INTEGRATION OF DHIKR AND SUFISTIC MEDITATION IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dan merumuskan konsep zikir dan meditasi sebagai bagian dari pengembangan metode pembelajaran dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI), dengan fokus untuk memperbaiki akhlak dan meningkatkan kesehatan mental peserta didik. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka yang menurut Cooper memuat 6 langkah, yaitu; 1) merumuskan masalah; 2) mengumpulkan data; 3) mengevaluasi data; 4) menganalisis dan menyusun informasi; 5) menafsirkan hasil temuan; 6) menyajikan hasil penelitian. Sumber data dari penelitian ini diambil dari Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin karya Al-Ghazali sebagai sumber primer serta berbagai buku dan artijel jurnal ilmiah sebagai sumber sekunder. Hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa pengintegrasian zikir dan meditasi dalam metode pembelajaran tidak hanya membantu dalam mentransformasikan akhlak peserta didik, tetapi juga dapat menurunkan tingkat stres, meningkatkan ketenangan psikologis, serta memperkuat kesadaran spiritual. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya kajian terkait integrasi zikir dan meditasi sebagai metode pembelajaran PAI. Secara praktis penerapan metode ini dapat membantu peserta didik dalam meningkatkan fokus, mengurangi stres, mengisi kekosongan spiritual dan mengubah akhlak peserta didik.

Kata kunci*: Kesehatan Mental; Meditasi Sufistik; Metode Pembelajaran; Moral Karakter*

Abstract

This study aims to explore and formulate the concept of dhikr (remembrance of God) and Sufi meditation as part of the development of teaching methods in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), with a focus on improving moral character and enhancing students' mental well-being. The study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method, following Cooper's six steps: (1) defining the research problem, (2) collecting data, (3) evaluating data, (4) analyzing and organizing information, (5) interpreting findings, and (6) presenting results. The primary data source for this study is Ihya Ulumuddin by Al-Ghazali, complemented by secondary sources such as books and scholarly journal articles. The findings conclude that integrating dhikr and meditation into teaching methods not only facilitates the transformation of students' moral character but also helps reduce stress, enhance psychological tranquility, and strengthen spiritual awareness. Theoretically, this research contributes to the academic discourse on integrating dhikr and meditation into Islamic education pedagogy**.** Practically, implementing this method can help students improve focus, alleviate stress, fill spiritual voids, and refine their moral character.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has the main goal of transforming students' morals into people with noble character (Zalsabella P et al., 2023). This transformation is in line with the concept of human beings which consists of two main elements, namely qalbu (heart) and lust (desire or lust). Qalbu acts as a spiritual awareness center that can guide humans towards goodness or *piety*, while lust, if not controlled, tends to lead humans to negative or *fujur* behaviors (Al-Ghazali, 2019). In this context, PAI learning should ideally be able to balance these two elements, so that students can develop their spiritual and moral potential optimally.

However, reality shows that there are big challenges in learning PAI in the modern era. Moral decadence is increasingly rampant, characterized by a decline in respect, honesty, and responsibility among Generation Z. In addition, the nature of anxiety and anxiety of the soul is also widespread, triggered by the pressures of living in the digital age, such as social media and the uncertainty of the future (Hasibuan et al., 2024; Nugraha et al., 2024). If this situation is left uncorrected, future generations will face an even more serious moral crisis. They have the potential to lose their identity as people of faith and noble character, making it difficult to contribute positively to community life (Anggara et al., 2024). In addition, increased untreated anxiety can lead to psychological disorders, such as depression and social isolation, which adversely affect the quality of life of individuals and society as a whole. This condition indicates that the learning methods currently applied are not fully effective in forming noble morals while improving students' mental health (Hasibuan et al., 2024).

Various studies have examined learning methods in character formation in schools. An international study by Dobson & Dobson (2021) in the UK shows that the combination of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) and Student as Teacher (SAT) improves learner engagement as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills, especially through the reinforcement of active listening. Research by Ray & Montgomery (2006) in the United States also highlights the effectiveness of classroom-based education and guided-learning, which emphasize mentoring and interaction with role models, in shaping student character.

At the national level, Ammar & Hanif (2024) found that habituation and exemplary methods are effective in educating the character of junior high school students in Banyumas. Munawwaroh (2019) added that the combination of exemplary methods (*uswah hasanah*) and stories is able to strengthen the character of students. Meanwhile, Aminah et al. (2022) revealed that contextual learning contributes to the formation of students' character in elementary schools.

With regard to meditation, there are various systems and various definitions. However, in general, meditation can be understood as a scientific approach to self-

recognition and understanding through inner exploration as well as increased self-awareness. This process involves the peace of mind to find the true essence within oneself, which is the spiritual aspect, higher consciousness, soul, or inner wisdom that encompasses all knowledge (Salahuddin, 2017). In practice, meditation is also often referred to as mindfulness, which is a method to present full awareness of the present moment without judging or being carried away by past or future influences (Sari et al., 2023).

In the world of education, various learning methods have been applied to improve the mental health of students. International research has shown the effectiveness of mindfulness practices applied in schools as a strategy to improve students' mental health and emotional regulation, such as those found in the research of Khng (2018) in Singapore and Reindl et al. (2020) in the United States which highlight the benefits of yoga-based learning in improving students' focus.

In Indonesia, the application of mindfulness in education has also been researched, such as the research of Saputro et al. (2023) mindfulness exercises can increase students' motivation to learn and focus on reading. The research of Putri et al. (2024) also confirms that this approach has a positive impact on mental health and academic achievement. Although various studies have proven the effectiveness of character-based learning methods and mindfulness, there is a gap that has not been widely discussed, namely the lack of integration of spiritual aspects in the approach. In fact, in the context of PAI, character formation not only emphasizes moral and social aspects, but also spiritual aspects that are the core of Islamic education.

To overcome this gap, an approach is needed that can bridge the mental health and moral transformation of students by integrating spiritual values. One potential approach is the integration of dhikr and meditation as part of the PAI learning method. Zikir in Islam is not just a ritual of worship, but also has a psychological dimension that can help control emotions, reduce stress, and increase inner peace (Al-Ghazali, 2019; Yumnah & Khakim, 2019). This perspective is in line with the mindfulness theory of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003), which emphasizes that meditation and mindfulness help individuals respond to life's stresses in a more positive way.

From the perspective of character education theory, moral transformation can be explained through the concept put forward by Thomas Lickona. He emphasized that moral formation in education must include three main dimensions, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three dimensions are important pillars in shaping moral individuals (Kurniawan & Nida Fitriyani, 2023; Loloagin et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic education, dhikr and meditation can be an effective combination to form a balance between qalbu and lust, which is the key in the formation of noble morals.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of dhikr in improving mental health and forming good character (Hubbi, 2019; Kasih & Munawaroh, 2023; Nurhuda et al., 2023). However, until now there has been no research that specifically discusses the integration of dhikr and meditation as a learning method in PAI. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by formulating the concept of integrating dhikr and meditation in PAI learning, so that it can be the basis for further research in developing a more comprehensive spiritual-based learning approach.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature method to examine the concept of dhikr and Sufistic meditation according to Al-Ghazali and its implications for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods. The main source in this study is *Ihya Ulumuddin* by Al-Ghazali, while the secondary source includes journal articles, books, and other written works relevant to the theme of dhikr, meditation, and Islamic education in indexed journals. This literature method follows six stages according to Cooper (1988), namely formulating problems, collecting data from valid literature, evaluating the relevance and credibility of sources, analyzing and compiling information by grouping the concepts of dhikr and meditation in the perspective of Al-Ghazali, interpreting the findings to see its relevance in Islamic education, and presenting the results of research systematically.

Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis method which focuses on exploring the meaning of texts in primary and secondary sources through the identification of main themes related to dhikr and meditation in Al-Ghazali's works, comparison with other perspectives in secondary literature, and drawing conclusions related to the application of these concepts in PAI learning. With this approach, the research is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the integration of dhikr and meditation in the PAI learning method based on Al-Ghazali's perspective. All stages of data analysis in this study are presented in the following scheme to provide a clearer and systematic picture of the research process.
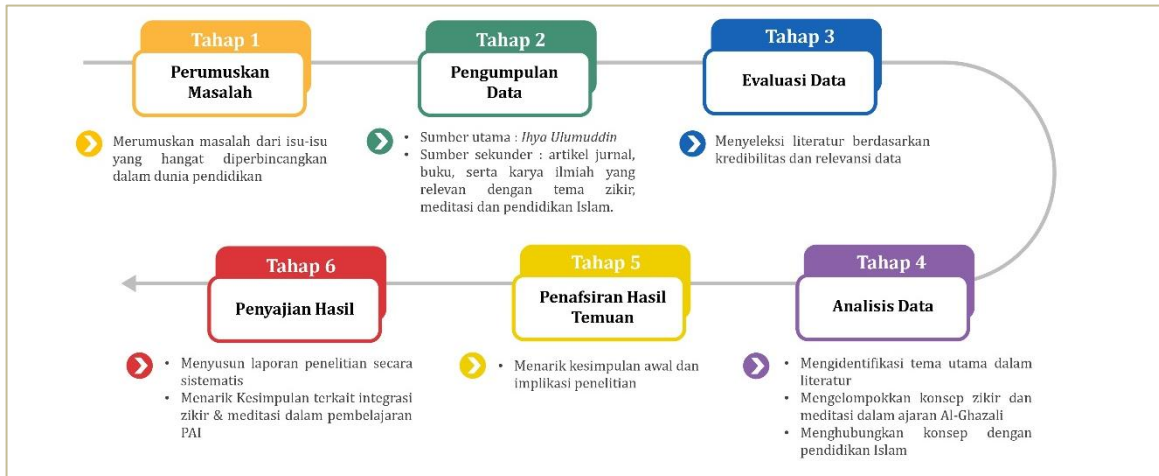
Figure 1. Data Analysis Stage Scheme

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Concept of Zikir

To provide a clearer understanding of the concept of dhikr according to Imam Al-Ghazali and other scholars, the following is a summary of the main aspects related to dhikr in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the Concept of Zikir

No	Aspects	Explanation
1	Definition of Dhikr	Remember Allah.
2	The Virtues of Dhikr	Better worship after reading the Quran.
3	Function of Zikir	A means of connecting servants with Allah.
4	Number of words in the Quran	Mentioned 292 times, contained in 36 letters.
5	Types of Zikir	Tasbeeh, Tahmeed, Dissolution, Takbeer, Huqla, Istaghfar, Shalawat, Milafulkin-like *'Allah'*.
6	Quality dhikr	Dhikr which is carried out continuously with the presence of the heart *(hudlur qalb)*
7	Types of Zikir	Zikir Qalbu from Zikir Lisan *(khafi)*.
8	Benefits of Dhikr	1) Bring peace of mind *(sakinah)* 2) Making qalbu soft to erode reprehensible properties.

The table above summarizes the views of Imam Al-Ghazali and other scholars regarding the concept of dhikr. The following explanation will further elaborate on each of these aspects in more depth. Regarding dhikr, Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* views dhikr as a form of worship that has a special position in Islam. He emphasized:

فليس بعد تلاوة كتاب الله عز وجل عبادة تؤدى باللسان أفضل من ذكر الله تعالى ورفع الحاجات بالأدعية

الخالصة إلى الله تعالى

> "There is no better worship after reciting the Qur'an that is done orally than remembering Allah and offering necessities through sincere prayers to Allah." (Al-Ghazali, 2011)

This statement emphasizes two main things: the meaning and position of dhikr. In his sense, dhikr is a means of connecting servants with Allah, both through verbal speech and contemplation of the heart. Meanwhile, in terms of its position, dhikr has a very high position in worship, even as the main practice that can be done after reading the Qur'an. In line with that, in the view of Ibn Atha'illah As-Sakandari, dhikr is still considered even though it is done without solemnity. He said:

> "Do not abandon dhikr because your heart cannot concentrate on Allah during dhikr. Because, your negligence to Allah when you do not dhikr is worse than your negligence when you do dhikr." (Atha'illah, 2020).

In another of his works, Ibn Athaillah mentioned that dhikr is to break free from negligence by always breaking free from negligence by presenting qalbu with Al-Haqq. Another opinion says that dhikr is the repetition of the name of Allah in the heart and through words. It can be done by remembering Allah's pronunciation, his nature, his law, his deeds, or similar actions. Dhikr can also be in the form of prayer (Al-Sakandary, 2011).

The word dhikr is the singular form (*mufrad*), while the plural form is *al-adzkar*. In the Qur'an, the word dhikr and those with the same root are mentioned 292 times, contained in 36 letters (25 Makkiyah and 11 Madaniyah letters). The words of dhikr are also repeated 76 *times* in the form of masdar (Andri, 2011).

There are so many words that mention dhikr in the Quran, it indicates the importance of this practice. One of the verses that emphasizes the virtue of dhikr is:

> "So remember Me, I will surely remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not disbelieve." (QS. Al-Baqarah: 152).

This verse shows that dhikr is not just a form of worship, but also a form of direct communication between servants and Allah. Allah promises to remember His servants who always remember Him, giving deep meaning to the practice of dhikr in the spiritual life of a Muslim (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuthi, 2023).

Al-Ghazali said that there are various types of dhikr, which can be in the form of *prayer beads*, *tahmid*, *tahlil*, *hauqalah*, *istighfar*, and *shalawat*. He also emphasized that the most influential and useful dhikr is dhikr that is carried out continuously with the presence of the heart. As for dhikr that is only spoken orally while the heart is negligent, then the benefits are very few. In fact, the presence of the heart in remembering Allah continuously or at least most of the time is more important than all other worships, because the presence of the heart to Allah is the essence of all worship, and is the highest fruit of the deeds of worship (Al-Ghazali, 2011). As he said in *Ihya:*

أَنَّ الْمُؤَثِّرَ النَّافِعَ هُوَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَى الدَّوَامِ مَعَ حُضُورِ الْقَلْبِ فَأَمَّا الذِّكْرُ بِاللِّسَانِ وَالْقَلْبُ لَاهٍ فَهُوَ قَلِيلُ الْجَدْوَى

بَلْ حُضُورُ الْقَلْبِ مَعَ اللّٰهِ تَعَالَى عَلَى الدَّوَامِ أَوْ فِي أَكْثَرِ الْأَوْقَاتِ هُوَ الْمُقَدَّمُ عَلَى الْعِبَادَاتِ بَلْ بِهِ تَشْرُفُ

سَائِرُ الْعِبَادَاتِ وَهُوَ غَايَةُ ثَمَرَةِ الْعِبَادَاتِ الْعَمَلِيَّةِ

In this regard, Sheikh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, a Sufi figure in America, said that dhikr is the most important deed of Allah's servants, and it is emphasized more than 100 times in the Quran. Qadhi Abu Bakr al-'Arabi explained that there is no legitimate righteous deed without dhikr. Whoever does not remember Allah in his heart when he gives alms or fasts, or for example, for example, the deed becomes incomplete. Therefore, dhikr can be considered as the best deed (Kabbani, 2007). Al-Ghazali also alluded to the various times of dhikr, which can be done after prayer, or those that are not time-bound (Al-Ghazali, 2011), as he quotes the words of Allah:

"When you have finished praying, remember Allah in a state of standing, sitting, and lying down." (QS. An-Nisa: 103)

From this verse, the scholars of Sufism developed an understanding that dhikr can be done in all circumstances. Fakhruddin Al-Razi divides dhikr into oral dhikr, heart dhikr, and deed dhikr. Ibn Athaillah added the dimension of dhikr sirr, which is the dhikr in the heart that is not heard by others, which according to him is more important than the dhikr that is recited (Al-Sakandary, 2011; Kabbani, 2007).

From the statements of Al-Ghazali and the Sufi scholars above, overall dhikr can be divided into two types, namely oral dhikr and heart dhikr. (1) Oral dhikr, namely dhikr by reciting certain recitations such as *rosary*, *tahmid*, *takbir*, *tahlil*, *istighfar*, and *shalawat*. In terms of time, there are dhikr that are bound by time and place and there are also those that are free. For example, after prayer, recitation during Hajj, before going to bed, after waking up, before eating, riding a vehicle, dhikr in the morning and evening, and others (Al-Sakandary, 2011). (2) Qalbu dhikr or Khafi dhikr, which is the dhikr that is hidden in the heart, without sound and words. Usually this dhikr is practiced by practitioners of the tariqat with the guidance of mursyid who have reached *ma'rifah* to Allah. This dhikr is not bound by space and time, when and where it can be done in various circumstances. The practitioners of the tariqat usually recite the phrase tahlil (*la ilaha illallah)* or the pronunciation *of Allah*, or *Huwa* (pronounced 'Hu' refers to Allah's asthma) (Al-Sakandary, 2011).

Zikir has many benefits, Al-Ghazali mentioned some of them, namely it can provide peace of mind called *sakinah* by referring to the hadith of the Prophet which explains that if a people dhikr (remember) Allah, they will be surrounded by angels, mercy will cover them, and sakinah (tranquility) will be revealed. In addition, the most impactful but sometimes unconscious thing is that dhikr can make qalbu soft which can then change morals from bad to good. As explained earlier, the most useful dhikr is dhikr that is done with full awareness of the heart. This is because the

heart is a place to feel God's presence, a source of faith growth, and a place where all the secrets of God are stored. Dhikr that is done sincerely in the heart, which is done with full sincerity as a form of servitude to Allah, will greatly affect a person's mental state. A heart that dhikr will be free from arrogance, resentment, hatred, and avoid the nature of ujub and takabur. In addition, he will also lose envy and envy, as well as gain calm and enthusiasm in worship. This happens because the heart or soul is overwhelmed by the grace of Allah thanks to the dhikr carried out (Arifin et al., 2022).

This statement is reinforced by other research that explains that the main purpose of dhikr is not just in verbal movements, but rather in achieving spiritual closeness and feeling God's presence in the heart. By feeling God's supervision and presence in every aspect of life, a person will always guard his heart and body from any actions that can cause God to turn away from him. Thus, he will always behave well and have noble morals (Saputra & Wahid, 2023).

In addition, other studies show that dhikr can improve mental well-being so that it has an impact on the ability to control emotions in responding to deviations in thinking and excessive anxiety (Arifin et al., 2022).

Sufistic Meditation

The concept of Sufistic meditation in Al-Ghazali's view has a broad dimension, involving spiritual and psychological aspects. To make this understanding easier, the following is a summary of the main aspects related to Sufistic meditation in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Sufistic Meditation Concepts

No	Aspects	Explanation
1	Definition of Meditation	In line with the concepts of *"khalwat"* and *"uzlah"*, which means: 1. Silence, contemplation 2. Lonely from the hustle and bustle of the world In general: Methods to increase self-awareness and achieve peace of mind
2	Meditation Goals & Benefits	1. Improving spiritual relationship with God. 2. Finding inner equanimity. 3. Peace of mind 4. Increased self-awareness
3	Sufistic meditation series	Silence, Tafakkur, Muhasabah, Zikir Qalbu accompanied by breathing or heartbeat.
4	Meditation practices in different religions	1. Hinduism: silence while chanting the mantra '*Om*' 2. Buddha: Silence focuses on thought and breathing 3. Christianity: Silence while visualizing sacred symbols and reciting mantras 4. Islam: silence while saying *the sentence tahlil* or the repetition of the words *of Allah.*

The table above provides a brief overview of the concept of sufistic meditation. Furthermore, the following discussion will elaborate more deeply on each aspect that has been summarized in the table. Although Al-Ghazali does not explicitly mention the word "meditation" in his work, concepts related to contemplation and silence to achieve peace of mind can be found in his teachings. In Al-Ghazali's perspective, the practice that goes hand in hand with meditation is often referred to as *uzlah* or *khalwat*, which is to retreat from the hustle and bustle of the world to deepen a spiritual relationship with Allah. In *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*, he stated:

أن الحكمة عشرة أجزاء تسعة منها في الصمت والعاشر في عزلة الناس

"That wisdom is in ten parts. Nine of them lie in silence, and the tenth is in seclusion from man." (Al-Ghazali, 2011)

From this statement, it can be understood that silence is one of the important aspects in obtaining wisdom and inner peace. However, in the Sufism tradition, this silent practice is not only limited to emptying the mind, but is also accompanied by tafakkur (contemplation) and muhasabah (self-introspection). The Sufis use this process as a means of realizing the sins of birth and mind that have been committed (Ainur Rofiq & Sutopo, 2023; Syahdan & Mulkiah, 2023).

Furthermore, other research states that in Sufism, this practice aims to deepen the spiritual relationship with God. Through regular meditation practice, which is complemented by honest meditation and introspection, one can gain a deeper understanding of oneself and bring God in every aspect of one's life. Thus, this spiritual practice provides many benefits, such as peace of mind, increased self-awareness, and feelings of closeness to God (Saputra & Wahid, 2023).

Al-Ghazali also explained that for a person who has undergone *riyadhah* such as fasting, solitude, not sleeping at night, and keeping quiet, he should multiply dhikr in a certain way. He recommends that a person sit in the corner of the house in a state of ablution and facing the Qibla, then recite the dhikr "*Allah... Allah*" with great solemnity. If done repeatedly, this dhikr will become a habit that is done without coercion, so that a person can reach a higher spiritual state (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali recommends tafakkur to be done before and after worship. Tafakkur serves as a means to present two knowledge in the heart, which can result in a deeper understanding. Thus, tafakkur is a form of muhasabah that helps a person to recognize and remove obstacles between himself and Allah (Al-Ghazali, 2011). In this context, Ibn Athaillah also emphasized the importance of manners in dhikr. Before, during, and after the implementation of dhikr, there are manners that are both external and internal. Before starting dhikr, a person is encouraged to repent, improve the soul through spiritual practice, and stay away from worldly attachments. All of this is aimed at making it easier for the heart to focus on Allah (Al-Sakandary, 2011).

In practice, practitioners of the tarekat often associate dhikr with the rhythm of the heartbeat and the breathing process, so that the concept of *dhikr of breath* was born. This dhikr is carried out by accompanying every inhale and exhalation with dhikr, which aims to increase awareness of Allah's presence and achieve inner peace. One of the commonly used methods is the recitation *of Huu Allah*, which is done by regulating breathing naturally. When inhaling, the heart pronounces *Huu* (which means "He, God"), and when exhaling, the heart pronounces *Allah* (Afifah & Rafida, 2024).

Furthermore, research conducted by Arifin et al. (2022) outlines the steps in the practice of dhikr naasas or *dhikr khafi*, which in the Qadiriyah Naqsyabandiyah tarekat is known as *tawajjuh*. The process includes several stages, namely: (1) Lowering the head to the left (towards the heart). (2) Close your eyes. (3) Close your lips. (4) Placing the tongue on the roof of the mouth. (5) Close the teeth without movement. (6) Regulate your breathing slowly, while accompanying the inflow of air with the remembrance of "Huu" in your heart and exhale with the remembrance *of "Allah"*. This practice is carried out with full awareness and a feeling of gratitude for the blessings of life that are still given by Allah.

In a general context, meditation is often understood as a method to increase self-awareness and achieve peace of mind. The ultimate goal is to find inner equanimity, both in spiritual contexts, self-discovery, and inner wisdom. Through meditation, a person can expand their awareness as well as train their mind to be more focused and calm. In addition, various studies have also shown that meditation has many benefits, including reducing stress, improving emotional balance, and strengthening concentration and effectiveness at work (Aisyah & Naan, 2020).

Interestingly, although meditation techniques in various religious traditions vary, their principles and goals tend to have similarities. In the Hindu tradition, meditation is done by chanting mantras such as *Om* or mentioning the name of a particular deity. In Buddhism, the practice of meditation emphasizes more on the observation of the mind and breathing. While in Christianity, meditation often involves visualizing sacred symbols and repeated prayers. On the other hand, in Islam, forms of meditation can be found in the practice of dhikr, which involves repeating monotheistic sentences such as *Laa ilaha illallah* or the repeated mention of the name of Allah (Arifin et al., 2022; Hubbi, 2019; Juniartha, 2019; Setiawan & Objantoro, 2019).

Thus, despite the variation in form and technique, meditation in various traditions has a similar goal, which is to draw closer to God and achieve peace of mind. From a psychological perspective, meditation also plays a role in helping a person develop a deeper understanding of themselves, while also improving mental and emotional health (Utami, 2017).

Many individuals apply meditation as a form of psychological therapy to gain mental calm. In Sudirman Tebba's view, dhikr is a form of *Sufistic meditation*, whose techniques are adapted from various Sufi practices. In this context, dhikr serves as a means to calm the mind and achieve a higher spiritual state. This is in line with Tri Niswati Utami's research, which shows that dhikr can increase a person's spiritual value as well as contribute to the formation of a stronger personality. In addition, dhikr is also known to turn distress into eustress, as well as have an impact on biological changes, such as a decrease in cortisol levels in the body. In other words, the practice of dhikr not only provides spiritual benefits, but also contributes to a person's mental and emotional health (Utami, 2017).

In addition to the benefits of dhikr in spiritual and psychological contexts, research on the practice of mindfulness in the world of education shows that this method also plays a role in forming healthy living habits from an early age. Studies on mindfulness training in children have found that this practice can improve focus skills, develop better copying mechanisms, and help regulate emotions. Not only that, the benefits of mindfulness also include a reduction in the level of aggression, hostility, depression, anxiety, and emotional discomfort (Parker et al., 2015).

Furthermore, mindfulness not only has an impact on children's emotional well-being, but also affects the mindset and behavior of adolescents, especially in avoiding bad habits such as the use of addictive substances. The results showed that adolescents who participated in mindfulness-based smoking cessation programs through yoga and meditation activities, showed higher motivation to quit smoking compared to the group that did not participate in the program (Parker et al., 2015).

The Concept of Morality in Al-Ghazali's Thought

Morality is one of the main aspects in Islamic teachings which is the goal of the practice of worship and Sufism. Imam Al-Ghazali discusses morality in depth in his various works. To make this understanding easier, the following is a summary of the main aspects related to the concept of morality in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the Concept of Morals.

No	Aspects	Explanation
1	Definition of Morals	The tendency of the soul to choose good or bad deeds without long consideration.
2	Types of Morals	Akhlak *Mahmudah* (good) and Akhlak *Sayyi'ah* (bad)
3	Factors Shaping Good Morals	1. Moral actions, 2. Ability to perform. 3. Moral knowledge. 4. Mental condition.
4	The Essence of Morals	Not only what is seen outwardly, but also a reflection of one's inner self.

Al-Ghazali is known as an expert in moral science who not only delves into the external aspect, but also the inner aspect, especially how qalbu affects the good or bad of a person's morals. This concept is also relevant to Lickona's theory of character morality which states that self-control plays a role in shaping a person's character (Loloagin et al., 2023).

In *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali defines morality as a trait that describes a person's good or bad, both outwardly and inwardly. He also explained that morality is a tendency of the soul that guides a person in choosing good or bad deeds easily, without the need for long consideration (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This view has similarities with Lickona's thinking which states that habits and social environment have a great influence on a person's moral tendencies (Kurniawan & Nida Fitriyani, 2023).

Al-Ghazali divides morals into two main categories, namely; *Akhlak Mahmudah* (Good Morals) and *Akhlak Sayyi'ah* (Bad Morals). Good morals are not only related to outward appearance, but further include inner traits that are more important because they determine one's actions in daily life. Human beings consist of a body that can be seen by the eye as well as a soul that can only be understood through the heart and mind. In Al-Ghazali's view, the body is created from the soil, while the soul comes from Allah (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

Furthermore, good morals are traits that are embedded in the soul so that a person can do good easily and without coercion. If an act is in accordance with reason and sharia, then it is called good morals, while if it is contrary to both, then it is considered bad morals (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

The position of good morals in Islam is so high that Al-Ghazali quoted Al-Kanani as saying:

> "Tasawuf adalah akhlak, siapa yang lebih baik akhlaknya, dia lebih tinggi dalam tasawuf" (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

The main goal of having good morals is to release the heart from love for the world and instill love for Allah SWT. Thus, a person will not love anything more than his desire to meet God. All the possessions he possessed were only used as a means to draw closer to Him, while his anger and lust were completely subject to the pleasure of Allah. All these actions must be measured based on sharia and reason in order to finally bring true happiness (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This opinion is reinforced by Ibn Ata'illah through his simple concept of happiness, teaching us not to put happiness in something temporary (Suhada et al., 2022).

In Al-Ghazali's view, good morals include four main strengths in a person, namely; 1) The power of science; 2) The power of anger (emotions); 3) The power of lust (desire); 4) The power of justice (justice). When these four aspects are in balance and support each other, then a person will have good morals (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

On the contrary, bad morals are considered a more dangerous liver disease than physical diseases. Therefore, learning the science of treating liver disease is an obligation for every sensible person. If left unchecked, this disease will get worse and cause many other evils (Al-Ghazali, 2011). Other research related to the concept of bad morals confirms that bad morals can bring destruction to individuals and society (Zuhdi, 2018).

Al-Ghazali said that there are four main factors that shape a person's morals, namely; 1) Good and bad actions taken; 2) Ability to do both; 3) Knowledge of both; 4) The state of mind that makes a person inclined to one of them (Al-Ghazali, 2011). This concept is in line with the theory of character education according to Lickona, which emphasizes that the formation of morals involves cognitive dimensions, namely knowledge of good and bad, affective, namely the condition of the heart (self-control*),* and behavior (moral action / habbits*)* (Kurniawan & Nida Fitriyani, 2023).

Perfection in these four aspects of morality can only be found in the Prophet PBUH. The more a person emulates his morals, the higher his position in the sight of Allah (Al-Ghazali, 2011). Shofiah's research reinforces this view by mentioning that the personality of the Prophet Muhammad is the best role model in the development of Islamic ethics (S. N. Huda & Afrina, 2020).

Thus, morality is not just a visible behavior, but a reflection of a person's inner state that is the key to true happiness, both in this world and in the hereafter.

Methods of Purifying the Soul

The purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) is the core of the teachings of Sufism which aims to cleanse the heart from despicable qualities and decorate oneself with noble morals. Imam Al-Ghazali and other Sufi scholars have formulated various methods of achieving purity of the soul. To make this understanding easier, the following is a summary of the main aspects related to Sufistic meditation in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Soul Purification Methods

No	Aspects	Explanation
1	Definition of Tazkiyatun Nafs	The process of purifying the soul to return it to its pure nature, as well as to heal the soul that has been polluted.
2	Moral Transformation	Tazkiyyah includes the transition from a soul filled with bad traits (*nafs, anger*, and *lawamah*) to a calm soul (*nafs mutmainnah*) by practicing sharia principles.
3	self-esteem	(1) Takhalli. (2) Tahalli. (3) Tajalli

Al-Ghazali said that one of the ways to educate morals is to use several self-traits to overcome bad traits. Just as a disease that disrupts the balance of the body that causes pain, cannot be cured except by the opposite, so with bad morals, i.e. liver disease, the treatment is the opposite. This process is carried out with seriousness in overcoming lust (Al-Ghazali, 2011).

In the study of the method of purification of the soul, this cannot be separated from the term al-nafs (*tazkiyah al-nafs*). Al-nafs, which means soul, is an object that needs to be purified through the *tazkiyah* process. Etymologically, "*tazkiyah*" comes from the Arabic verb "*zakka-yuzakki-tazkiyan,*" which means to purify or cleanse. From the perspective of Sufis, tazkiyah is a process of purification of the heart that aims to get closer to Allah through a series of stages that are carried out with great seriousness. Worship that is carried out with sincerity not only increases piety but also helps a person in controlling lust, so that his soul becomes cleaner (Hasballah et al., 2018).

In Arabic, al-nafs refers to the soul or spirit that moves the human body. This soul can be educated and controlled, as explained in the Qur'an, Surah Ash-Shams verse 8: *"So Allah inspired the soul (the way) of evil and piety."* This verse affirms that every soul is created in perfect condition, but humans are given the choice to follow the path of good (piety) or evil (falsehood) (Hasballah et al., 2018).

Therefore, tazkiyah al-nafs is a process of purifying the soul in order to return it to its pure nature, as well as to heal the soul that has been polluted through a sufistic approach. This transformation includes a transition from a soul filled with bad traits (*nafs, anger*, and *lawamah*) to a calm soul (*nafs mutmainnah*) by practicing sharia principles. In a simpler explanation, it is to eliminate negative traits such as greed, pride, envy, and hatred, and replace them with divine (praiseworthy) qualities such as compassion, gratitude, love, care, and discipline in worship and daily life (Aprilia et al., 2024).

In Sufism, the tazkiyah al-nafs process consists of three main stages, namely *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. These three stages are interconnected and must be done sequentially.

First, Takhalli

The first stage in the purification of the soul focuses on cleansing oneself of reprehensible qualities. This process involves the elimination of negative impulses that come from lust, such as envy, prejudice, pride, and riya' attitude. Sufism scholars divide vices into two categories, namely innate vices and inner vices. Innate vices include bad deeds committed by the limbs, while inner vices are related to evils that originate from the heart. In this context, takhalli is an effort to cleanse oneself from sin and impurities through sincere repentance (Aprilia et al., 2024).

Second, Tahalli

After going through the takhalli process, the next step is to decorate the soul with commendable qualities. The bad traits that have been abandoned are replaced with good values through consistent spiritual practice. One of the main ways in this stage is by dhikr, which according to Al-Ghazali can dissolve the impurities of the heart and make it softer. In addition, tahalli also includes the application of positive

qualities such as patience, piety, honesty, trust, and humility. Habits in performing worship such as reading the Qur'an, dhikr, and praying are also an important part of this stage (Mutholingah, 2021).

With a chain, Tajalli

The last stage in tazkiyah al-nafs is the highest spiritual attainment. After going through the process of takhalli and tahalli earnestly, a person is expected to reach the level of soul that is pleasing to Allah (*nafs mardhiyah*). At this stage, a person will have full awareness of God's presence in every aspect of his life. Tajalli occurs when the veil between man and Allah is revealed, so that every action done is solely based on love for Him. In this condition, a person is no longer driven by lust, but by sincerity and sincerity in worshipping Allah (Mutholingah, 2021).

Thus, the process of tazkiyah al-nafs is a long journey in purifying the soul through the stages of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli. Through this method, one can attain a higher spiritual level, have noble morals, and attain true inner peace (Aprilia et al., 2024).

Implications for the Development of PAI Learning Methods

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a systematic effort to shape Muslim personality through teaching, guidance, and habituation of Islamic values. PAI not only focuses on knowledge transfer (cognitive), but also includes affective and psychomotor aspects to shape the religious character of students (Syahidin, 2022). This is in line with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System in Article 3 which states that the purpose of national education is to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become the color of a democratic and responsible country (National, 2004). This proves that education as a whole has an important role and the main goal in making humans who are faithful and devout.

In the educational process, learning methods have an important role in determining the effectiveness of delivering material to students. Learning methods can be defined as methods or strategies used by educators to achieve learning goals optimally. Each method has certain characteristics that affect how students understand, process, and apply the material given (Riza & Barrulwalidin, 2023).

In the context of PAI, the selection of learning methods not only considers the academic aspect, but also the spiritual aspect. This aims to ensure that students not only understand Islamic teachings in theory, but also be able to apply them in daily life (Rahman, 2022). The PAI learning method refers to the approach or strategy used in delivering PAI material so that students can understand, internalize, and apply Islamic teachings holistically. The selection of this method must be adjusted

to the learning objectives, characteristics of students, and the existing learning context (Arifin, 2021).

Research shows that learning that integrates spiritual aspects can help shape individuals who have a deep understanding of life's values. By implementing Sufism practices, students can develop self-awareness, strengthen their faith, and better manage relationships with the surrounding environment (I. R. Huda & Priyatna, 2024).

Steps (Syntax) in Learning Methods

According to Joyce, each learning method has a syntax or systematic steps that help students achieve learning goals optimally. This syntax generally includes the stages of preparation, presentation of the material, exercises, and evaluation (Joyce & Weil, 2009; Ummah & Fathani, 2018). However, in this study, the author only focuses on the formulation and development of the preparation stage, without discussing the aspects of material presentation to learning evaluation.

In the context of developing spiritual-based PAI learning, the syntax in stage I or commonly called the preparation stage before learning, can be modified by adding aspects of mental conditioning to increase students' mental and emotional readiness before receiving teaching materials. This concept is in line with the principle of self-regulated learning in cognitive theory, which emphasizes the importance of mental readiness before the learning process takes place (Zimmerman, 2014). In Islamic studies, the practice of mental conditioning is also known in the Sufism tradition, which emphasizes the importance of purifying the heart before receiving knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2019).

As an innovation in the PAI learning method, the author intends to develop a syntax that begins with one instruction to support mental conditioning before learning which can be illustrated through the following chart:

Modifikasi Sintaks I

Pengembangan Model Pembelajaran PAI

Instruksi I
Peserta didik diberikan instruksi untuk memiliki wudlu sebelum memulai pembelajaran PAI.

Sintaks I : Self Awareness
Peserta didik diajak Bersama-sama menghadirkan kesadaran diri melalui praktik zikir meditasi dengan guru sebagai pemandu dan pembimbing.

Sintaks II
......

Sintaks III
......

Figure 2. Syntax Flow of PAI Learning Model Development

Based on the figure, the explanation of syntax development in PAI learning can be detailed as follows:

Instruction I: Perform ablution (before starting learning)

Before starting PAI learning, the teacher gives instructions to students to have ablution during the PAI learning process. Ablution before learning aims to physically cleanse oneself, as well as a symbol of purification of the heart (Al-Ghazali, 2019).

Sintaks I: Self Awareness

The author named this syntax I Self *Awareness* based on the purpose of this syntax, which is to reflect on self and create inner peace. Self-awareness is a person's ability to recognize and understand their thoughts, feelings, and inner conditions (Sugiarto & Suhaili, 2022). Self Awareness is not only related to psychological awareness, but also includes spiritual awareness, namely understanding one's relationship with Allah and improving the quality of faith and worship.

The author develops activities in syntax I in the form of the application of Zikir Khofi (dhikr in the heart), which is accompanied by breathing techniques. The order of dhikr Khofi used: (1) Bismillah (1x) – Starting by saying the name of Allah to ask for blessings. (2) Istighfar (7x) – Asking Allah for forgiveness for all sins and mistakes as self-reflection. (3) Shalawat (7x) – Asking Allah for blessings on the light of the Prophet Muhammad that can soften the heart. (4) Subhanallah (7x) – Purifying Allah from all shortcomings. (5) Alhamdulillah (11x) – As a form of gratitude and glorification to Allah. (6) Hu-Allah (7 minutes) – Saying the name of Allah in the heart to achieve inner peace. (7) Alhamdulillah (1x, as a closing) – carried out by the teacher in a Jahr (harsh) manner as an instruction that the dhikr activity in syntax I has been completed.

Based on several studies from Arifin et al. (2022) regarding the impact of dhikr khafi and Kabat-Zin (2003) related to the benefits of mindful-education, it is concluded that there are several benefits obtained, including: (1) Helping students focus and calm more before receiving teaching materials. (2) Increase emotional intelligence in facing learning challenges. (3) Instilling the habit of dzikrullah as a form of self-reflection. (4) Deepening spiritual understanding and improving relationship with God.

With the development of syntax I in this series of PAI learning methods, it is hoped that students will be more prepared mentally in receiving knowledge so that they have better self-control and a soft heart as the basis for moral transformation. In the world of education, each learning method has its own advantages and disadvantages, depending on the purpose and context of its application. The results of this study formulate the concept of integrating dhikr and meditation as one of the learning stages aiming to complement the existing methods by providing space for

strengthening the emotional and spiritual aspects of students. Table 5 below presents a comparison between other learning methods and the integration of dhikr & meditation in a particular learning stage.

Table 5. Comparison of Syntax of Learning Methods.

No	Aspects	Learning Methods	
		Usual Methods	Spiritually-Based Methods
1	General Purpose Method	Knowledge transfer, academic skills	Moral Transformation & Mental Health
2	Emotional and spiritual	None/only a glimpse without fully delving	There are emotional and spiritual aspects
3	Study Preparation	Pray together/individually	Dhikr and meditation
4	Advantages	Less time-consuming, easier to do	Reduce stress, increase self & spiritual awareness, improve focus
5	Disadvantages	Less touching on psychological and spiritual aspects	Difficult to measure quantitatively, requires consistency and competent supervisors, limited time.

The results of this study provide theoretical implications in terms of enriching studies in the field of Islamic education by adding the dimension of inner conditioning in the syntax of PAI learning. The integration of the concepts of dhikr and meditation as part of the PAI learning method shows that the spiritual aspect can be combined with a cognitive approach to produce more effective and meaningful learning. It also supports Al-Ghazali's findings on the importance of purification of the soul before receiving knowledge and strengthens the study of self-regulated learning and mindfulness-education.

Practically, the application of this method can help students improve focus, reduce stress, and deepen their spiritual connection with PAI materials. PAI teachers can adopt this strategy as part of the classroom routine to create a more conducive learning atmosphere mentally and emotionally.

Thus, this research provides a new perspective in the field of Islamic education by offering a more holistic approach, namely by integrating the spiritual dimension as part of a more systematic and conditioning-based teaching method.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research provides a new perspective in formulating a concept that integrates dhikr and meditation as the development of PAI learning methods which are expected to be a means to transform morals and improve students' mental health. However, this study has limitations in terms of research methods. The data obtained was obtained from the results of the literature study without involving direct field experiments to test the methods that had been formulated. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the direct impact of the concept that

integrates dhikr and meditation in its application in the field in a way that PAI teachers can start learning with a short dhikr session before the delivery of material to increase concentration, calmness, and transform students' morals.

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