

# THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRITY FOR MUSLIM'S CHARACTER BASED ON AL-GHAZALI'S ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*Integrity is one of the moral qualities of human that needs to be translated into everyday life particularly by Muslim individuals. It also refers to ethic, a principle that is followed daily. A person's character consists of the combination of qualities that make up his personality, and it is this attribute that motivates a person to avoid something that could cause him to be considered an individual without integrity. The characteristics of a person without integrity include deception, treachery, deviance, corruption, money politics and the likes. These characteristics could be avoided if one adorns oneself with elements of integrity such al-Sidq (truthfulness). Al-Sidq is elaborated based on the thought of al-Ghazali in his Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din. This article concludes that al-Sidq refers to six definitions which include the word, intent and will, determination and its fulfillment, balance and preference between spiritual and physical practices, and religious maqam (status). It establishes the quality of integrity within Muslim individuals.*

**Keywords:** Integrity, Character, Moral, Ethic, al-Ghazali.

## INTRODUCTION

Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tusi al-Shafi'i, famous for Abu Hamidal-Ghazali, was born in 450AH at Tus. Al-Ghazali mastered knowledge in various fields, and is thus referred to as an Islamic proof ("*hujjah al-Islam*"). He wrote in various fields of study and his lectures were attended by famous scholars. He was a *Shafi'i* scholar and followed "*al-Asha'irah*" sect. According to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, al-Ghazali's mastery in various fields of knowledge, and the honor given to him as "*hujjah al-Islam*", encourages the historians ("*muarrikhin*") and hadith scholars ("*muhaddithin*") to agree without doubt that he is the "*mujaddid*" (reformer) of the fifth century. Al-Ghazali died at the age of 55 on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> Jumadal Akhir 505AH and was buried in Tus (Kathir, 1998; Al-Imad & Al-Hayy, 1989; Al-Hamid, 2009; Yusuf, 1994; Fauzi & Hasrul, 2017). The discussion of ethical cum ethical issues encompasses all writings of al-Ghazali, it spreads throughout his various discussions, and it is so much important to him that he would go forth and back to it. The major objective of this study is to expatiate al-Ghazali's view of the area of the study traditionally through dissecting some of his writings. In doing this the study employs a library based qualitative method, by extracting

and analyzing details from the works of al-Ghazali and other works of relevance to the study at hand. And the study is centrally structured on the perception of al-Ghazali in relation to Muslim's integrity and character.

### **The Suitability of Al-Ghazali's Thinking**

The thought of al-Ghazali is appropriate to be learnt, especially by the majority of Muslims in Malaysia. This is because Muslims in Malaysia are widely exposed to the influence of al-Ghazali's thought through seminars and texts. Al-Ghazali's teachings have been commonly taught in “*Musolla, Masjid and pondok-styled*” institutions, and his thoughts are easily accepted and practiced. There is an educational-chain linking the ulama of the Malaya with al-Ghazali, Ahmad al-Qushashi and Ibrahim al-Kurani were among the scholars who linked his thought with the Malay scholars back in the days. For example, among the Malay scholars who studied with al-Kurani was Shaykh Abd al-Ra'uf Singkel. Shaykh Muhammad Yasin al-Fadani also lists the books of al-Ghazali such as “*Ihya Ulum al-Din, Minhaj al-'Abidin, Bidayah al-Hidayah and al-Hikmah fi makhluqati-llah*” that he studied through his teacher, Shaykh Muhammad Ali al-Maliki who is related to Shaykh Ahmad al-Ramli based on sanad al-Kurani to al-Ghazali (Zaidi, 2004; Fauzi & Hasrul, 2017).

In 1778CE, Shaykh `Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani translated Bidayah al-Hidayah in his work titled Hidayah al-Salikin (Ahmad, 2002). Raja Ali Haji also contributed in spreading al-Ghazali's thought, especially those contained in “*Ihya Ulum al-Din, Minhaj al-Abidin and Bidayah al-Hidayah*”, into the Malay world, for example his poetic masterpiece *Gurindam Dua Belas* (Watson & Matheson, 1983; Hassan, 2004). According to Hamka, al-Ghazali's thought in his “*Ihya Ulum al-Din*” greatly influenced the Malay community. He acknowledged that his books, *Tasawwuf Modern, Lembaga Hidup* and *Lembaga Budi* were influenced by al-Ghazali's thought (Hassan, 2004; Fauzi & Hasrul, 2017). After understanding the reality of the Malaysian society, especially the Muslims who are already familiar with al-Ghazali's thinking, it is important that al-Ghazali's ideas are more systematically promoted among Malaysians (Fauzi & Hasrul, 2017).

### **Integrity from Islamic Perspective**

One of the oldest meanings of integrity refers to its etymology. Integrity stems from the Latin word “*integritas*” or “*integer*” which means wholeness or unit. It also carries the meaning of entire, a whole or untouched intact, sound, true or reliable (Lisa, 2015; Zaidi & Sani, 2011; Mustafar, 2009). Integrity means the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles or the quality of being honest and upright. In sum, integrity is honesty (New Oxford, 2004; Kamus, 2002). Someone who has integrity always behaves honestly and according to firm moral values and principles (Advanced English Dictionary, 2003). According to al-Mawrid dictionary, integrity in Arabic language is salamah (far from shame and disease), kamal (perfection), istiqamah (firmness), amanah (sincerity) and al-Tamamiyyah (the original word is tamam which means perfection) (Munir, 1991; Al-Wasit, 2005; Al-Munjid, 1988).

Integrity also means something against corruption. If corruption is defined as the misuse of entrusted power for personal and political purposes, then integrity means the use of public power for a purpose which is officially confirmed and justified by the public (Jeremy, 2007). Integrity in Malay language is an individual character, according to Dwibahasa (2008) it means

honesty (Dewan, 2007), uprightness, sincerity, perfection, a state of perfection (Zulkifli, 2009; Zulkifli, 2008) and completeness (Mohamad, 2009).

From the Islamic perspective, integrity can be attributed directly, and in parallel, to the attributes of trust, honesty, faith, strong belief, powerful character and noble manners. For believers, integrity at a high degree in the sight of God is piety, that is doing what they are commanded and avoiding things that are prohibited (Mustafar, 2009). The term al-Sidq is associated with the concept of integrity. Al-Sidq originally refers to the strength of something like words and so on. Strength here is meant to be the strength of reliability and truth of something. The opposite of sidq is kadhb, as mentioned by Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the essence of sidq is amanah and the essence of kadhb is khiyanah (Al-Hakim, 1981; Zaidi & Sani, 2011).

### Element of Integrity

Al-Sidq is related to sincerity as explained by Al-Jurjani (1985) that sidq is the origin and the beginning, while ikhlas is a branch of sidq. According to Al-Kashani (2007), a person of perfect sidq is the one who is perfect in the tasdeeq (acceptance) of all that were brought by the Prophet P.B.U.H., be it his knowledge, words and deeds. Al-Ghazali describes sidq through the verses of the Quran and Hadith, which include:

*“Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah: of them some have completed their vow through sacrificing their lives, and some others are waiting for it, and have not changed their determination in the least”,*

and the hadith of the Prophet P.B.U.H., reported by Abdullah, saying:

*“You must be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man will keep speaking the truth and striving to speak the truth until he will be recorded by Allah as a siddiq (speaker of the truth). Beware of telling lies, for lying leads to immorality and immorality leads to Hellfire. A man will keep telling lies and striving to tell lies until he is recorded by Allah as a liar” (Muslim & Hajjaj, 2000).*

Al-Sidq is employed in six different meanings, and whoever succeeds to possess all of them deserves to be called al-siddiq (the sincere one). The first meaning is sidq fil-qawl (sincerity of speech) referring to the news mentioned either in connection with past or future as well as keeping or betraying promises. Someone who confesses that he is the servant of Allah S.W.T but submits to his lust is hence a liar. The second meaning is sidq fin-Niyyah wal-iradah (sincerity of intent and will), which refers to the sincerity in which every motion and rest is driven by Allah S.W.T. If it is driven by selfish motive which is not for Allah's sake, then it is a lie. Even though his words are true, it is still considered a lie because of the wrong intent of his heart which resembles a hypocrite (al-Ghazali, 2000). The third meaning is sidq fil-`azm (sincerity of determination) i.e. the strong determination of doing something good without any other tendency, doubts and weaknesses in doing it. It is a strong determination that was set before the practice. Even if he might get killed in a war, the determination remains firmly to sacrifice for war. The fourth meaning is “*sidq fil-wafa' bil-`azm*” (sincerity of keeping promises with determination), in which Allah S.W.T takes a person determination as a promise. If he reaches the determination then it is true and if otherwise then it is a lie. Al-Sidq in this section is heavier than the third, because sometimes human set their determination with non chance

which lead them to be dominated by lust and thus weakened the determination (Al-Ghazali, 2000; Hasrul, 2014; Hasrul & Fauzi, 2015).

The fifth meaning is *sidq fil-'amal* (sincerity of action), which refers to a person who strives earnestly to apparently not showing what is in his being which is not his attribute. Instead his actions conform outwardly to his being. For example, a person performs a *khushu'* (engrossed humbleness) prayer and he does not do it to be seen by others. Although he is true for not engaging in *riya'* (show off), yet he is still not *sidq* in action because the inner *khushu'* is not correspondent to the outer *khushu'*. The sixth meaning is *sidq tahqiq fi maqamat al-din* (sincerity of the religious status), where it is higher and nobler than *sidq al-Khawf* (fear), *al-Raja'* (hope), *al-Ta`zim* (glorification), *al-Zuhd* (ascetism), *al-Rida* (contentment), *al-Tawakkal* (reliance), *al-Hubb* (affection) and others. One should have these attributes in his whole being despite not meeting all those attributes. Someone who fears Allah S.W.T is not necessarily really scared of Him in relation to his fear to face a cruel king or robber (Al-Ghazali, 2000; Hasrul, 2014; Hasrul & Fauzi, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

The thought of al-Ghazali is appropriate to be learnt by Muslim individuals in Malaysia because they have been widely exposed to al-Ghazali's thought. Muslim individuals of integrity are those who possess the element of integrity, *sidq*, within them. *Al-Sidq* is of six types, it consists of intent and will, determination and its fulfillment, balance and preference between spiritual and physical practices, and religious *maqam* (status). It emphasizes the separation of both internal and external self from the domination of lust, commitment to the obedience of Allah S.W.T, and parallel spiritual and physical practices that completes each other according to the command of Allah S.W.T. Another is striving to adorn with admirable qualities in the real sense, even if it is not possible to achieve all the qualities to reach the highest and perfect *maqam* (status). These elements help Muslim individuals to not committing fraud, and prevent them from going against the attributes of integrity, such as treachery and the likes.

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