

Designing Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education Based on Thinking of *Al-Ghazālī*: Fuzzy Delphi Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop an early childhood education curriculum framework rooted in al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy. The research, which employed a mixed exploratory method, explored al-Ghazālī's thinking on early childhood education through document analysis of his work in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* as well as secondary sources by relevant scholars. A Fuzzy Delphi method involving 25 field experts validated the proposed items in the framework, which covered curriculum elements like aims, objectives, content, teaching strategies, learning activities, and assessment methods. With over 75% consensus, the experts supported the six curriculum elements comprising 58 items. In this analysis, Al-Ghazali demonstrates visionary thinking in the field of educational philosophy, with a specific emphasis on improving Islamic education in the context of child education. He underscores the significance of these elements of the curriculum in nurturing the growth of an exemplary individual who aligns with the divine educational objectives of Islam. This framework presents an early proposition for enhancing existing early childhood education curriculum standards and emphasizing practical student outcomes.

Keywords: Al-Ghazālī, curriculum framework, Islamic early childhood education

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INTRODUCTION

Education stands as a fundamental necessity in societal development. Rapid conditions influence the dynamic educational environment in 21st-century learning and hence require continuous development (Leng et al., 2023). While efforts have been made to adapt the current curriculum

to these changes, a significant gap exists in integrating comprehensive Islamic educational philosophies within early childhood education frameworks. In alignment with the needs of an evolving society, the curriculum of Islamic education demands critical discourse to accommodate the diverse needs of today's learners (Mughal, 2021). This gap necessitates a critical discourse on Islamic education curricula to address the diverse needs of today's young Muslim learners. Early childhood education, as a preparatory process for children before formal education, needs to be highlighted as the first step in adapting to new challenges. The curriculum for early childhood education in Malaysia is structured through the National Standard Preschool Curriculum, aiming to develop children's potential holistically and comprehensively across various developmental aspects, encompassing physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions (Rahman & Noor, 2018). This process is facilitated through a safe learning environment that fosters enjoyable, creative, and meaningful learning experiences. Abu Hamid ibn Muhammad al-Ghazālī, famously known as Al-Ghazālī, a prominent figure in Islamic education, introduced several key concepts about true education. His valuable thoughts became a reference in various disciplines during the golden era of Islamic knowledge, which led to his title of *Hujjat al-Islam* (Nofal, 1993). His educational concepts are methodically analyzed, forming the basis of a curriculum design for early childhood education.

This paper will begin by exploring the current state of early childhood education in Malaysia, pointing out certain gaps in current research, especially in Islamic early childhood. It will then delve into an analysis of al-Ghazali's insight into education and the psychology of children. The study will propose a curriculum framework based on this foundation that integrates the thinking of al-Ghazali with a contemporary curriculum framework. Finally, the paper will conclude with recommendations and future research that will benefit educators and policymakers. This comprehensive examination aims to examine the significance and necessity of integrating al-Ghazālī's educational thought scheme into the contemporary early childhood curriculum frameworks. By synthesizing these elements, the research seeks to offer valuable insights into the creation of a holistic and culturally relevant curriculum framework for early childhood education in Islamic contexts.

Problem Statement

While the structured nature of Malaysia's National Standard Preschool Curriculum provides a solid foundation, there remains a significant gap in integrating comprehensive Islamic educational philosophies that cater to the holistic development of children. Saptri et al. (2021) mentioned that current frameworks primarily focus on broad developmental aspects but often lack a deep integration of spiritual and moral education rooted in Islamic thought. This gap can create a disconnection between the child's early education and cultural and

religious values, potentially affecting their overall development and identity formation. Although the curriculum covers various developmental aspects, it predominantly focuses on secular knowledge with limited emphasis on religious and moral education, resulting in an education system that does not fully address the spiritual needs of Muslim children (Hashim, 2019a). The long-term implications of this curricular gap affect multiple stakeholders: parents struggle to maintain religious and cultural continuity, educators face challenges in delivering holistic education, and communities risk losing their cultural identity across generations. The current curriculum is seen as emphasizing physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development but often treats these areas in isolation rather than as interconnected facets of a child's growth.

These issues have been addressed by numerous private preschools that have implemented their own curricula, integrating their unique values and aspirations (H. Ismail et al., 2019). For instance, a study by Gumindari et al. (2019) found that certain Islamic preschools promote a curriculum combining Islamic educational concepts with Montessori methods. However, this integration may not be suitable from an Islamic education perspective. With the diversity of curricula and approaches used, there is concern that the existing national curriculum may not be effectively implemented for preschool students. The educational aspirations based on the National Education Philosophy may not

be fully realized in Malaysia (Nordin et al., 2021). Furthermore, a critical concern is whether these modules are verified by experts in the field or tested through rigorous research. As Ekawati et al. (2019) suggested, expert validation is crucial for ensuring the feasibility and applicability of educational content, particularly in integrating Islamic values effectively.

In this study, Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy has been examined and reconstructed into Malaysia's contemporary early childhood curriculum framework to address existing gaps and enhance current curriculum standards. This integration focuses on elements of the curriculum framework rooted in Islamic values, ensuring holistic development that prepares children for a balanced and fulfilling life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Al-Ghazālī is a prominent figure in Islamic education, extensively discussing the concept of education in his various writings. His ideas on education are prominently presented in the content of his book, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Asari, 1993). Additionally, discussions on education can also be found in other works by Al-Ghazālī, such as *Ayuha al-Walad*, *Fatihah al-Ulum*, *Mizan al-Amal*, and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Nofal, 1993). In the introductory chapter of *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, specifically in *Kitab al-'ilm*, Al-Ghazālī offers fundamental explanations of education, including the definition of knowledge, its classification, hierarchy, benefits, and other related aspects (Gil'adi, 1992). His contributions to the field of

education are significant and multifaceted, addressing theoretical and practical dimensions. His works remain relevant for contemporary educational philosophy and pedagogy discussions within Islamic contexts (Sheikh & Ali, 2019).

Al-Ghazālī's insight offers a comprehensive concept and overview of the true education that Muslims should practice today. He outlines a curriculum guide that includes the philosophy, goals, and objectives of genuine education according to Islam (Salaeh et al., 2023). Furthermore, Al-Ghazālī explains the elements of education that can be integrated into the current curriculum. Through his seminal work, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Al-Ghazālī provides recommendations on appropriate methods for educators to use in teaching students (Asari, 1993). Al-Ghazālī, who is also proficient in psychology, is adept at designing a curriculum process tailored to meet the psychological needs of children (Rothman, 2021). His insights remain valuable for developing a holistic and effective educational framework in contemporary Islamic education.

According to al-Ghazālī, the primary purpose of education should be the development of individuals with well-rounded and balanced characters, enabling them to attain happiness and fulfillment in both this life and the afterlife (F. Karim & Al-Ghazali, 2015). Al-Ghazālī identifies two types of happiness for Muslims: (1) temporal happiness in this world and (2) eternal happiness in the afterlife. Quasem (1975) elucidates that temporal

happiness is achieved in two ways. First, through the acquisition of knowledge and moral development, which are divinely bestowed upon humans. Second, through the fulfillment of basic needs such as food and shelter, which require knowledge and skills to obtain. While the pursuit of temporal happiness is essential, it must be coupled with the attainment of knowledge to govern oneself and society effectively. For eternal happiness, al-Ghazālī asserts that it can only be attained by seeking divine forgiveness and blessings and avoiding divine retribution, specifically hellfire. Al-Ghazālī concludes that both types of happiness must be pursued through acquiring knowledge and cultivating a balanced character. In addition, as al-Ghazālī mentioned, education needs to develop a good moral character (F. Karim & Al-Ghazali, 2015). Al-Ghazālī describes character as the inward form of a person. He says a balanced character is achieved by embodying the mean or moderate path in all affairs. Both extremes of character traits are considered blameworthy, whereas the mean represents the optimal and praiseworthy state (Siraj & Arshad, 2009).

Al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy proposes a distinct curriculum content grounded in his pedagogical ideals. By leveraging his hierarchical classification of knowledge and its divisions, the curriculum content begins its formation with an in-depth exploration of his ideas (Barni & Mahdany, 2017). Al-Ghazālī's insight into the concept of *fard 'ayn* underscores the necessity for a curriculum model tailored to a child's developmental stage

and age. Foundational religious tenets, including faith, practical worship, and ethics, are essential components of *fard 'ayn*, necessitating early exposure for children (Al-Ghazali, 2017). Beyond the *fard 'ayn* component, Zarkasyi (1990) advocates for the inclusion of additional elements such as the memorization of selected Quranic verses and hadith, the biography of the Prophet (*Sirah*), and the stories of his companions, as also stated by al-Ghazālī in his *Ihya'*. Meanwhile, *fard kifayah*, as elaborated by al-Ghazālī, encompasses practical sciences that are obligatory for specific communities only. Particular subjects or fields of knowledge do not differentiate these notions but rather by the types of religious obligations about their acquisition, as explained by Bakar (1998). Subjects such as language, mathematics, arts, logical thinking, and sports are also considered essential for children's education within their respective levels. This approach aims to foster a child's growth within a holistic learning framework, as emphasized by authoritative scholars (Hashim, 2019b). Al-Ghazālī's classification of knowledge, viewed as mutually complementary, aims to develop a balanced individual aligned with the stated educational objectives (Ihya & Yani, 2020).

Al-Ghazālī's intricate delineation of four fundamental values, known as *ummahat al-fadhail*, encapsulates his ethical perspective (Mubarak, 2019). These values, wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, constitute intrinsic facets of human nature, requiring cultivation to maintain balance and prevent

excessiveness (Quasem, 1975; Syamsuddin & Mamat, 2014). Al-Ghazālī stresses a precise progression from virtuous (*fadhilah*) to reprehensible (*radzilah*) characteristics within each of these values as identified by Umaruddin (1996). Al-Ghazālī's analysis of values serves as a guiding framework for educators to scaffold character formation and foster continual growth in children's souls. Al-Ghazālī's value-based framework transcends cultural boundaries, converging within both Islamic and Western character education paradigms. While parallelisms exist, as highlighted by Quasem (1975) there are disparities persist between al-Ghazālī's perspective and Western conceptions of virtue ethics. Ultimately, the universal nature of these values advocated by al-Ghazālī extends their pertinence to all children, fostering a broader discourse on the centralization of virtuous values in education.

In this introductory exploration, the curriculum framework based on al-Ghazālī's thinking discerns two fundamental educational concepts: (1) *Ta'lim* (education) and (2) *tarbiyah* (nurturing), which underpin the analyzed teaching strategies. *Ta'lim*, characterized by knowledge dissemination with a cognitive emphasis, encompasses strategies such as systematic teaching and learning, integrated approaches, memorization methods, playful learning, soul-based learning, lifelong learning, differentiated instruction, and gradual learning (Bashir, 2017; Hashim, 2019b; Yussof, 2010; Zarkasyi, 1990; Zawawi, 2017). Conversely, *tarbiyah* aligns with nurturing and entails value cultivation and

physical care, manifesting within and beyond preschool settings (Sahin, 2018). This concept of nurturing amplifies children's learning experiences, imbuing them with significance and profound understanding (Memon et al., 2021). *Tarbiyah* aims to foster character traits while simultaneously aiding the existing teaching processes. The curriculum framework indicates that *tarbiyah* can be operationalized through strategies such as self-development (*riyadah al-nafs*), habituation (*ta'wid*), peer interaction, adult interaction, teacher-student-relationships (*suhbah*), reinforcement and punishment methods, and exemplar methods (*qudwah*) (Arshad, 2009; Attaran, 2015; Bashir, 2017; Sulaiman, 2014). These strategies remain relevant for contemporary educational practices, such as habituation practices within preschool routines that exemplify virtuous values (Cinantya et al., 2019). The convergence of the *ta'lim* and *tarbiyah* concepts within early childhood education gives rise to the term *ta'dib*, encapsulating a more holistic educational philosophy, as mentioned by Al-Attas (1989), which education should encompass a comprehensive process of nurturing children's potential. Notably, this notion is reinforced using the term *ta'dib* within the educational process described in the study's sample unit by al-Ghazālī's work (Al-Ghazali, 2017). The concept of *ta'dib* presents an innovative educational framework that integrates these two foundational principles of *ta'lim* and *tarbiyah*. This synthesis heralds a transformative paradigm within Islamic

education, wherein educators transcend the conventional role of information dissemination and instead emerge as mentors, fostering the development of virtuous character within their students.

Regarding teaching activities, al-Ghazālī does not explicitly prescribe specific teaching activities to achieve educational goals; scholarship indicates that historical educational practices during his time included teaching activities, games, and pedagogical approaches (Ahsan, 1973; Gil'adi, 1992; Quraishi, 1970; Rosenthal, 2014). The activities mentioned above have become integral to the Islamic educational tradition. Tibawi (1972) also reveals that al-Ghazālī innovatively employed teaching activities, such as chess games and musical singing, in *kuttāb*-level instruction in Islamic education. Based on the examined literature, early childhood educators can engage in activities such as storytelling, prayer, and remembrance sessions (*du'a* and *zikir*), reading, writing, arithmetic, questioning, playing, conducting experiments, and practical activities within the classroom (Barni & Mahdany, 2017; Gil'adi, 1992; Husna & Wasik, 2021; Saptri et al., 2021; Zarkasyi, 1990). Al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of making teaching activities enjoyable and fostering children's love for learning and education (Bashir, 2017). A balanced approach to teaching activities is essential during early childhood education to prevent children from becoming disinterested, aligning with al-Ghazālī's assertion that children's hearts should not "die" from monotony (Alkanderi, 2019).

The curriculum framework for early childhood education grounded in al-Ghazālī's philosophy incorporates two assessment methods to evaluate children's developmental stages within the classroom. The assessment methods examined include the concept of *muhasabah* (self-assessment) and continuous observation and admonition by the teacher. *Muhasabah* is defined as self-assessment, wherein Memon et al. (2021) explain it as a reflective process of intentions and activities throughout the learning process. This aligns with Hawkes's (2005) assertion that reflection assists students in identifying positive values to nurture within themselves, a notion congruent with al-Ghazālī's philosophy. To instill a Muslim personality in children, the guidance of teachers is crucial in cultivating the practice of *muhasabah* to enable children to internalize each lesson (El-Moslimany, 2020). The second assessment method, continuous observation and admonition, is paramount in the context of Islamic education from al-Ghazālī's moral-oriented viewpoint, given the importance of removing undesirable traits and habits through ongoing observation and guidance by teachers (Razak et al., 2016). Al-Ghazālī advocates for a systematic approach to admonition, applying it at various stages with an emphasis on compassion and care (Azhari & Mustapa, 2021). This approach focuses on character development rather than humiliation, as it aims to nurture moral values (Roslan et al., 2019). Therefore, educators need to understand children's psychology to effectively utilize admonition

as an educational strategy (Bariyah, 1999). Both assessment approaches are practical and should be implemented simultaneously during teaching sessions with children. Their concurrent use enhances the efficiency of assessing children's developmental progress. In conclusion, while al-Ghazālī's recommended assessment methods emphasize moral and spiritual development, they provide a foundation for comprehensive assessment innovations catering to specific developmental aspects or skills.

METHODOLOGY

The Fuzzy Delphi Method was used to reach consensus among selected experts on the aims, objectives, content, teaching strategy, activity, and assessment method in designing a curriculum framework based on the thinking of al-Ghazālī in early childhood education. It was introduced by Murray et al. (1985) and Kaufmann and Gupta (1988) and was developed in combination with set fuzzy theory and the Delphi technique. The rationale for applying the fuzzy Delphi method compared to the Delphi technique is that it saves time and costs when handling questionnaires. In the context of curriculum development, the Fuzzy Delphi Method was one of the credibility methodologies as it can effectively process complex multi-dimensional educational concepts, accommodate the natural uncertainty in expert opinions, and provide more refined consensus measurements compared to traditional Delphi methods. This makes it particularly well-suited for developing educational frameworks where precision

in conceptual integration is essential. This method proves particularly valuable in educational framework development because it can handle the inherent complexity and ambiguity in educational planning, especially when integrating classical Islamic philosophy with contemporary educational needs.

A total of 25 experts were selected in this study using purposive sampling. The number of experts selected was acceptable for the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM), as suggested by Adler and Ziglio (1996), and a minimum of 10 experts were needed in the study to achieve high uniformity among experts. The expert panel was carefully curated to ensure comprehensive coverage of all crucial aspects of the framework development. These experts have consisted of experts in their fields with extensive experience in curriculum planning, credible practitioners with knowledge and practical experience, and highly contributed to educational reform initiatives. As a result, several selection criteria are determined as follows:

1. Possess a minimum of five years of professional experience in the domains of early childhood education, curriculum development, and Islamic education.
2. Highly involved in policy research, collaborating with relevant stakeholders, and conducting consultations within many research domains.
3. Actively engaged in respective expertise by demonstrating scholarly contribution through publication,

practical innovation, and high involvement with educational institutions or regulatory agencies.

The development of the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) instrument was preceded by a comprehensive literature review on al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy, with a particular focus on the elements of the curriculum framework as articulated in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and his other works. This review was augmented by secondary literature from authoritative scholars who have extensively studied al-Ghazālī's thoughts, especially his educational thought and philosophy. The literature review phase involved a systematic analysis of classical Arabic texts and contemporary interpretations to authentically represent al-Ghazālī's educational principles.

The Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) instrument encompasses six elements of the early childhood education curriculum framework: (1) aims of education, (2) educational objectives, (3) curriculum content, (4) teaching and learning strategies, and (5) learning activities and (6) assessments. These elements were selected based on the recommendations of Ornstein and Hunkins (2017), ensuring systematic coverage of all essential aspects of curriculum design while maintaining alignment with contemporary educational theory. Following the literature review and validation by content experts, 58 items were identified within these six curriculum elements.

The instrument employed the Fuzzy Delphi Questionnaire, featuring 58 items rated on a five-point fuzzy linguistic scale:

strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Experts were provided with the questionnaire and asked to respond according to their level of agreement. They were also given the option to highlight or modify any items they found misleading. After completing the questionnaire, the experts returned the instrument to the researchers for data analysis.

The Fuzzy Delphi Method was collected and analyzed using the following steps below:

1. Determine the number of experts involved, i.e., between 10–20 respondents (Adler & Ziglio, 1996). This study chose to get a consensus of 25 experts.
2. Determining the Linguistic Scale based on the triangular fuzzy number. Triangular Fuzzy Numbers represent values as (m1, m2, m3), where m1 is the minimum value, m2 is the most logical value, and m3 is the maximum value. This type of fuzzy number is used to create a Fuzzy scale akin to a Likert scale, which translates linguistic variables into fuzzy numbers. The levels of the Fuzzy scale must be in odd numbers, as this enhances the accuracy of the data. The higher the Fuzzy scale, the more precise the data obtained, as explained in Figure 1.
3. All data is scheduled to get average values (m1, m2, m3), i.e., minimum, municipal and maximum values.
4. Determine the distance between the

numbers to determine the threshold value by using the following formula:

$$d(\bar{m}, \bar{n}) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{3}[(m1 - n1)^2 + (m2 - n2)^2 + (m3 - n3)^2]}$$

This study collected and analyzed data using the Fuzzy Delphi technique. Experts were provided with an instrument where each item was represented on a Likert scale along with a blank space for comments and suggestions. The Likert scale data obtained were analyzed using Excel. All data were converted into Triangular Fuzzy Numbers. A five-point Fuzzy scale was utilized in this study.

The advantages of the Fuzzy Delphi Method include (1) saving time on the questionnaire process, (2) being cost-effective, (3) reducing the number of surveys needed while increasing the response rate, (4) allowing experts to fully express their opinions, thus ensuring the completeness and consistency of their input, and (5) reducing inevitable fuzziness in the study. Moreover, this method guarantees the

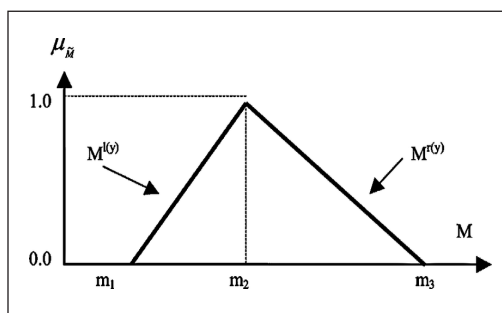


Figure 1. Triangular fuzzy number

accuracy of the expert panels’ opinions by eliciting genuine responses from them (Yaakob et al., 2023).

However, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of this approach. Expert selection may introduce biases that could influence the results. The chosen experts might not fully represent the perspectives within the context of Islamic early childhood education because of the difference in specialization for every expert. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, as the study focuses on a curriculum framework development based on al-Ghazali’s thinking in the early childhood education scenario. The applicability of the results to other educational systems may require further research. Furthermore, while valuable, reliance on expert opinions may not capture the full complexity of implementing curriculum changes in real-world educational settings.

RESULTS

In this curriculum framework for early childhood education based on *al-Ghazālī’s*

educational ideas, these 58 items were resolved to six elements of the curriculum framework given to the experts, which are stated in Table 1.

The curriculum framework for early childhood education based on the philosophy of al-Ghazālī yields several fundamental components within a structure proposed by Ornstein and Hunkins (2017). The consensus levels demonstrate several noteworthy patterns that reveal important insights about the integration of al-Ghazālī’s educational philosophy into contemporary early childhood education. Most striking is the exceptionally high consensus (98%) achieved for educational goals, suggesting strong expert agreement on the fundamental principles that should guide early childhood education from an Islamic perspective. This is closely followed by objectives at 91%, indicating that experts found the practical translation of al-Ghazālī’s philosophical principles into concrete educational targets both feasible and appropriate. The content categories reveal an intriguing hierarchical pattern: Values secured the highest consensus (93%), followed by skills

Table 1
Expert consensus on elements of Al-Ghazālī’s curriculum framework

No	Element	Threshold value item	Percentage consensus (%)
1	Goal	0.14	98
2	Objectives	0.16	91
4	Content (Knowledge)	0.16	77
5	Content (Skills)	0.19	88
6	Content (Values)	0.18	93
7	Strategies	0.18	87
7	Activities	0.17	93
8	Assessment	0.20	96

(88%), while knowledge content received a relatively lower consensus (77%). This distribution notably reflects al-Ghazālī's educational hierarchy, where moral and spiritual development (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*) takes precedence over mere knowledge acquisition. The implementation elements—teaching strategies (87%), activities (93%), and assessment (96%)—all achieved robust consensus levels, suggesting that experts strongly endorse the proposed practical approaches for translating al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy into contemporary classroom practices. The particularly high consensus on assessment methods (96%) indicates strong agreement on evaluation approaches that successfully bridge classical Islamic educational principles with modern pedagogical requirements.

Upon examination of the table above, these six elements meet the criteria for the fuzzy Delphi technique, with construct item values below 0.2. Moreover, the percentage agreement values based on all the proposed curriculum framework elements attain a consensus percentage exceeding 75% of expert consensus, rendering this expert consensus valid, as cited by Chu and Hwang (2008). The proposed curriculum framework aligns with al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy, guiding the design and implementation of early childhood education curricula in line with his holistic approach.

All items that constituted the consensus evaluation by the expert panel within the proposed curriculum elements are presented in Figure 2. This detailed

documentation provides transparency and facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation process performed by the curriculum framework components. The inclusion of these detailed evaluations in the diagram strengthens the thoroughness and academic integrity of the study, allowing readers to delve into the subtle nuances that guided the experts' consensus-building efforts. This practice aligns with the scholarly tradition of promoting transparency and accountability in research while enhancing the discourse on curriculum development within early childhood education.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section aims to thoroughly examine and interpret the research results. This study analyzed the impact of an early childhood education curriculum influenced by al-Ghazālī, who emphasizes holistic development, including spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical aspects. Integrating Al-Ghazali's insights into modern curricula can significantly enhance the moral and spiritual dimensions of education.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The primary aim of education based on al-Ghazali's philosophy is attaining happiness in this world and the hereafter, alongside creating a balanced and perfect individual (Zarkasyi, 1990). This dual focus on spiritual and worldly success aligns well with the objectives of modern education systems, including Malaysia. National Education Philosophy, as constructed in the early 70s, emphasizes producing well-rounded

AIM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attainment of happiness in word and hereafter 2. A balanced and perfect individual 	
OBJECTIVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquiring moral and values 2. Exposure to principles and tenets of religion 3. Achieving balance in character formation 4. Purification of soul 5. Attainment balance of conduct within human soul 6. A well rounded of good society 	
CONTENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tenet of faith 2. Ethics 3. Practical faith 4. Prophet's biography 5. Sports 6. Arts 7. Language 8. Critical Thinking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play skills 2. Spiritual intelligence 3. Emotional intelligence 4. Communication skills 5. Literacy skills 6. Numeracy skills 7. Locomotor skills 8. Collaborative skills 9. Thinking skills
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wisdom 2. Courage 3. Temperance 4. Justice
STRATEGY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exemplary (qudwah) 2. Companionship (suhbah) 3. Play 4. Integrate approach 5. Peer interaction 6. Adult interaction 7. Soul purification 8. Self discipline 9. Soul based learning 10. Gradual learning 11. Lifelong learning 12. Systematic pedagogy 13. Reward and punishment 14. Habituation 15. Differentiated instruction 16. Memorization 	
ACTIVITY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pray and remembrance 2. Playing 3. Storytelling 4. Experiments 5. Nature interaction 6. Practical activities 7. Question and answer 8. Reading, writing, arithmetics 	
ASSESSMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self reflection - muhasabah 2. Continuous observation and feedback 	

Figure 2. Items of Al-Ghazālī's curriculum elements proposed

individuals with balanced traits as Malaysian citizens' character (N. Ismail et al., 2021). However, this framework introduces other perspectives on achieving these goals by integrating moral and spiritual development from an early age.

Al-Ghazali's educational objectives include acquiring moral values, exposure to religious principles, achieving balance in character formation, purification of the soul, and the formation of a good society (Sheikh

& Ali, 2019). These objectives align with the aims of Malaysia's education system, which already incorporates many of these themes. However, al-Ghazali's framework proposes a more explicit and structured approach to integrating these elements into early childhood education. This approach ensures that children are exposed to ethical and spiritual teaching in a developmentally appropriate and engaging manner. In the current era of digitalization and artificial

intelligence, children face new challenges that necessitate a greater emphasis on ethical considerations in teaching and learning sessions. Educators play a crucial role in helping children focus on attitude, moral, and spiritual development as central aspects of the educational process (Barni & Mahdany, 2017).

The curriculum content, derived from the fuzzy Delphi analysis, includes tenets of faith, ethics, practical faith, the Prophet's biography, arts, language, and critical thinking. Additionally, skills such as play, spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, communication, literacy, numeracy, locomotor, collaborative, and thinking skills are emphasized in Figure 2. This curriculum framework offers a more integrated and cohesive approach. For instance, including the Prophet's biography as a core component provides children with role models and moral lessons woven into the fabric of their daily learning experiences. Al-Ghazālī's redefinition of *fard 'ayn* emphasizes that all subjects of knowledge must be tailored to the importance and suitability of the child's age and interests as they grow up (Shahzadi et al., 2021; Sheikh & Ali, 2019)

The implementation strategies proposed by al-Ghazālī's framework amplify *ta'dib* as the comprehensive essence of education (Zawawi, 2017). Education must support physical perspectives, such as locomotor skills, as well as cognitive and spiritual perspectives, to develop balanced character. Al-Attas defines education in terms of *ta'dib* as the inculcation of *adab* in man itself, which means understanding the

proper order and place of things (Syarboini, 2019). *Ta'dib* encompasses the entire educational process, including *tarbiyah* (nurturing), which involves methods like the exemplary approach and peer and adult interaction, and *ta'lim* (transmission of knowledge), which includes gradual learning and memorization strategies. This integrated framework ensures that educators are not only transmitters of knowledge but also role models demonstrating good morals and conduct (Wartini, 2016).

Al-Ghazālī's insights provide a robust psychological foundation for teaching and learning concepts in early childhood education, enabling Malaysian education to progress rapidly in 21st-century learning. Concepts such as gradual learning, differentiated instruction, and the incorporation of play should be foundational elements in children's curricula to support their innate disposition (*fitrah*). While teachers have the freedom to choose various teaching aids, strategies, and technological tools, the primary focus in children's education must remain on nurturing their souls, aligning with al-Ghazālī's educational objectives (Noor et al., 2021).

Besides, al-Ghazali's framework emphasizes self-reflection (*muhasabah*) and continuous observation in collecting responses to children's understanding. This assessment approach encourages children to self-evaluate and receive ongoing feedback from teachers, helping them to develop a deeper understanding of their own learning processes and moral

development (Mutmainah, 2021). This method stands in contrast to traditional assessment methods that often focus solely on academic achievement, providing a more holistic view of a child's development.

Comparing al-Ghazali's framework with contemporary early childhood education frameworks reveals several unique contributions. Al-Ghazali's framework emphasizes spiritual and moral development, often less pronounced in modern curricula (S. R. A. Karim et al., 2021). Additionally, the structured and integrated approach to teaching these values through various methods provides a more cohesive learning experience (Saptri et al., 2021). This holistic approach ensures that children receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for both worldly and spiritual success. Recent studies by modern educational researchers have shed light on Al-Ghazali's approach to learning, revealing striking similarities between his ideas and contemporary educational theories. Al-Ghazali's work has emerged as a key reference point for integrating new concepts like self-regulated learning into Islamic education (Shahzadi et al., 2021). The Islamization approach employed by Al-Ghazali in evaluating learning content has become a fundamental principle in Islamic educational philosophy (Gyagenda, 2021). This approach encourages students to excel in various fields while staying true to the essential objectives of Islamic education. By examining Al-Ghazali's ideas, one can see that his centuries-old insights continue to shape and inform current

educational practices, especially within Islamic education contexts.

This framework offers valuable aspirations for Islamic early childhood education by bridging traditional wisdom with modern educational practices. The emphasis on integration within this curriculum facilitates a seamless transition, avoiding a dualistic approach to education, as Mustamin and Mulawarman (2010) suggested. This framework also serves as a practical suggestion by Al-Attas (1989), Hashim (1999), and Arshad (2002) for the Islamization of the curriculum, a concept that has been discussed since the 1970s. However, implementing this framework presents challenges; teachers must deeply understand al-Ghazālī's educational views and actively analyze modern child learning theories to effectively practice in preschool settings. This training and development process is time-consuming and requires numerous grounded studies to support the framework.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of fostering holistic development in early childhood education by incorporating al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy. The curriculum framework addresses the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions of children's growth, promoting well-rounded development. Using the Fuzzy Delphi Method ensures expert consensus, adding robustness and credibility to the framework. This research may benefit educators, curriculum

developers, policymakers, and educational institutions by providing a framework that supports holistic development and culturally relevant education. Future research should focus on testing the framework in real-world settings to see how well it works in different cultural contexts. It should also continue exploring how other classical Islamic educational philosophies can be blended into modern curriculum. By connecting classical Islamic ideas with today's educational needs, this study opens for new innovations in Islamic education, helping to keep it relevant in ever-changing curriculum trends.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. While valuable, reliance on expert opinions through the Fuzzy Delphi Method may introduce certain biases. Depending on expert opinions, while advantageous for fostering a structured consensus, introduces inherent subjectivity and potential biases. Furthermore, while the composition of the expert panel may meet numerical adequacy, it may not adequately represent the diverse perspectives within the Islamic educational school of thought. FDM's intrinsic preference for consensus can marginalize minority viewpoints, which may offer valuable insights.

The findings advocate for a balance of nurturing and education, as seen in Malaysia's National Childcare and Education Policy. This research suggests a need for revisitation incorporating Islamic educational principles

and modern educational standards. Although this policy and curriculum are inspired by al-Ghazali's development, they need to be elaborated by implementing six different curriculum elements to fill certain gaps in Islamic early childhood education. This may involve creating new guidelines for Islamic preschools or integrating Islamic values more broadly into national early childhood education standards.

A comprehensive teaching module is essential for effective implementation, ensuring educators have the tools to succeed and laying the foundation for future research into al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy in preschool settings. Educators and school administrators suggested undergoing specialized training to effectively implement this integrated approach. This could involve developing professional development programs that bridge traditional Islamic educational methods with contemporary pedagogical practices. Schools may need to adapt their daily routines and learning environments to better reflect the holistic nature of al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy, potentially including more time for reflection, character-building activities, and spiritually oriented lessons in a fun approach.

Future research also suggests that this study can be further developed by analyzing other Islamic education scholars, such as Ibn Sina, Ibn Jama'ah and others, to incorporate these scholars' educational philosophy into the curriculum framework. This research can broaden future research into integration or differentiation and adapt to modern

educational development to ensure Islamic education is relevant in today's challenging education.

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