the religious education system that was rigid and not adaptive to the challenges of the times, and judged the failure of some *of the du'āt* as a reflection of their intellectual limitations and narrow educational horizons.

According to al-Ghazālī, the success of *da'wah* cannot be achieved without a combination of a deep understanding of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, mastery of *'ulūm al-insāniyyah* (the humanities), and high social communication skills. He demanded that the *du'āt* have a broad scientific horizon and a multidisciplinary approach that includes philosophy, history, sociology, economics, psychology, and natural sciences such as chemistry, biology, and astronomy (al-Ġazālī, 2005; Al-Ghazālī, 1983; Ġazālī, 2000). In his view, effective *da'wah* demands an integration between revelation and reason, between the classical heritage of Islam and the challenges of modernity. Therefore, al-Ghazālī proposes a progressive and comprehensive *model of da'wah*—a synthesis between tradition and renewal that emphasizes the importance of the close relationship between religion, science, and social change (Ġazālī, 2000).

The discourse on Al-Ghazālī's thinking on Islamic education shows significant conceptual depth. He views education as the main means in the process of humanizing humans to achieve a degree of spiritual perfection before God (Suban, 2020). Education, within the framework of Al-Ghazālī, is not just the transmission of knowledge, but also a moral and spiritual transformation rooted in divine values.

The educational curriculum initiated by Al-Ghazālī predominantly emphasizes the mastery of religious knowledge and the internalization of ethical values as the main foundation in character formation (Azahra, 2022). In the context of Islamic educational leadership, Al-Ghazālī also emphasized the importance of exemplifying faith in action, as well as the need for integration between the sciences of revelation and rational knowledge (Suddahazai, 2023). Thus, Islamic education leaders, including *dai*, are not only required to master religious knowledge, but also to be able to implement these values in daily social practices.

In line with the principles of *self-regulated learning*, Al-Ghazālī's educational theory emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, cognitive ability, and

personal initiative in the learning process(Shahzadi, M., Awan, T. H., & Irfan, 2021) He underlined the active role of students in regulating their own learning process, which reflects the dimensions of spiritual and intellectual discipline.

However, existing studies tend to focus on general aspects of Al-Ghazālī's educational thinking, such as educational objectives, curriculum, or learning methods. There have not been many studies that specifically explore how the concept of education according to Al-Ghazālī can be used as a framework in formulating the educational qualifications of a dai. In fact, in the classical Islamic tradition, dai is not only a preacher but also an educator, moral leader, and agent of social change.

Thus, there is an important gap in academic discourse related to the integration of Al-Ghazālī's educational thinking in formulating the ideal competencies of a dai. Further research is needed to examine the epistemological and pedagogical dimensions of Al-Ghazālī's thought that are relevant in shaping the qualifications and capacities of superior dai in the contemporary era.

The main argument in this article states the importance of *da'i education reform* through the integration between Islamic traditions and contemporary science. He views the success of da'wah as the fruit of a synthesis between spiritual depth, intellectual breadth, and social skills, so that *da'i* is able to respond to the challenges of the times in a reflective and transformative manner. This idea represents a philosophical approach that bridges the tension between orthodoxy and modernity, as well as proposing a model *of da'i education* oriented towards epistemological renewal and social relevance.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research design. The literature review was conducted to identify, interpret, and analyze Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's thoughts based on his primary works such as *Ma'rakat al-Muṣḥaf*, *al-Ḥaqq al-Murr*, *Ma'a Allāh*, and *al-Da'wah al-Islāmiyyah*, and supported by secondary references such as books, academic journals, and dissertations relevant to the themes of da'wah and contemporary Islamic education. This method is used to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework for the multidisciplinary da'wah model and to uncover al-Ghazālī's contribution to the epistemological reform of the da'wah world. The data were analyzed with descriptive-analytical techniques that focused on content

interpretation, mapping key ideas, and elaboration of the relationship between the normative (*nash*) and contextual (*'aql*) dimensions in al-Ghazālī's intellectual project.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Ibnu In his busy carrying out his da'wah duties, al-Ghazālī consistently criticized the religious education system accepted by the du'āt (plural of *dā'ī*). He assessed that the failure of preachers and scholars in carrying out da'wah duties reflects weaknesses in their educational backgrounds. His views on the educational requirements for du'āt were not limited to the traditional Islamic study framework, but also reflected the spirit of the times that encouraged Muslims to excel in various branches of modern science in order to support the project of Islamic reform. Al-Ghazālī integrates the idea of intellectual excellence into the discourse of da'wah and religious education, but without explicitly describing the feasibility of integration between religious education and modern education, and without providing detailed guidelines on its implementation (Al-Ghazālī, 2003, 2005)

Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī's perspective on education and da'wah can still be studied further. He believes, as affirmed in the Qur'ān, that the divine election of a nation is determined by intellectual and moral superiority that benefits mankind, not on the basis of ethnicity or geographical location (al- Ġazālī, 2004) This view implies that religious authority is worthy of being held only by those who have adequate intellectual, spiritual, and educational capacity. In al-Ghazālī's view, Allah chose the rasūl from among the best of His creation and bestowed upon them virtue in terms of intellect and spirituality. Therefore, the du'āt who are narrow-minded and lack intellectual ability are not worthy of continuing their prophetic mission (al-Ġazālī, 2005; Al-Ghazālī, 2003).

The success of da'wah, according to al-Ghazālī, is highly determined by the commitment of the du'āt to the mastery of broad and profound knowledge. An ideal da'ī must have the intellect of a philosopher, emotions as subtle as a writer, precision like a lawyer, courage as tough as a knight, and gentleness like an old man. Without a combination of these qualities, a da'ī would not be able to understand the substance of religion in its entirety, and thus fail to convey the treatise of Islam comprehensively (Ġazālī, 2008)

In this framework, al-Ghazālī also emphasizes the importance of reading activities as the foundation of da'wah thought. A da'ī must be a lover of knowledge and books, and have a high enthusiasm for reading various types of literature—both religious and non-religious. He encouraged da'īs not only to read classical Islamic literature such as the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and the works of scholars, but also to study works that deal with atheism, philosophy, and trends of contemporary thought, while avoiding reading from periods of intellectual turmoil. A da'ī's emotional and intellectual relationship with the Qur'ān and Sunnah is an absolute requirement for achieving an authentic understanding (Al-Ghazālī, 1983)

Al-Ghazālī also emphasized the importance of knowledge of Islamic history, including the biographies of the khulafā' al-rāshidīn, as well as an understanding of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *munāsabāt al-ḥadīṣ*. The da'ī must study the history of mankind, understand the dynamics of the fiqh movement, literature, education, and Islamic intellectual development, and delve into Islamic law and culture. However, al-Ghazālī does not require da'ī to attain the level of mastery of knowledge like the imams of the great sects such as Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, or Ibn Ḥanbal. He only emphasizes the importance of a minimum intellectual capacity as well as a basic understanding of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, with adequate knowledge of *awlawiyyāt al-fiqh al-Islāmī* (priority in Islamic law). Specific questions are left to competent experts in their respective fields (al-Ġazālī, 2005; Al-Ghazālī, 1983).

In relation to the understanding of Islam, al-Ghazālī views mastery of Arabic language and literature as an essential condition for the effectiveness of da'wah. Learning Arabic, according to him, is a path to understanding revelation, strengthening Muslim identity, and conveying Islamic teachings. He even proposed the establishment of Arabic language learning institutions and the sending of delegations abroad to spread the Arabic language culturally, without always linking it directly to religious aspects (Ġazālī, 2000)

Al-Ghazālī's emphasis on Arabic displays the distinctive character of his tradition-rooted approach to da'wah. However, this can also pose challenges in the context of Islamic universality, which idealizes cross-cultural and linguistic da'wah. The demands of strict Arabic proficiency can be an obstacle for non-Arab da'ī who, although not fluent in Arabic, still have the capacity to convey Islam effectively through their specific expertise (al-Ġazālī, 2005; Ġazālī, 2000) According to al-Ghazālī, these aspects are only part of the process of intellectual formation of a da'ī. In the midst of

the rapid flow of universal thought and inter-civilizational interaction, the da'i are required to have a solid foundation in the treasures of Islamic and non-Islamic scholarship. They need to study the history of human thought, including modern philosophy, ethics, and social and political theories. Effective da'wah, in his view, also requires knowledge in the fields of sociology, economics, education, and psychology (al-Ġazālī, 2005; Al-Ghazālī, 1983; Ġazālī, 2000)

The da'wah approach developed by al-Ghazālī requires that da'i be able to understand the psychological condition of the object of da'wah and use revelation as a means to cure intellectual error and confusion. Therefore, the humanities must be approached from an Islamic perspective. Da'i must also understand comparative religions (*al-adyān al-muqāranah*), recognize the teachings, practices, and shortcomings of other religions, and understand common ground in order to build constructive dialogue (al- Ġazālī, 2004; Ġazālī, 2008) Al-Ghazālī also demanded that the da'i study natural sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, geography, botany, and zoology. Mastery of these natural laws is necessary to maintain the social balance that is the pillar of da'wah. The inability of some da'i to develop a solution da'wah approach to society is often due to a weakness in understanding these laws and a lack of a comprehensive foundation of study (al- Ġazālī, 2004; al-Ġazālī, 2005; Al-Ghazālī, 1983; Ġazālī, 2000, 2008).

Al-Ghazālī's call to delve into various branches of knowledge was not intended to simply collect information, but to make science an instrument of da'wah. With this provision, the da'i are able to read the dynamics of society and actively contribute to solving modern human problems. This means that da'wah is not just the delivery of dogma, but a science-based social and intellectual intervention. In addition, da'is are required to study areas such as politics, economics, and psychology, in order to understand Muslim society more fully. They should not limit themselves to a particular school of jurisprudence or theological school. Intellectual independence and openness to social, cultural, and historical contexts are a must. Da'i need to understand global currents of thought, the structure of human society, influential figures, and the development of the times as a whole (Ġazālī, 2000, 2008)

In summary, al-Ghazālī formulated a complex and ambitious model of da'wah: demanding that da'i have broad insight, high social skills, and a multidisciplinary approach that includes traditional and modern, rational and spiritual, physical and ethical aspects. However, this model also contains paradoxes; Not all experts are able

to meet these standards, and may even fail in their own expertise. However, these ideal demands reflect the need to integrate da'wah with science and modernity (Ġazālī, 2000).

Thus, al-Ghazālī's intellectual project gives room for optimism. It not only offers a new approach to the development of da'wah, but also establishes a framework for Islamic reform through the integration of religion, science, and the progress of the times. Through this synthesis, the da'ī are expected to be able to present Islam in a modern, relevant, and transformational form.

Discussion

1. Between Da'wah Idealism and Epistemological Reality

In the trajectory of contemporary da'wah thought, al-Ghazālī occupies a distinctive position by formulating an educational approach for *dā'ī* that is multidimensional and demands cross-disciplinary intellectual achievement. His criticism of the reality of religious education in his time was not only focused on the content of the curriculum taught, but also on the way in which the *du'āt* articulated da'wah intellectually, emotionally, and socially in the midst of the complexity of the modernity landscape. This criticism is not only normative, but also reflects the urgent need for an epistemological redefinition in the Islamic da'wah project (Don & Awang, 2009; Ġazālī, 2000)

Al-Ghazālī viewed the failure of the missionaries to convey the message of Islam comprehensively as a reflection of the limited education they received. Within this framework, he does not demand that *dā'ī* be a *mujtahid* in the classical sense, but affirms the importance of a minimum threshold of intellectual competence, a basic knowledge of the Qur'ān and al-Sunnah, as well as a contextual insight into modern society. He emphasized that *dā'ī* who are narrow-minded and lack professional competence in various fields of knowledge are not worthy to continue their prophetic mission (Al-Bayānūnī, 1993; al-Ġazālī, 2005).

In his conception, da'wah is not enough to be based on religious rhetoric or memorization of normative texts. Al-Ghazālī claimed that the success of da'wah includes "the intellect of a philosopher, the emotion of a writer, the meticulousness of a jurist, the courage of a *mujāhid*, and the gentleness of an educator." Thus, the da'wah project according to al-Ghazālī requires integration between various branches of science: from philosophy and psychology, to sociology, economics, and even politics.

The epistemological aspect of al-Ghazālī's view demands an openness to contemporary sciences as a tool for understanding human reality. He explicitly advocates that *the dā'ir* understand the social structure, the discourse of modern philosophy, the development of Western thought, and the socio-cultural transformations faced by Muslims (Shehu, 2017; Trihono & Setiyono, 2018).

The discourse between da'wah idealism and epistemological reality reveals the tension between aspirational religious teachings and practical understandings of knowledge and existence. Da'wah, as articulated by contemporary scholars, seeks to reform and modernize Islamic thought with an emphasis on rationality and social justice. However, this idealism often clashes with the epistemological realities faced by practitioners and scholars in the field.

In a reformist perspective, scholars such as Maulana Waheed ud-Din Khan and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi advocated a rational approach to Islamic teachings, as well as promoting moderation and interreligious harmony ("Philosophy of Dawah in Islam: A Comparative Analysis of Maulana Waheed u Din and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's Thoughts," 2023). On the other hand, figures such as Habib Lutfi emphasized the importance of integrating spirituality and nationalism in da'wah, and showed that a sincere love for the homeland can expand the reach of religious messages while strengthening community cohesion (Bin Yahya et al., 2020).

The relationship between da'wah idealism and epistemological reality also presents a complex interaction between the conceptual framework of Islamic outreach and the philosophical foundations of knowledge. Da'wah in the Qur'an emphasizes the transformation of values and the promotion of goodness, while epistemological realism, especially in the context of Hegel's thought, assumes that reality is conceptual, where concepts become the basis of understanding the world. This creates an important synthesis between the morality of da'wah and the conceptual approach to social reality (Westphal, 1989).

The conceptual framework of da'wah affirms the fundamental goal of an invitation to divine guidance, with an emphasis on moral and ethical transformation through verbal communication methods and tangible actions (Umro atin, n.d.). Values of goodness such as truth and purity are central elements in the implementation of da'wah according to the Qur'an (Umro atin, n.d.), while practical approaches such as rational argumentation and social engagement are used to convey messages effectively (Fauziah, 2024).

Meanwhile, epistemological reality demands a more grounded approach. The epistemological perspective of da'wah science, especially in the context of social welfare, emphasizes community empowerment and respect for diversity, reflecting the response to the concrete challenges faced by the ummah (Hidayatulloh, A., & Syukur, n.d.). Although idealism has moral impetus, criticism of it shows that an overly strong form of idealism can ignore the complexity of social realities, so a more realistic epistemological approach is considered to be able to provide a sharper and more relevant understanding of social dynamics and the effectiveness of da'wah (Hofweber, 2019).

2. Da'wah as a Multidisciplinary Construction: Philosophy, Literature, and Social Sciences

Reading for al-Ghazālī is not just a passive activity, but is the backbone of the intellectual formation of the dā'ī. He emphasized that the du'āt should be "obsessed" with reading, not only in religious literature, but also in works of philosophy, literature, social sciences, and secular thought. They need to equip themselves with insight into various schools of thought, including atheism, agnosticism, and postmodern thought, all of which are done not to absorb relativism, but to understand the context and build relevant da'wah narratives (Bensaid, 2013; Ġazālī, 2000).

On the other hand, al-Ghazālī still insists that the emotional and intellectual relationship with the Qur'ān and al-Sunnah is the main foundation. Therefore, the dā'ī must understand *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *munāsabāt al-ḥadīṣ*, i.e. the historical context of the descent of the verses and the release of the Prophet's hadiths. This strengthens their ability to make contextual readings *maqāṣidī* of normative texts in the face of the challenges of the times. One of the central issues that has sparked academic debate on al-Ghazālī's da'wah model is its demand for Arabic language proficiency as the main prerequisite for effective da'wah. He even advocated the establishment of Arabic language schools in various countries and the separation of Arabic from religious institutions so that this language could become a neutral and universal medium of da'wah (Trihono & Setiyono, 2018)

However, this demand raises a critical question: does the necessity of mastering the Arabic language not actually contradict the essence of Islamic universality that crosses ethnic, geographical, and linguistic boundaries? Scholars such as Fazlur Rahman and Tariq Ramadan remind us that the spirit of Islam is inclusive and adaptive

to the cultural and linguistic diversity of mankind. Therefore, the imposition of one language as the main channel of da'wah risks reducing da'wah to an Arabization project, not Islamization (Rahman, 1982)

In the final part of his intellectual model, al-Ghazālī showed a very progressive thought: the *dā'ī* had to master not only religious sciences, but also natural sciences such as physics, biology, chemistry, astronomy, to geography and botany. Da'wah, in this perspective, cannot be separated from the understanding of *sunan al-kawn* (the laws of nature) as part of *sunan Allāh fī khalqih* (the law of Allah in His creation). Understanding the physical and biological world is considered important to build a rational, credible da'wah and not trapped in superstitions or worldviews that are used (Bensaid, 2008)

This marks al-Ghazālī's implicit criticism of the traditional Islamic education system which is often confined to a narrow curriculum of *fiqh* and theology, without touching the development of contemporary science. He realized that Muslims could not lead civilization solely on classical heritage, without active involvement in the production of new knowledge relevant to the challenges of the times. (Al-Ghazālī, 2003; Ġazālī, 2000). Although al-Ghazālī's da'wah model is ideal and visionary, it also holds serious challenges in terms of implementation. The requirement for a *dā'ī* to have competence in various fields ranging from religious science, social sciences, philosophy, to natural sciences is something very heavy, even unrealistic in the context of ordinary human ability. This has given rise to criticism of epistemological elitism, where only a handful of people with encyclopedic intellectual capacity are able to meet these demands (Bensaid, 2013)

In academic discourse, this raises a methodological question: does da'wah really have to be done by individuals who are "perfect" from a scientific point of view? Or is da'wah more effective if it is carried out collectively by a multidisciplinary community, where each member fills in the other's shortcomings? This idea is in line with the interdisciplinary approach of da'wah teams that began to be developed in the context of contemporary urban da'wah (Sari & Amin, 2020)

Overall, al-Ghazālī offers a synthesis between the Islamic scientific tradition and modern intellectual approaches. He tried to bridge the classical dichotomy between religion and science, as well as between traditional and modern education. Although his vision seems utopian, his spirit reflects the need for today's Muslims to get out of intellectual stagnation and build a da'wah methodology that is relevant to the global

context. Thus, al-Ghazālī's works not only make an important contribution to contemporary Islamic da'wah discourse, but also become a serious effort to reunite knowledge *'ilm*, wisdom *ḥikmah*, and civilization *adab* in forming a *dā'ī* that is not only rhetorically communicative, but also epistemically and ethically representative.

Al-Ghazālī's da'wah thought represents a serious attempt to synthesize the normative idealism of da'wah with the complex epistemological realities of modern society. In his view, da'wah is not enough to rely on religious rhetoric or memorization of normative texts, but rather requires cross-disciplinary intellectual skills that include philosophy, sociology, psychology, and the natural sciences. Al-Ghazālī emphasized that the success of da'wah requires the intelligence of a philosopher, the emotional sensitivity of a writer, the thoroughness of a jurist, the courage of a mujahid, and the gentleness of an educator. He considers the failure of the da'is to convey the message of Islam comprehensively as a reflection of the weak religious education system, and therefore calls for an epistemological redefinition in the project of Islamic da'wah.

Nevertheless, the idealistic da'wah model in the style of al-Ghazālī faces significant implementation challenges. The demand to master various branches of knowledge made the profile of the da'i he initiated very high and almost utopian, thus causing criticism of the epistemological elitism in the da'wah project. In this context, methodological questions arise regarding the effectiveness of da'wah: should it be carried out by scientifically "perfect" individuals, or is it more realistic if it is done collectively by a multidisciplinary community? This is where al-Ghazālī indirectly opens up space for a more contextual approach to collaborative da'wah. Although his vision demanded high idealism, the spirit of al-Ghazālī was a critical impetus to emerge from intellectual stagnation and build a model of da'wah that was relevant, rational, and in harmony with the global challenges and plurality of modern society.

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D. CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazālī's da'wah thought offers an epistemological synthesis between religion and science that requires da'is not only to master classical Islamic texts, but also to be actively involved in the realm of modern science. His ideas reflect the urgency of renewal in da'wah education which has been trapped in a monodisciplinary and normative approach only. Da'wah, according to al-Ghazālī, should be understood as an intellectual and social activity that demands broad insight, interdisciplinary skills, and sensitivity to the context of the times. Although its idealism demands high intellectual standards, this model of da'wah presents a progressive offer to overcome the stagnation of thought in the Islamic world. Thus, this article concludes that al-Ghazālī's intellectual project is not only relevant, but also urgent to be used as a foundation in the development of a more inclusive, rational, and transformative modern da'wah curriculum and proxy.

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