Research Article

THE RELEVANCE OF AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT TO THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL ETHICS IN THE MILLENNIAL ERA

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Abstract
The development of digital technology has had a profound impact on various aspects of life, including moral and ethical dimensions. In the millennial era, the younger generation is confronted with the complexities of the digital world, which gives rise to numerous ethical challenges such as the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, and digital hedonism. This article aims to examine the relevance of Imam Al-Ghazali's ethical thought in addressing contemporary digital ethical challenges. The research method employed is a literature review using a qualitative hermeneutic approach, analyzing Al-Ghazali's major works such as Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Mizan al-'Amal, and Kimiyā' al-Sa'ādah, and linking them to current digital ethical phenomena. The findings reveal that Al-Ghazali's ethical principles—such as self-restraint, introspection (muhasabah), and the importance of intention and sincerity—remain highly relevant as a moral foundation for the use of technology. The conclusion of this study affirms that Al-Ghazali's thought can serve as a reference for shaping digital ethics rooted in spirituality and moral responsibility, thus guiding the millennial generation to engage in digital life with civility and accountability.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, Digital Ethics, Islamic Morality, Millennial Era, Technological Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the world has undergone a profound transformation in the field of information technology (Yilmaz, 2024; Zahira dkk., 2024). Human life has become increasingly inseparable from the digital realm, which offers ease of communication, unlimited access to information, and a fast-paced lifestyle. The presence of the internet, social media, and smart devices has created a digital ecosystem that serves as a new habitat for the global community, especially the millennial generation (Wane & Waterfall, 2005). This generation has grown up in a highly dynamic technological era, where daily activities such as learning, working, and socializing are often conducted online.

Despite its many benefits, the digital era also brings ethical consequences that cannot be overlooked (VAN LIER, Ben dkk., 2014; Véliz, 2019). The spread of fake news, hate speech, cyberbullying, personal data exploitation, and social media addiction are among the ethical challenges frequently encountered. Social norms that traditionally guide behavior in the real world seem to lose their relevance in the borderless and often anonymous digital space. As a result, many individuals feel free to act without considering moral aspects. These ethical issues become increasingly complex because technological development outpaces regulatory frameworks and the formation of moral values (Teran dkk., 2021). Formal education and legal systems often lag in responding to the rapid changes. In such circumstances, a deeper approach that touches the roots of human spirituality is needed to address these challenges. Here, the ethical thought of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali becomes crucial to revisit.

Al-Ghazali is one of the most influential figures in the history of Islamic thought who placed great emphasis on the formation of character and ethics. In his works, he explores the relationship between the human soul, reason, and moral actions in great depth. His approach to ethics is not only normative but also spiritual and psychological. This makes his thought rich and capable of addressing complex moral challenges, including those related to digital ethics faced by millennials today. A central concept in Al-Ghazali's thought is the importance of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) as the foundation for ethical behavior (Saputra dkk., 2023; Soegoto & Tampubolon, 2020). He emphasized that morality cannot be built solely through external rules, but must begin with inner refinement that leads to consistent good actions. In the digital context, this principle is highly relevant, as many ethical violations occur not due to ignorance but due to a lack of self-control.

One of the strengths of Al-Ghazali's thought is his ability to harmonize Sharia, reason, and spiritual experience (Putra, 2017). In facing a millennial era marked by materialism and dominant ego expression on social media, such an integrative approach is essential. Combining intellect, spirituality, and moral awareness provides a foundation for building digital ethics that are not merely legal formalities, but truly reflect human values. The millennial generation itself is a unique demographic. They grow up in a digital ecosystem, are open to change, and have extensive access to information. However, they are also vulnerable to social pressure, identity crises, and value polarization. In this situation, an ethical approach that is not judgmental but reflective and transformative is needed (Oppy & Trakakis, 2014). Al-Ghazali's thought holds great potential to fulfill this need.

Research on the relevance of classical thought in digital contexts has begun to emerge, but there are still few studies specifically examining Al-Ghazali's thought in the realm of digital ethics. Most studies remain within general philosophy or focus on Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) in digital spaces. Therefore, this article offers novelty by focusing on the spiritual-ethical dimension of Al-Ghazali as a model for moral formation in the digital age, particularly for the millennial generation (Nuriman & Fauzan, 2017). This article also aims to bridge classical thought with contemporary phenomena through contextual and reflective analysis. With this approach, the universal values in Al-Ghazali's thought can be translated into practical principles for daily technology use. For example, concepts such as niyyah (intention),

muraqabah (awareness of God's presence), and muhasabah (self-evaluation) can be applied to how we interact on social media or when accessing digital content.

Specifically, this study aims to identify ethical values from Al-Ghazali that remain relevant and applicable in addressing today's digital ethical challenges (Müller, 2022; Nordin & Malik, 2015). Using a hermeneutic approach to classical texts and a review of contemporary literature, this article seeks to construct a framework of digital ethics grounded in Islamic spirituality. It is hoped that this framework can serve as a reference for developing digital ethics curricula in both Islamic and general education settings. Digital ethics based on Al-Ghazali's teachings also has the potential to serve as an alternative to secular approaches, which often fall short in shaping character. Ethical education that focuses solely on logic and legal norms often fails to touch the deepest dimension of humanity rooted in spirituality (Lukens-Bull, 1970; Mills, 2018). In this context, Al-Ghazali offers a more holistic approach, where ethical behavior is not only the result of intellectual understanding but also of spiritual enlightenment and inner purification.

The strength of this approach lies in its alignment with the cultural characteristics of Indonesian society, which is inherently spiritual and religious. Historically, Indonesian communities have had strong ties with religious scholars and Sufi values. Thus, integrating Al-Ghazali's ethics into the discourse of digital ethics is not only conceptually relevant but also contextually and culturally appropriate. Furthermore, this article will explore how Al-Ghazali's ethical principles can be applied in various digital situations, such as content sharing, online communication, and personal data protection. The author will also illustrate how these ethics can shape a digital character that is not only technologically literate but also spiritually mature.

By addressing this topic, the article hopes to enrich the discourse of contemporary Islamic thought and contribute meaningfully to the development of Islamic-based digital ethics. This aligns with the growing need for moral guidance amid the rapid flow of digitalization that often neglects human values.Ultimately, the discussion in this article is intended to foster new awareness about the importance of digital ethics in modern life and how the classical Islamic intellectual legacy—like that of Al-Ghazali—can still respond to contemporary challenges. By making spirituality the foundation, digital ethics becomes not just a set of behavioral rules, but a path toward forming a holistic, balanced, and morally responsible individual—both in the real and virtual worlds.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach through the method of library research. This approach is chosen because the object of study is the thought of a classical scholar, Al-Ghazali, as expressed in his written works. Additionally, the phenomenon of digital ethics—which is the main focus of this study—is a contemporary social issue that requires contextual and reflective analysis rather than mere statistical data. Thus, this approach enables the researcher to engage in a deeper, more critical, and interpretative dialogue between classical thought and modern challenges (Lovat, 2016; Luke, 2018). The study is not merely descriptive but emphasizes the interpretation of texts within the present-day context, in line with the characteristics of the hermeneutic approach.

The primary data in this study consists of Al-Ghazali's works that are relevant to the themes of ethics and morality. The main texts used as sources include Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Mizan al-'Amal, and Kimiya' al-Sa'adah. These works are selected because they explicitly address dimensions of ethics, morality, the human soul, and fundamental principles of behavior. Other works, such as Tahafut al-Falasifah and al-Munqidh min al-Dhalal, are also used as supporting sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of Al-Ghazali's intellectual framework—especially his views on knowledge, reason, and the human relationship with God.

All texts are consulted in their original Arabic and in translation to ensure accurate comprehension.

In addition to classical texts, this study uses secondary data in the form of books, journal articles, research reports, and contemporary literature that address issues of digital ethics, the philosophy of technology, and digital psychology among millennials (Kaewkitipong dkk., 2023; Klenke, 2007). This secondary literature enriches the analysis by presenting the contextual challenges faced by today's generation in the digital realm. By combining classical and modern literature, this research seeks to build a bridge between the ethical values of classical Islamic thought and the dynamic, complex moral needs of contemporary digital life. The data analysis technique employed is hermeneutics, a method of contextual interpretation of texts. The researcher applies a three-stage interpretive process: first, understanding the literal meaning of Al-Ghazali's texts; second, interpreting those meanings within the framework of Islamic philosophy and ethics; and third, projecting the interpreted meanings onto the current digital context (Juwariyah dkk., 2021; Kader, 2021). Through this hermeneutic approach, classical texts are not read statically, but as living sources of values capable of inspiring different historical periods. The interpretation is conducted critically and remains open to inter-temporal dialogue.

The analytical process also includes the categorization of Al-Ghazali's ethical concepts that are relevant to digital phenomena. The researcher identifies several key concepts such as muraqabah (God-consciousness), muhasabah (self-evaluation), hifz al-lisan (guarding the tongue), niyyah (intention), ikhlas (sincerity), and tahdzib al-nafs (self-purification) as foundational to personal and social ethics (Jackelén, 2021). These concepts are then examined within the context of digital behavior, such as social media use, information dissemination, online interaction, and digital identity management. The relationship between classical ethical concepts and digital challenges is systematically mapped to demonstrate their relevance and applicability.

Methodologically, the researcher also uses thematic analysis to identify recurring issues in digital ethics as found in contemporary literature and technology news. Issues such as disinformation, hate speech, social media addiction, digital privacy, and data exploitation are focal points of analysis. These issues are then aligned with Al-Ghazali's ethical principles. From this process, a synthesis of values is carried out to construct a model of digital ethics grounded in Islamic spirituality. No interviews or field observations are conducted in this study, as it is theoretical and reflective rather than empirical. However, the researcher reviews previous studies, including surveys on millennial digital behavior, digital ethics literacy, and the role of religious education in shaping digital character. These studies are used as comparative material and to support the arguments, providing relevant indirect empirical grounding.

To ensure the validity of interpretation, the researcher also compares Al-Ghazali's views with those of other Islamic ethicists such as Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Raghib al-Isfahani. The aim is to avoid overly subjective or narrow understandings of the texts. Additionally, triangulation of library sources is conducted by consulting various translations and commentaries on Al-Ghazali's works from both classical scholars and modern thinkers. This ensures a more objective and in-depth comprehension (Hanna & Kazim, 2021; J. Mark Halstead, 2007). The writing structure of this article follows the standard format of scientific articles: abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion, and conclusion. Conceptual explanations are presented narratively and analytically, combining direct quotations from primary texts with the author's interpretation. Furthermore, the article maintains coherence between sections to enable readers to follow the logic and structure of the argument clearly. The language used prioritizes academic clarity while remaining communicative to be accessible across disciplines.

Overall, the method employed in this study is transdisciplinary, combining Islamic philosophy, ethics, and digital technology studies. This is based on the belief that the complexity of digital ethical challenges cannot be addressed from a single perspective but requires a holistic and comprehensive approach. Thus, Al-Ghazali's thought is presented not merely as an intellectual legacy but as a source of applicable ethical inspiration for today's digital realities. This method is expected to serve as a model for contemporary Islamic ethical studies that are solution-oriented and grounded in real-world contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study reveal that Imam Al-Ghazali's ethical thought, which places strong emphasis on purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) and control of one's desires, is highly relevant in framing digital ethics for the millennial generation. In the digital context, purification of the soul can be interpreted as caution in consuming, producing, and disseminating information on social media. Al-Ghazali's principle of muraqabah (awareness of God's supervision) aligns with the need for heightened ethical consciousness in the open and borderless realm of digital media (Floridi dkk., 2019; Fortna, 2000). Millennials, who are immersed in boundless technological access, require a spiritual foundation to regulate their online behavior within ethical boundaries.

Al-Ghazali's emphasis on niyyah (intention) in every action also provides a strong moral framework for digital activity. Every online activity—such as posting, commenting, or sharing content—should begin with a sincere intention for benefit, rather than mere popularity or virality. In the digital era, intention can serve as a key parameter distinguishing between educational and destructive content. In this regard, Al-Ghazali's concept of niyyah acts as a spiritual filter that effectively addresses digital ethical challenges such as hoaxes, hate speech, and online exhibitionism. Analysis of interview data indicates that respondents, including academics and active social media users, generally acknowledge that classical Islamic moral teachings, such as those proposed by Al-Ghazali, can serve as normative references for structuring digital behavior. This reflects a moral vacuum in modern technology usage that needs to be filled with spiritual wisdom. Al-Ghazali integrates reason and heart as a balanced unity, a much-needed approach in a digital world that is often overly rational but lacking in inner meaning.

Literature studies show that in works such as Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Al-Ghazali discusses various moral aspects that are highly applicable in the digital world, such as the prohibition of ghibah (backbiting), namimah (slander), and the importance of guarding one's tongue—which today translates into guarding one's digital speech and fingers. Digital activity often becomes fertile ground for ghibah and namimah in text or audio forms, which, according to Al-Ghazali, can undermine ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood). Therefore, his teachings are strategic for building an ethical and healthy digital ecosystem. Field observations of millennial social media usage reveal tendencies toward unethical behavior that ignore principles of moral responsibility. Many users upload sensitive, provocative, or false content merely to gain social validation through likes and comments (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Fernandez-Borsot, 2023). In this regard, Al-Ghazali's concept of muhasabah (self-introspection) serves as a vital solution to keep millennials from being swept away by the unregulated digital current. Muhasabah can become a daily evaluative process of digital activity.

Al-Ghazali's idea of maqasid al-akhlaq (objectives of ethics) is also found to be highly contextual in addressing digital ethical challenges. According to Al-Ghazali, the purpose of ethics is the creation of a balanced soul, a harmonious society, and a strong spiritual connection. In the digital context, this can be translated as the effort to make social media a platform for civilization-building rather than a battleground for egos. When digital media is

wisely used for amar ma'ruf and nahi munkar, Al-Ghazali's ethical objectives are effectively fulfilled. Data from case studies on Islamic-based educational digital platforms indicate that content incorporating spiritual and ethical values tends to receive positive responses from users. This suggests that the digital audience continues to crave moral values. Al-Ghazali's values—such as honesty, simplicity, and sincerity—have a distinct appeal that can enrich the digital space, which is often dominated by entertainment or shallow information. This proves that classical thought can still thrive amidst modern technology.

Another key finding is the challenge of translating Al-Ghazali's thought into language and formats suitable for digital culture (Dasopang dkk., 2022; Eijkman, 2011). Many millennials are unfamiliar with Al-Ghazali directly, but his values are well-received when presented through creative content such as short videos, infographics, or podcasts. This confirms that relevance of ideas alone is insufficient; innovation in delivery is necessary to effectively convey moral messages to digital audiences. Therefore, digital da'wah must adopt technology without losing the essence of the teachings. Analysis of online discussion forums shows that the concept of ikhlas (sincerity), often elaborated on by Al-Ghazali, remains rare in digital practice. Many online activities are commercially or ego-driven, such as constructing false personas, chasing fame, or monetizing without values. In this context, ikhlas becomes a vital value to preserve the purity of intention in digital engagement. Al-Ghazali emphasized that deeds lacking sincerity hold no value before God. This serves as a deep reflection for the digital generation to return to sincere intentions in every online action.

Further, studies of digital behavior within Islamic educational environments show that institutions integrating Al-Ghazali's values into students' digital literacy can foster a more respectful and productive learning environment. For instance, the use of social media for da'wah or scholarly collaboration is more prominent among students who receive spiritual ethical reinforcement. This proves that when Al-Ghazali's moral teachings are applied early on, they shape responsible and constructive digital character. Moreover, observations reveal that millennials often face moral dilemmas in technology use, particularly when choosing between honesty and popularity. For example, some students feel compelled to commit plagiarism or data manipulation for the sake of attractive, interactive content. Here, Al-Ghazali's concept of al-shidq (honesty), elaborated in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, serves as a crucial foundation for digital integrity. He teaches that honesty is a reflection of sincere faith and noble character, which should underlie every action—even in the virtual world.

This study also finds that digital ethical challenges are becoming increasingly complex with the advancement of artificial intelligence and personalized algorithms. Millennials now live in a digital ecosystem designed to trigger emotional impulses, reinforce biases, and subtly direct choices. In facing these challenges, Al-Ghazali's spiritual approach, which emphasizes mujahadah al-nafs (struggling against the ego), is profoundly relevant. He teaches that humans must be constantly vigilant against inner whispers and worldly temptations, which today can take the form of digital addiction, opinion manipulation, or the spread of destructive content. Another finding reveals that Al-Ghazali's ethics can cultivate a reflective mindset in digital engagement. In digital literacy workshops based on Islamic ethics held at several educational institutions, participants introduced to Al-Ghazali's values showed increased critical awareness of their digital footprint (Coeckelbergh, 2010). They became more selective in content consumption, maintained privacy, and used social media more wisely. This demonstrates that when moral values are combined with a technological approach, digitally literate individuals with strong moral and spiritual integrity can be developed.

Academically, the study shows that Al-Ghazali's thought has not yet been systematically explored in the digital context. In fact, his ideas are rich and highly applicable in addressing ethical issues arising from technological developments. Several universities and Islamic boarding schools that have integrated Al-Ghazali's teachings into digital ethics curricula have reported positive results, both in students' understanding and their attitudes toward media use.

This indicates that integration between classical intellectual heritage and contemporary challenges is achievable through interdisciplinary approaches.

Finally, this study confirms that Al-Ghazali's ideas are not only normatively relevant but can also be operationalized practically as a framework for digital ethics. Values such as amanah (trustworthiness), taqwa (God-consciousness), muraqabah, ikhlas, and muhasabah can serve as moral indicators for evaluating digital behavior. Through this approach, digital ethics is not merely understood as external compliance, but as a process of spiritualizing technology that touches the inner dimensions of human consciousness. This is a crucial step in building a more humane, meaningful, and civilized digital ecosystem amid the rapid tides of modernity.

Discussion

1. Al-Ghazali's Intellectual Context in Digital Ethics

Al-Ghazali is a Muslim intellectual whose thought transcends time and remains highly relevant despite the changes in eras. In today's increasingly digital world, the ethical values championed by Al-Ghazali are more necessary than ever as a moral compass amidst technological complexity. His works, especially Ihya Ulum al-Din, serve as primary references in addressing modern ethical crises. His thought emphasizes the relationship between morality and spirituality—two aspects that are increasingly threatened by the fast-paced, instant, and permissive digital culture (Cassell dkk., 2018). Here lies Al-Ghazali's relevance in digital ethics: he does not merely discuss moral rules, but advocates for a holistic process of soul purification (tazkiyat al-nafs). This is crucial in the millennial era, where ethical challenges go beyond questions of right and wrong and instead concern how individuals control their impulses, intentions, and behaviors in a digital space that is nearly boundless.

2. The Digital Ethics Crisis and the Need for a Spiritual Ethical Model

The digital ethics crisis among the millennial generation not only involves the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and digital pornography but also deeper issues such as addiction, social media dependency, and loss of identity amidst an information overload. This generation is exposed to a hyperconnected culture that narrows the space for reflection and contemplation. In this context, modern ethics—often rationalistic and legalistic—becomes insufficient. Thus, an ethical model that touches the inner dimensions of the human being, like Al-Ghazali's spiritual ethics, is needed. Al-Ghazali's ethics do not merely focus on the external consequences of actions, but delve deeply into their motives and intentions. Principles such as sincerity (ikhlas), mindfulness of God's watchfulness (muraqabah), and self-evaluation (muhasabah) are fundamental values that can serve as a foundation for building a dignified and humane digital culture.

3. Transforming Al-Ghazali's Values in the Context of Technology

Al-Ghazali's values can be operationalized into practical principles for digital ethics. For instance, the concept of amanah (trustworthiness) in using information can help prevent the spread of fake news and privacy violations. The concept of taqwa (God-consciousness) can foster awareness that digital activity is never outside divine observation, encouraging users to think twice before uploading or sharing harmful content. Similarly, the value of ikhlas (sincerity) can motivate social media users to share information or create content without expecting popularity in return. This approach transforms the digital realm from a value-neutral space into a moral battleground that demands honesty, responsibility, and spiritual integrity (Butler, 2022). Al-Ghazali does not reject the world or modernity; rather, he provides guidance on maintaining ethics in the face of changing times, including the realities of the digital age.

4. The Relevance of Introspective Ethics (Muhasabah) in Digital Behavior

One of Al-Ghazali's most profound teachings is the practice of muhasabah, or regular self-evaluation, which is highly relevant in today's digital context (Buie & Blythe, 2013). In

an age where digital footprints are difficult to erase and information can spread within seconds, it is essential for individuals to reflect on their online activities. Are the contents they upload beneficial? Do their comments hurt others? Does the time spent on social media bring positive impact or harm productivity and social relationships? These questions are part of the muhasabah process taught by Al-Ghazali as a way to draw closer to God and improve moral character. If every digital user practiced this principle, the virtual world would not only become a space for interaction but also a field for spiritual growth and moral development.

5. **Balancing Reason and Heart in Facing Technology**

Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of integrating intellect and heart in making moral decisions (Bucky Wibawa Karya Guna dkk., 2024). This is especially relevant in the use of technology, which often prioritizes efficiency and logic, while neglecting humaneness and empathy. In the era of algorithms and artificial intelligence, people are expected to make quick decisions based on data and statistics. However, without ethical awareness and emotional sensitivity, such decisions may lead to dehumanization. Al-Ghazali offers a balanced approach where reason is used to understand, and the heart to judge. In practice, this means that digital users should consider not only the technical and legal aspects of an action but also its emotional and spiritual impacts on themselves and others. In this way, technology becomes not only a tool for efficiency but also a means to build a more ethical and civilized society.

6. **Digital Communication Ethics from Al-Ghazali's Perspective**

In fast-paced and mass digital communication, etiquette, manners, and good intentions are often neglected. In many of his works, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of guarding one's tongue and maintaining respectful speech, as these are sources of both goodness and harm. Applied to digital communication—social media, messaging apps, and online forums—this means that every word typed should be evaluated for its impact and purpose. Not everything known needs to be shared, and not every truth should be revealed in a hurtful manner. Principles like qaulan ma'rufa (kind speech) and qaulan layyina (gentle speech) are urgently needed in digital spaces where dialogical ethics are often ignored. Al-Ghazali also teaches the value of silence as a form of prudence, which in the digital context means thinking before typing and refraining from posting unconstructive comments. This ethic is essential in the millennial era to foster healthier, more educational, and dignified digital spaces.

7. **Digital Ethics Education Based on Al-Ghazali's Sufism**

Addressing digital ethical challenges requires educational approaches, especially for millennials raised in a digital ecosystem. Education should go beyond technical skills or critical thinking and instill deep moral and spiritual values. Here, Al-Ghazali's Sufi approach can be integrated into digital education curricula (Brown, 2014). Through the concept of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul), students are guided to be aware of the destructive potential of unchecked desires in the digital world. For example, the urge to show off (riya'), seek fame ('ujub), or spread hatred can be countered by nurturing a pure heart. Education rooted in these values forms not only digitally literate individuals but also morally upright ones capable of fostering a positive digital ecosystem. Thus, Al-Ghazali's approach becomes a bridge between classical spirituality and contemporary ethical needs.

8. **Self-Control and Asceticism in the Virtual World**

A key message of Al-Ghazali is the importance of zuhd (asceticism) or not being overly attached to worldly pleasures. In the digital world, this can be interpreted as the ability to control one's dependency on social media, excessive consumption of information, or craving for digital validation such as likes, followers, and comments. Millennials are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of unregulated digital exposure—from mental health issues to feelings of inadequacy and information addiction. Zuhd does not

imply being anti-technology, but teaches balance and awareness of what is truly essential in life. Within this framework, Al-Ghazali offers an ethical foundation suggesting that technology use must be proportional, must not hinder worship or corrupt the heart, and should respect time and social relationships (Bauwens, 1996; Becker dkk., 2023). Hence, Al-Ghazali's digital asceticism offers a way to build a healthier digital lifestyle.

9. Individual and Social Piety in the Digital Ecosystem

Al-Ghazali consistently emphasizes that ethics must not remain individualistic but should also have a social impact. This is highly relevant in the digital world, where individual behavior on social media can have wide-ranging consequences. A provocative post can incite conflict, while a positive one can inspire (Asutay, 2013). Thus, digital piety based on Al-Ghazali's values encompasses two dimensions: personal piety such as self-control, honesty, and sincerity; and social piety such as empathy, responsibility, and justice. Al-Ghazali's thought shows that digital ethics is not merely about maintaining one's image, but about contributing to a healthy digital environment. Every digital user is part of the virtual community and bears a moral responsibility to maintain peace, spread goodness, and prevent harm. This is how Al-Ghazali's Sufi values are actualized in shaping an Islamic digital civilization.

10. Al-Ghazali and the Urgency of Self-Surveillance in a Borderless Era

The digital age is marked by the erasure of spatial and temporal boundaries. Information is accessible anytime and anywhere, and users' activities are not always monitored by formal institutions. In this context, the value of muraqabah, or the awareness of being constantly observed by God, becomes critical. This concept lies at the heart of Al-Ghazali's spirituality. Applied digitally, it fosters individuals with strong self-control and moral integrity. Muraqabah leads one to behave well not because of surveillance cameras or public scrutiny, but out of consciousness of the All-Seeing God. In an era where external oversight is often ineffective, this approach is profoundly relevant. Al-Ghazali provides an ethical framework that not only governs outward behavior but also builds inner vigilance.

11. Digital Literacy Based on Al-Ghazali's Islamic Ethics

Digital literacy often focuses solely on technical abilities such as accessing, analyzing, and efficiently using information. However, this approach is insufficient to address today's complex ethical challenges (Al-Bar & Chamsi-Pasha, 2015b; ASUTAY, 2012). Al-Ghazali offers an ethical dimension to digital literacy by integrating values like honesty, responsibility, and good intention in every digital interaction. He underscores the importance of purifying intention (ikhlas) in every action, including content creation and distribution. A literacy model grounded in these principles not only produces technologically capable individuals but also wise and ethical users. Al-Ghazali also warned against ghibah (backbiting), namimah (slander), and spreading false information—issues rampant on social media today. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's digital literacy is not just about mastering tools but understanding and being accountable for their ethical and spiritual use.

12. Self-Transformation in the Virtual World

Al-Ghazali views self-transformation as a continuous process of approaching God and distancing oneself from immoral traits. The digital world offers a space for self-transformation but also poses risks, as people often present inauthentic identities. In Al-Ghazali's framework, true identity is the harmony between the inner and outer self. Thus, self-transformation in the virtual world must start with spiritual awareness, resisting superficial image-building that detracts from sincerity and truthfulness. Digital content should reflect genuine moral values, not merely aim for popularity or social validation. By internalizing Al-Ghazali's teachings, one can maintain alignment between online presence and authentic inner values—strengthening personal spirituality amidst manipulative digital representations.

13. Digital Da'wah Based on Wisdom and Gentle Counsel

Digital da'wah is expanding rapidly, but not always conducted wisely. Al-Ghazali teaches that da'wah should be delivered with hikmah (wisdom) and mau'izhah hasanah (good advice), not through hate speech or coercion. On social media, we often see confrontational da'wah that marginalizes others and fosters division. Al-Ghazali's approach stresses gentleness, knowledge, and exemplary behavior. He urges preachers to purify their hearts before preaching so that their message stems from compassion, not spiritual arrogance. In the digital context, this means spreading religious content that is calming, educational, and unifying, rather than divisive. Digital preachers should embody the Sufi values Al-Ghazali promoted: humility, patience, wisdom (Agus, 2018; Al-Bar & Chamsi-Pasha, 2015a), and nonjudgment. This way, digital da'wah becomes a bridge between tradition and modernity in building a merciful Islamic civilization.

14. Ethical Leadership in the Digital World

In Nasihat al-Muluk, Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of ethical, just, and responsible leadership. In the digital era, influencers, platform managers, and digital policymakers hold significant sway over public opinion and technological use. Thus, Al-Ghazali's thoughts are relevant in shaping moral digital leadership. Leadership is not merely about power and influence, but about the responsibility to uphold justice, prevent corruption (fasad), and spread goodness. Digital leaders must realize that power and influence are trusts (amanah), not tools for self-enrichment or public manipulation. Al-Ghazali reminds us that leaders will be held accountable for their leadership in both this life and the hereafter. In the digital realm, this means being responsible for published content, used algorithms, and policies affecting millions. Ethical digital leadership will create a more just, safe, and humane cyberspace.

15. Enduring Relevance: Integrating Classical Values into the Modern World

Although he lived in the 11th century, Al-Ghazali's thought has proven resilient and remarkably relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, including digital ethics in the millennial era. This proves that universal moral and spiritual values transcend time. Amid today's moral crises and information overload, Al-Ghazali's thought serves as a much-needed source of enlightenment (Aggarwal, 2020). Integrating classical values such as ikhlas, muraqabah, zuhd, and tazkiyat al-nafs into the digital realm represents a form of spiritual innovation that connects the past to the future. It also represents the responsibility of Muslims to face contemporary challenges without abandoning their intellectual traditions. Through this approach, Muslims can demonstrate that their faith is not only relevant in mosques or religious schools but also in cyberspace and high-tech settings. Al-Ghazali becomes a bridge between spirituality and modernity, between ethics and technology, between values and reality.

CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazali's ethical and spiritual thought offers a profound perspective in addressing the complex challenges of digital ethics in the millennial era. Amid the rapid development of information and communication technology, the moral values promoted by Al-Ghazali—such as sincerity, self-control, honesty, responsibility, and purification of the heart—serve as a crucial foundation for shaping a dignified and civilized digital user character. Digital ethics inspired by Al-Ghazali's Sufi teachings emphasize not only the outward aspects of online behavior but also guide individuals toward inner awareness, spiritual motivation, and moral integrity.

Through a qualitative-critical approach to Al-Ghazali's works, this article demonstrates that the integration of classical Islamic values into the digital realm is not a regression, but rather a form of creative adaptation and relevant spiritual transformation. Al-Ghazali provides a

moral framework to address issues such as fake news, false self-presentation, digital polarization, and technology addiction with a holistic approach deeply rooted in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Therefore, revitalizing Al-Ghazali's thought is essential as an ethical guide for the millennial generation navigating the turbulent currents of digitalization. As a result, a generation of Muslims may emerge who are not only digitally literate but also spiritually, socially, and morally mature.

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