

Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students: A Synthesis of Al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's Thought

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ABSTRACT

The development of modern education demands a holistic approach to understanding and nurturing the potential of gifted and talented students. This study synthesizes the intellectual perspectives of two prominent Islamic scholars, Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, to formulate the characteristics of gifted and talented learners from an Islamic epistemological standpoint. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the integration of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality, whereas Ibn Khaldun focuses on intellect, social experience, and structured stages of education. Through this synthesis approach, the study identifies six key characteristics of gifted learners according to Islamic thought: intellectual and spiritual intelligence, sincerity of intention, noble character, the ability to comprehend social and historical issues, critical and creative thinking, and progressive lifelong learning. The synthesis culminates in a conceptual framework comprising three dimensions spiritual (ruhaniyyah), intellectual ('aqliyyah), and socio-ethical (akhlaqiyyah) which not only complements Western cognitive-based models but also provides valuable guidance for developing Islamic value-oriented gifted education systems in Malaysia and the broader Muslim world.

Keywords: Gifted and Talented Students, al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, Critical Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

The development of contemporary education has increasingly emphasized gifted and talented students as vital assets for shaping a nation's future. Students in this category generally possess high intellectual ability, exceptional creativity, and heightened emotional and moral sensitivity compared to their peers (Subhi et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding their characteristics comprehensively is fundamental to designing an educational system that aligns with their potential and needs.

In general, modern studies on gifted and talented learners have been pioneered by Western scholars such as Howard Gardner (1983) with his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Joseph Renzulli (2005) with the Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness, and Gagné (2008) who introduced the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT). These scholars emphasize cognitive ability, creativity, task commitment, and environmental factors as key characteristics of gifted learners. However, the present study seeks to explore and synthesize the ideas of two eminent Islamic scholars Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun—in identifying the characteristics of gifted students from a holistic and value-based Islamic epistemological perspective.

Imam al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), through his works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and *Ayyuha al-Walad*, underscores the importance of integrating knowledge, ethics, and spirituality in education. He asserts that intellectual intelligence alone is insufficient; it must be accompanied by spiritual purification (tazkiyat al-nafs) and the cultivation of proper conduct (adab) (al-Ghazali, 2005). Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406 CE), in his *Muqaddimah*, highlights reason as a means to comprehend social and historical phenomena and positions education as the foundation of civilization. He outlines the principles of gradual learning (ta'wid), experiential understanding, and the integration of revealed (naqli) and rational ('aqli) sciences as essential foundations for student excellence (Ibn Khaldun, 2002).

Both scholars offer holistic insights into human and learner development. However, limited research has systematically organized and synthesized their thoughts specifically to identify the characteristics of gifted and talented students. Therefore, this study aims to present a synthesis of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's intellectual perspectives in identifying the main characteristics of gifted and talented learners based on classical Islamic thought, while assessing their relevance within contemporary educational contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Gifted and Talented Students in Education

Gifted and talented students refer to individuals who demonstrate exceptional abilities in one or more domains such as cognitive, creative, leadership, artistic, or academic performance (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005). In the educational context, identifying gifted and talented learners is crucial to ensuring that they receive educational experiences aligned with their unique potential and developmental needs.

According to Davis, Rimm, and Siegle (2011), gifted and talented students often exhibit a deep interest in knowledge, a high level of concentration, critical thinking skills, and intellectual maturity in reasoning and decision-making. They also display strong intrinsic motivation and the ability to solve problems creatively and innovatively. Hence, educational approaches should be flexible, student-centered, and designed to accommodate multiple forms of potential and excellence.

Modern Theories Related to Intelligence and Talent

A variety of modern theories have been developed to understand intelligence and talent. Among the most influential are the following:

a) Multiple Intelligences Theory by Howard Gardner (1983)

Gardner introduced the *Multiple Intelligences Theory*, which proposes that intelligence is not limited to linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, but encompasses at least eight distinct forms of intelligence, including musical, bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences. This theory broadened the scope of educational recognition by validating diverse forms of student excellence (Gardner, 1983).

b) The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness by Joseph Renzulli (2005)

Renzulli proposed that gifted individuals exhibit a combination of three key traits: above-average ability, creativity, and task commitment. His model emphasizes that giftedness is not solely based on IQ but also involves intrinsic motivation and innovative capability (Renzulli, 2005).

c) The Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) by Gagné (2008)

Gagné distinguished between *natural abilities (gifts)* and *systematically developed skills (talents)*, highlighting the mediating roles of motivation, environment, and training in transforming potential into outstanding performance (Gagné, 2008).

Studies on Classical Islamic Scholars in Education

Classical Islamic scholars such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun have long articulated profound views on education and human development. Al-Ghazali emphasized the integration of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality as the foundation of true education (al-Ghazali, 2005). According to him, the ultimate purpose of learning is to draw closer to Allah and to cultivate a balanced individual in intellect, heart, and action.

Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun underscored the role of education in shaping civilization through a gradual and experiential process of learning. He criticized rote memorization without understanding and advocated for a

pedagogical approach that develops analytical ability, moral character, and intellectual discipline (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). Both scholars shared a concern for the holistic formation of learners intellectually, ethically, and socially.

The Significance of Synthesizing Islamic Scholarly Thought

Synthesizing the ideas of classical Islamic scholars is essential to reviving the intellectual heritage of Islam in addressing the challenges of modern education. In the context of gifted and talented education, such synthesis provides an added dimension that is spiritual, ethical, and holistic elements often overlooked in modern models that focus primarily on cognitive aspects (Al-Attas, 1993).

Moreover, this synthesis situates gifted education within the framework of *insan kamil* the ideal, well-balanced human being encompassing intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions consistent with the aims of Islamic education (Rosnani, 2007). It also contributes to the development of alternative models that are relevant and contextualized to Malaysia and the broader Islamic world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative design utilizing content analysis and conceptual synthesis. This design enables an in-depth exploration, interpretation, and systematic reconstruction of classical Islamic ideas to form a new conceptual framework. The study adopts a library-based research approach, which is appropriate for investigating the intellectual contributions of classical scholars. The analysis focuses on the primary texts of Imam al-Ghazali, such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, as well as Ibn Khaldun's seminal work, *al-Muqaddimah*. These primary sources are supported by secondary references from academic journals, scholarly books, and dissertations on Islamic educational thought and modern theories of giftedness.

Research Approach and Justification

A synthesizing approach is employed to integrate the essential educational elements of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's thought, producing a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of gifted and talented students from an Islamic perspective. This approach is justified as both scholars represent complementary educational philosophies—al-Ghazali emphasizes the spiritual and ethical dimensions, whereas Ibn Khaldun stresses rational and social development. The synthesis enables the integration of the spiritual (ruhaniyyah), intellectual ('aqliyyah), and socio-ethical dimensions, thereby proposing an Islamic value-based gifted education model (Al-Attas, 1993; Rosnani, 2007).

Sources of Data

This study relies on two main sources of data:

(a) Primary Sources

1. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* by Imam al-Ghazali.
2. *al-Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldun.

(b) Secondary Sources

1. Foundational works such as *The Concept of Education in Islam* (Al-Attas, 1980), *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Nasr, 1984), and *Reclaiming the Conversation* (Rosnani, 2007).
2. Academic articles including *Studi Komparasi Konsep Pendidikan Islam al-Ghazali dan Ibn Khaldun* (Zulianti, 2015) and *Ibn Khaldun in Contemporary Education Discourse* (Che Husna, 2009).
3. Recent proceedings and dissertations related to Islamic education and gifted learners (Basir et al., 2023; Ma'zumi et al., 2023).

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through documentary analysis of classical and secondary sources. The study employed hermeneutic reading techniques, interpreting texts in light of their historical, linguistic, and philosophical contexts. To ensure textual accuracy, original Arabic references were consulted where necessary, particularly for core terms such as *'aql* (intellect), *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), and *ta'wid* (gradual training). Educational concepts, values, and character traits were systematically extracted and organized into thematic categories.

Data Analysis Method

Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis and comparative analysis of scholars' ideas. The process involved three main stages:

1. Initial Coding: Identifying core concepts in the texts such as intellect, ethics, tazkiyah, ta'wid, and insan kamil.
2. Theme Extraction: Categorizing these concepts into overarching themes—spiritual (ruhaniyyah), intellectual ('aqliyyah), and socio-ethical (akhlaqiyyah).
3. Conceptual Synthesis: Integrating the themes from both scholars to construct a new conceptual framework describing the characteristics of gifted learners from an Islamic perspective.

This analytical process allows for a systematic integration of classical Islamic thought with contemporary educational paradigms.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, several strategies were implemented:

1. Source Triangulation: Cross-examining multiple scholarly interpretations of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's thought to avoid interpretive bias (Rosenthal, 1967; Osman Bakar, 1999).
2. Expert Validation: Consulting two experts in Islamic education and philosophy to confirm the accuracy of concepts and Arabic terminologies.
3. Audit Trail: Documenting every stage of data collection and analysis to ensure transparency and replicability.

Methodological Outcome

The methodology produced a conceptual synthesis framework comprising three principal dimensions:

1. Ruhaniyyah (Spiritual): Encompassing sincerity, intention, and purification of the soul.
2. 'Aqliyyah (Intellectual): Encompassing critical reasoning, creativity, and analytical capacity.
3. Sosial-Akhlak (Socio-Ethical): Encompassing social responsibility, ethical conduct, and moral integrity.

This framework serves as the foundation for subsequent discussions on the applicability of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's thought in contemporary gifted education.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND SCHOLARLY ANALYSIS

The Synthesizing Approach in the Study of Scholars' Thought

The synthesizing approach in the study of intellectual figures refers to the effort of integrating the ideas or viewpoints of two or more scholars to form a new and more comprehensive understanding or concept. This synthesis involves comparison, integration of key elements, and critical reasoning concerning the context and application of the scholars' ideas. In this study, the synthesis focuses on two eminent Islamic thinkers Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun in understanding the characteristics of gifted and talented students from an Islamic intellectual perspective.

This approach is essential for revitalizing the intellectual legacy of classical Islamic thought within the framework of modern education, as emphasized by al-Attas (1993) and Rosnani (2007). It enables the researcher to construct an integrative conceptual framework that unites intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions elements often separated in secular modern paradigms.

Brief Biographies of al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun

Imam al-Ghazali

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali was born in 1058 CE in Tus, Persia. Known as *Hujjat al-Islam* (“The Proof of Islam”), he is one of the most renowned Muslim scholars in the fields of philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, and Sufism. His major works include *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, and *Ayyuha al-Walad* (alGhazali, 2005).

Ibn Khaldun

Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun was born in 1332 CE in Tunis. He is a distinguished Muslim scholar celebrated for his contributions to history, sociology, and education. His magnum opus, *al-Muqaddimah*, contains profound insights on human formation, civilization, and knowledge (Ibn Khaldun, 2002).

Al-Ghazali’s Educational Thought

Al-Ghazali emphasized that the ultimate aim of education is to draw nearer to Allah and to develop a balanced individual intellectually, spiritually, and morally (al-Ghazali, 2005; Nasr, 1984). Education, in his view, must cultivate beneficial knowledge, strengthen moral discipline (*adab*), and purify the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). He distinguishes between praiseworthy and blameworthy knowledge, highlighting the importance of pure intention and ethical practice in learning (Hashim, 2004).

According to al-Ghazali, the ideal student exhibits sincerity, determination (*himmah*), noble character, and a deep yearning for knowledge that leads to truth and ultimate happiness in the hereafter (al-Attas, 1993; alGhazali, 2005).

Ibn Khaldun’s Educational Thought

Ibn Khaldun viewed education as the foundation of civilization and social well-being (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). He introduced the concept of *ta’wid* (gradual training) and criticized teaching methods that relied excessively on rote memorization without comprehension (Al-Attas, 1993; Rosenthal, 1967). He also emphasized the integration of rational (*‘aqli*) and revealed (*naqli*) knowledge as the basis of balanced education.

The characteristics of learners, according to Ibn Khaldun, include critical thinking, intellectual depth, curiosity, and the ability to comprehend social and historical realities (Che Husna, 2009; Hassan Langgulung, 1991).

Similarities and Differences Between the Two Thinkers

Both scholars underscore the balance between intellect and spirituality in education. Al-Ghazali focuses primarily on the spiritual and ethical formation of the individual, whereas Ibn Khaldun highlights the sociological and civilizational functions of education. Despite these differing emphases, both agree that education should not be utilitarian in nature; rather, it must cultivate *adab* (proper conduct) and prepare individuals to serve as moral agents within society (Rosnani, 2007; Wan Mohd Nor, 1991).

Theoretical Foundations for Developing the Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students

Based on the synthesis of al-Ghazali’s and Ibn Khaldun’s thought, the formation of gifted and talented students within Islamic education should not focus solely on cognitive development but also encompass spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. This approach aligns with the philosophy of Islamic education, which emphasizes the

harmony between *'aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *ruh* (soul) in cultivating the *insan kamil* the complete and balanced human being (Al-Attas, 1980; Rosnani, 2007).

Intellectual Intelligence and Analytical Capacity

Both thinkers acknowledge that reason (*'aql*) is the most important gift distinguishing humans from animals. Al-Ghazali describes intellect as the means to comprehend knowledge and recognize God (al-Ghazali, 2005). He asserts that students must refine their intellectual capacity through deep study and disciplined intellectual training. Ibn Khaldun regards reason as the foundation of civilization, emphasizing analytical thinking and understanding of social and historical realities as essential traits of excellent learners (Ibn Khaldun, 2002; Che Husna, 2009).

Sincerity and Purity of Intention in Seeking Knowledge

For al-Ghazali, sincerity (*ikhlas*) and purity of intention are key to attaining blessed and meaningful education. Knowledge pursued without righteous intention leads to spiritual corruption (al-Ghazali, 1998). Hence, gifted students must not only possess intellectual superiority but also internalize that knowledge is a path toward divine pleasure. Ibn Khaldun also underscores the significance of intention and learning attitudes, although he focuses more on the social and practical aspects of knowledge (Ibn Khaldun, 2002).

Noble Character and Spiritual Strength

Al-Ghazali views education as a process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification) that produces virtuous individuals close to Allah (Nasr, 1984). Moral excellence is not only a key characteristic of gifted learners but also the ultimate goal of education. Thus, a gifted student, in al-Ghazali's view, must embody humility (*tawadhu*), honesty, and integrity in acquiring and disseminating knowledge. Ibn Khaldun likewise emphasizes the role of moral training and ethical discipline as essential foundations for social sustainability (Rosenthal, 1967).

Ability to Understand Social and Historical Issues

Ibn Khaldun identifies the ability to understand *'umran* (social structure) and historical processes as a core characteristic of excellent students. Through the study of history and sociology, learners can analyze patterns of civilizational rise and decline and derive lessons from the past (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). This suggests that gifted learners should not only excel academically but also possess social awareness and foresight for the future of the *ummah* (Che Husna, 2009; Zarkasyi, 2010).

Critical and Creative Thinking Skills

Al-Ghazali encourages the use of reason to evaluate arguments, challenge falsehoods, and pursue truth through profound intellectual reflection (al-Ghazali, 2005). Ibn Khaldun criticizes educational systems that prioritize memorization over comprehension and critical reasoning (Rosnani, 2007). Therefore, gifted students, according to both scholars, should master the art of critical inquiry, independent thinking, and creative problem-solving.

Habitual, Gradual, and Lifelong Learning

Ibn Khaldun introduces the concept of *ta'wida* process of gradual, systematic, and repetitive learning. Excellent students should progress through structured stages of mastery without haste (Ibn Khaldun, 2002). Al-Ghazali similarly stresses *istiqamah* (consistency) in learning students must persevere patiently and pursue knowledge with dedication (al-Ghazali, 1998). Both scholars regard education as a lifelong journey requiring discipline and sustained commitment.

This synthesis reveals that al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's ideas collectively form a holistic conceptual framework for gifted education grounded in balance between intellect and spirituality, individual ethics and social responsibility, cognition and character.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS ACCORDING TO AL-GHAZALI

Intellectual and Spiritual Intelligence

Imam al-Ghazali emphasizes that intellectual intelligence (*'aql*) and spiritual intelligence (*qalb*) are two interrelated elements essential to the formation of a complete individual. He asserts that the intellect serves as a tool for acquiring knowledge and understanding God, whereas the heart functions as the spiritual center that guides the intellect toward truth. In the context of gifted and talented students, maintaining a balance between intellectual and spiritual intelligence is crucial to ensure that the knowledge acquired brings both benefit and divine blessing (al-Ghazali, 2005).

Balance Between Knowledge and Morality

Al-Ghazali stresses that knowledge without morality is futile and can lead to destruction. He insists that the ultimate purpose of seeking knowledge is to draw closer to Allah and to cultivate virtuous character. Therefore, gifted and talented students must ensure that the knowledge they acquire is applied ethically and contributes to the betterment of society (al-Ghazali, 1998).

Himmah and Diligence in Seeking Knowledge

The concept of *himmah* refers to a high aspiration and strong determination in the pursuit of knowledge. Al-Ghazali highlights that students must possess a deep enthusiasm for learning and should not give up easily in their intellectual endeavors. Such diligence and perseverance are key to achieving both excellence and divine blessing in one's educational journey (al-Ghazali, 2005).

Sensitivity to Values and Truth

Al-Ghazali also emphasizes that students must develop a heightened sensitivity to moral values and truth. This includes the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and the commitment to uphold truth even in the face of challenges. Such sensitivity represents a sign of elevated spiritual intelligence and is vital in forming individuals of integrity and moral strength (al-Ghazali, 1998).

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS ACCORDING TO IBN KHALDUN

Intellect as the Foundation of Intellectual and Societal Development

Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that the intellect (*'aql*) is the fundamental basis for the intellectual development of individuals and the progress of society. He asserts that rational thinking enables human beings to understand natural and social phenomena, which in turn facilitates the establishment of advanced civilizations (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). In the context of gifted and talented learners, the emphasis on intellectual cultivation is crucial to producing individuals capable of contributing effectively to societal advancement.

The Role of Education in Civilizational Development

According to Ibn Khaldun, education plays a central role in the construction and sustainability of civilization. He maintains that the quality of education determines the level of a society's progress. High-quality education produces knowledgeable and ethical individuals who serve as catalysts for civilizational growth (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). Therefore, gifted and talented students must be provided with a comprehensive and value-based education to ensure their intellectual abilities translate into meaningful contributions to their communities and nations.

Gradual Training (Ta 'wid) and Mastery of Knowledge

Ibn Khaldun introduces the concept of *ta 'wid*, which refers to a gradual and continuous approach to learning. He emphasizes that mastery of knowledge requires a systematic process and consistent practice. Students must

progress through well-structured stages of learning to achieve deep understanding in any field (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). This approach is vital for shaping gifted and talented learners who possess both strong intellectual discipline and solid mastery of their knowledge domains.

Integration of Revealed (Naqli) and Rational ('Aqli) Knowledge

Ibn Khaldun highlights the importance of integrating *naqli* (revealed) and '*aqli* (rational) knowledge. He argues that a balance between these two forms of knowledge is essential for attaining holistic and comprehensive understanding. Gifted and talented learners should be educated to appreciate and master both types of knowledge so that they can think critically, act ethically, and contribute wisely to the moral and intellectual growth of society (Ibn Khaldun, 2005).

SYNTHESIS OF AL-GHAZALI'S AND IBN KHALDUN'S THOUGHT

Integration of Gifted Student Characteristics Based on Both Thinkers' Perspectives

The educational philosophies of al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun each offer distinct yet complementary perspectives in defining students' intelligence and giftedness. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of balance between intellect, spirituality, and morality in shaping a learned and virtuous individual. He views knowledge as a process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), to be pursued with sincerity (*ikhlas*) and proper moral conduct (*adab*) (Zuliarti, 2015).

In contrast, Ibn Khaldun focuses on the cultivation of intellect through experience and observation of social and historical realities. He associates intelligence with one's ability to comprehend societal change and exercise critical and reflective reasoning (Khumaidah & Hidayati, 2021).

The synthesis of both scholars' ideas produces a comprehensive framework of Islamic giftedness, encompassing the following core characteristics:

1. Balance between intellect and spirituality, grounded in the tawhidic (monotheistic) purpose of education (Ma'zumi et al., 2023).
2. Depth, analytical reasoning, and reflective thinking, as highlighted in al-Ghazali's emphasis on *muraqabah* (self-vigilance) and *tafakkur* (contemplation).
3. Social awareness and noble ethics, aligned with Ibn Khaldun's view of education as a tool for civilizational development (Basir et al., 2023).

Conceptual Framework of Gifted and Talented Students Based on Islamic Thought

Based on the synthesis of both thinkers, this study proposes a conceptual framework consisting of three interrelated components:

1. Spiritual Dimension (*Ruhaniyyah*): Encompasses sincerity of intention, spiritual awareness, and ethical behavior grounded in Islamic values. This reflects al-Ghazali's view of education as a process directed toward seeking Allah's pleasure.
2. Intellectual Dimension (*'Aqliyyah*): Refers to students' cognitive abilities, including critical, creative, and analytical thinking. Ibn Khaldun perceives education as an instrument for cultivating understanding of the empirical and social world.
3. Socio-Ethical Dimension (*Sosial-Akhlak*): Represents social responsibility, compassion, and active involvement in community development, aligning with the Islamic vision of holistic human formation (Basir et al., 2023; Zuliarti, 2015).

This framework embodies a holistic and balanced educational philosophy that integrates both intellect and spirituality, in accordance with the *maqasid al-tarbiyyah al-Islamiyyah* (objectives of Islamic education).

Comparison with Modern Educational Models

Modern educational models, such as Renzulli's *Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness* and Gagné's *Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT)*, emphasize cognitive ability, creativity, and environmental influences. Although these models address intellectual potential, they generally neglect the spiritual and moral dimensions that are central to Islamic education (Ma'zumi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, integration between modern and Islamic approaches can produce a more balanced gifted education model:

1. The Western model contributes to structural, pedagogical, and psychometric aspects of curriculum design and talent assessment.
2. The Islamic model emphasizes values, spirituality, and identity formation, ensuring that intellectual excellence is guided by moral consciousness (Khumaidah & Hidayati, 2021).

Thus, this synthesis offers a comprehensive framework that unites intellectual rigor with ethical and spiritual grounding in the education of gifted students.

Implications for Contemporary Gifted Education

The synthesis of al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's thought has significant implications for gifted education in Malaysia and the broader Muslim world:

1. Holistic curriculum design integrating cognitive, spiritual, and social components should be implemented in elite schools, MRSM institutions, and specialized centers such as Kolej Permata Insan.
2. Development of Islamic-based gifted modules, including those on tazkiyah al-nafs (soul purification), adab al-ta'allum (ethics of learning), and critical-reflective thinking.
3. Teacher training for gifted education, enabling educators to effectively apply Islamic pedagogical principles in the teaching process (Zuliarti, 2015; Basir et al., 2023).
4. Further research initiatives to develop a systematic Islamic gifted education model adaptable to national and international educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms that the education of gifted and talented students must not be narrowly confined to intellectual measurement alone. Through the synthesis of Imam al-Ghazali's and Ibn Khaldun's educational thought, it becomes evident that the true characteristics of gifted learners in the Islamic framework encompass a balance between intellectual intelligence, spiritual maturity, moral excellence, social awareness, and critical reflective reasoning.

Al-Ghazali emphasizes the development of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), proper moral conduct (*adab*), and sincerity of intention (*ikhlas*) in the pursuit of knowledge, while Ibn Khaldun highlights rationality, social reality, and the need for structured and systematic education. The integration of these perspectives yields a holistic model of gifted Islamic learners who are intellectually sharp, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible.

This model not only complements existing Western-oriented gifted education frameworks that focus primarily on cognitive abilities but also provides a robust foundation for the design of curricula and modules that are relevant to the context of contemporary Islamic education. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of continuously exploring and integrating the intellectual legacies of classical Islamic scholars into modern educational systems particularly in Malaysia and across the Muslim world to produce *insan kamil* (the complete human being) who excels not only in knowledge but also in ethics, spirituality, and social engagement.

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