



# Faith and Morals from the Perspective of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih: Comparative Analysis and Its Relevance for Contemporary Islamic Education

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## Abstract

The issue of faith and morality remains a fundamental challenge in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in developing a holistic and sustainable religious character. Amidst the trend toward cognitive and normative education, this study revisits the thoughts of classical scholars, particularly al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, as a relevant conceptual foundation to address this need. This study aims to understand and compare the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih on faith and morality, while also examining their relevance to the development of contemporary faith and morality education models. The specific objectives of the study include: (1) explaining al-Ghazali's thoughts on faith and morality; (2) analyzing Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on faith and morality; (3) conducting a comparative analysis of the concepts of faith and morality of both figures; and (4) examining the contributions of their thoughts to contemporary Islamic education. This study uses a literary or library approach, collecting data from printed books, scientific journals, and online sources, thus providing comprehensive insight into the study's theme. The results of the study show that al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih have different approaches in developing morals; al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul through the internalization of faith, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes rationality, moral habituation, and systematic self-control. Despite their differences, both agree that the balanced development of the mind, heart, and spirit is the foundation for moral formation. These findings indicate that the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih remain relevant as a foundation for holistic, value-based faith and moral education, and are capable of forming a comprehensive religious character in the context of contemporary Islamic education.

## INTRODUCTION

Al-Ghazali's thinking on faith and morality places faith as a spiritual foundation that must be deeply internalized in the heart, not simply believed rationally. According to him, true faith will give rise to divine awareness that guides behavior, so that morality is understood as a manifestation of faith through purification of the soul and Sufi inner development. Ibn Miskawaih views faith as a belief that is in harmony with reason and rationality, which serves as the basis for the formation of morality. Morality for him is the result of systematic education, habituation, and self-control, so that humans are able to distinguish between good and bad ethically. Comparatively, al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual and inner dimensions, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes a rational and practical approach. Both are relevant to contemporary faith and moral education because they offer a holistic educational model that integrates faith, reason, and character formation in real life.

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Based on previous research, comparative studies of the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih on faith and morality have been conducted by several researchers, including Miftah Ulhaq and Inayati (2025), Ma'arif et al. (2025), and Anam (2023), which generally emphasize the differences in the two figures' approaches to moral education. Ibn Miskawaih emphasized rationality, moral habituation, and self-control as means of moral formation, while al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual dimension, purification of the soul, and internalization of faith. Despite their different methods, both agree that morality can be formed through a balanced integration of reason, heart, and spirit. The novelty of this research lies in the integrative comparative analysis that systematically links morality to the foundations of each figure's faith, and synthesizes al-Ghazali's Sufi and Ibn Miskawaih's rational-philosophical approaches as a conceptual model of faith and moral education that is holistic and relevant to the development of contemporary Islamic education.

What distinguishes this study from previous studies lies in the integrative comparative analysis approach to the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, where morality is not only positioned as an object of ethical study alone, but is studied systematically in relation to the foundations of the faith of each figure. In contrast to previous studies that tend to place morality or moral education partially, this study emphasizes the conceptual relationship between theological beliefs and the formation of ethical behavior within the framework of classical Islamic thought. In addition, this study presents a synthesis between al-Ghazali's Sufi approach and Ibn Miskawaih's rational-philosophical approach as a holistic conceptual model of faith and moral education that is relevant for the development of contemporary Islamic education curriculum. Therefore, the objectives of this study are formulated to explain al-Ghazali's thoughts on faith and morality, examine Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on faith and morality, comparatively analyze the concepts of faith and morality according to both figures, and examine the relevance of their thoughts to the development of contemporary faith and moral education models.

This research is crucial because the issue of faith and morality remains a fundamental challenge in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in developing a holistic and sustainable religious character. Amidst the trend towards cognitive and normative education, this study revisits the thoughts of classical scholars, particularly al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, as a relevant conceptual foundation to address this need. The contribution of this research lies in its integrative comparative analysis that systematically links the foundations of faith and the formation of morality, thereby enriching the body of Islamic educational knowledge with a holistic perspective. The significance of this research is not only theoretical but also practical, as it offers a synthesis of Sufi and rational-philosophical approaches as an applicable model of faith and moral education. The urgency of this research is further strengthened given the need to reconstruct the Islamic education curriculum that is able to balance the spiritual, rational, and moral dimensions in facing the challenges of the modern era.

## METHODS

This type of research is literary research, or library research, which involves collecting data and information obtained from various references found in the library (Hadi, 1982). Researchers gather data from various available sources, including printed books, scientific journals, and the internet. This allows for broader insight into related topics.

In this study, researchers will analyze the data using descriptive methods. This technique is used to draw conclusions (knowledge) through an attempt to identify message characteristics, conducted objectively and systematically (Moeloeng, 1991). The descriptive method aims to objectively represent the phenomena present in the research problem. This representation is achieved by describing the phenomena as existing data or facts (Hadari Nawawi and Mimi Martini, 2005).

This allows for truly objective and meaningful conclusions to be drawn. The comparative method, on the other hand, involves analyzing the two research objects by comparing them to identify similarities and differences.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on faith and morality demonstrate different approaches. Al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul, while Ibn Miskawaih emphasized rationality and moral habituation. However, both agree that the balanced development of the mind, heart, and spirit is the foundation for moral formation, so their thoughts remain relevant as the basis for a holistic, values-based model of contemporary faith and moral education. The following describes the findings and discussion of the researchers' analysis related to this theme.

### a. Al-Ghazali's thoughts on Aqidah and Morals

Al-Ghazali emphasized that aqidah is a spiritual foundation and belief that must be internalized in the heart. Aqidah is not merely a rational belief, but also an inner experience gained through understanding sharia and Sufi practices. True faith fosters an awareness of God's presence in every aspect of life. Aqidah serves as a moral foundation that guides behavior and the formation of one's morals (Al-Ghazali, 2010).

According to al-Ghazali, morality is reflected in his work, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. He explains that the formation of morality must go through a process of internalizing moral values derived from revelation and Sufi experiences, so that good morals are born from a pure heart and directed towards universal good. This approach emphasizes the balance between the spiritual, rational, and practical dimensions of human behavior, so that morality becomes not only a social norm but also a medium for developing religious character and individual spiritual perfection (Zubaedi, 2011).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that, according to al-Ghazali, faith and morality are closely related. Faith serves as the spiritual foundation and foundation of belief that inspires one's behavior, while morality is the concrete manifestation of that belief in daily actions (Nasution, 1995). In other words, true faith and a deep internalization of faith will give rise to good morality, because morality is considered a reflection of a pure heart and an awareness of God's presence in every aspect of life.

### b. Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on Aqidah and Morals

According to Ibn Miskawaih, aqidah is understood as a belief or foundation of faith that must be aligned with reason and rationality. Aqidah is not only a spiritual guide but also serves as the basis for the formation of morals and ethical behavior. For Ibn Miskawaih, true faith must be in harmony with rational considerations, enabling humans to assess the good and bad of actions and develop morals through education, habituation, and self-control. In other words, according to Ibn Miskawaih, aqidah integrates theological and rational aspects, so that an individual's morality and ethics are formed systematically and in a balanced manner, not solely dependent on spiritual experience or tradition (Ibn Miskawaih, 2008).

According to Ibn Miskawaih, morality is a state of the soul that naturally motivates a person to behave well, which can be developed through education, habituation, and self-control. He emphasized that good morals arise from a balance between reason and desire, where reason plays a role in assessing the good and bad of actions and guiding humans to act ethically. With this rational-philosophical approach, morality is not merely a social norm, but the result of the integration of faith, reason, and consistent moral training, enabling individuals to develop intelligent and ethical character (Ibn Miskawaih, 2008).

According to Ibn Miskawaih, understanding faith has a direct influence on the formation of morality, because a solid faith aligned with rationality provides the foundation for individuals to judge the right and wrong of actions. A deeply understood faith enables a person to rationally internalize moral values, so that the morality formed is not merely an outward habit, but rather consistent, purposeful, and ethical behavior. In other words, the stronger a person's understanding of rational and balanced faith, the more purposeful their moral behavior will be in

daily life, so that morality becomes a tangible manifestation of a harmonious belief between faith and reason.

### **c. Comparative Analysis of Faith and Morals According to Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih**

Research by Miftah Ulhaq and Inayati (2025) shows that Ibn Miskawaih emphasized moral-based education through a rational approach and moral habituation, while Al-Ghazali promoted a Sufi approach that emphasized the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul.

Despite their differing approaches, both agreed that education must develop the mind, heart, and spirit in a balanced manner. Their thinking has proven relevant in the development of a holistic, values-based Islamic education curriculum.

Analysis by Ma'arif, M.Ghozali et al. (2025) shows that both scholars emphasize the importance of harmony between theological belief and ethical behavior to achieve spiritual perfection, with Al-Ghazali emphasizing the Sufi aspect and Ibn Miskawaih emphasizing a philosophical approach.

Research by Anam (2023) shows that there are similarities and differences in the methods of moral education according to Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawaih, and Imam An-Nawawi. These similarities include the view that morality is changeable and the goal of moral education, namely achieving a perfect life. The difference lies in the process of moral development, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazali have different approaches to moral education. Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes rationality and moral habituation, while al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul. Nevertheless, both agree that moral development must integrate the development of the mind, heart, and spirit in a balanced manner and emphasize that morality is malleable. The differences in methods used demonstrate the richness of classical Islamic thought, relevant as a foundation for developing holistic, values-based Islamic education toward a perfect life.

### **d. Comparative Analysis of Faith and Morals According to Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih**

The connection between the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih and contemporary Islamic educational models lies in how both figures provided a conceptual foundation for the formation of a holistic religious character. (Nasution, 1995).

Al-Ghazali emphasized the internalization of faith through a Sufi and spiritual approach, so that faith education not only emphasizes cognitive aspects or memorization, but also fosters inner awareness, purification of the heart, and the formation of morals born of deep faith. In the context of contemporary education, this is relevant for building strong religious character and spiritual integrity in students. (Al-Ghazali, 2010).

Ibn Miskawaih emphasized the harmony between faith and rationality, where rationally understood faith serves as the foundation for moral habits and systematic moral development. This approach is relevant for developing students who are not only devout but also critical thinkers and able to consistently apply ethical values. (Ibn Miskawaih, 2008).

By combining these two approaches, a contemporary model of faith and moral education can be designed holistically, balancing the spiritual, rational, and practical dimensions, so that students understand faith in depth and are able to implement it in their daily morals.

A comparative study of the thoughts of classical scholars on faith and morality, namely al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, shows that Ibn Miskawaih emphasized rationality and moral habituation, while al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul. Despite their different approaches, both agree that moral development must integrate the mind, heart, and spirit in a balanced

manner, thus reflecting the richness of classical Islamic thought relevant to the development of holistic, values-based Islamic education.

Similar analyses have previously been conducted by several researchers, including Miftah Ulhaq and Inayati (2025), who examined the relationship between the concepts of Islamic education according to Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali and their relevance to contemporary Islamic education; Ma'arif, M. Ghozali et al. (2025), who discussed the concepts of faith and morality from the perspectives of Imam Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih; and Anam (2023), who conducted a comparative study of moral education methods according to Imam Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawaih, and Imam An-Nawawi.

Based on the analysis of the researchers above, it can be concluded that Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazali have different approaches to moral education. Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes rationality and moral habituation, while al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul. Nevertheless, both agree that moral development must integrate the development of the mind, heart, and spirit in a balanced manner and emphasize that morality is malleable. The differences in methods used demonstrate the richness of classical Islamic thought, relevant as a foundation for developing holistic, values-based Islamic education toward a perfect life.

What distinguishes this study from previous studies lies in the integrative comparative analysis of the thoughts of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, which not only positions morality as an object of ethical study but also systematically links it to the foundations of each figure's faith. Unlike previous research, which tended to focus on aspects of morality or moral education in a partial manner, this study emphasizes the conceptual relationship between theological belief and the formation of ethical behavior within the framework of classical Islamic thought. Furthermore, this study presents a synthesis of al-Ghazali's Sufi approach and Ibn Miskawaih's rational-philosophical approach as a holistic conceptual model of faith and moral education that is relevant for the development of contemporary Islamic education curricula.

## CONCLUSION

This research successfully uncovers faith and morals from the perspectives of al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih: a comparative analysis and its relevance for contemporary Islamic education. The explanation is as follows:

### 1. Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Faith and Morals

According to al-Ghazali, faith and morals are closely related. Faith serves as the spiritual foundation and foundation of belief that inspires one's behavior, while morals are the concrete manifestation of that belief in daily actions. In other words, true faith and a deep internalization of faith will give rise to good morals, because morals are considered a reflection of a pure heart and an awareness of God's presence in every aspect of life.

### 2. Ibn Miskawaih's Thoughts on Faith and Morals

According to Ibn Miskawaih, understanding faith has a direct influence on the formation of morals, because a solid faith aligned with rationality serves as the basis for individuals to judge the good and bad of actions. A deeply understood creed enables a person to rationally internalize moral values, so that the morals formed are not merely external habits, but consistent, purposeful, and ethical behavior. In other words, the stronger a person's understanding of rational and balanced creed, the more purposeful their moral behavior will be in daily life, so that morality becomes a concrete manifestation of a harmonious belief between faith and reason.

### 3. Comparative Creed and Morals According to Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih

Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali had different approaches to moral education. Ibn Miskawaih emphasized rationality and moral habituation, while Al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual dimension and purification of the soul. Nevertheless, both agreed that moral development must integrate the development of the mind, heart, and spirit in a balanced manner and emphasized that morality is malleable. The differences in methods used demonstrate the richness of classical Islamic thought, relevant as a foundation for developing holistic, values-based Islamic education towards a perfect life.

4. The Relevance of Their Thoughts to Contemporary Models of Faith and Moral Education  
By combining these two approaches, a contemporary model of faith and moral education can be designed holistically, balancing the spiritual, rational, and practical dimensions, so that students understand faith in depth and are able to implement it in their daily morals.

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