

## The Concept of Sa'ādah in the Perspective of Sufism: An Analysis of Imam Al-Ghazali's Thoughts in Ihya Ulumuddin

Lailatul Risqiyah<sup>1</sup>✉, Royanullah<sup>2</sup>, Imam Mawardi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jurusan Tasawuf dan Psikoterapi Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Semarang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study aims to construct a conceptual model of spiritual happiness (sa'ādah) and analyze the mechanisms for achieving it from the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali's Sufism. Using qualitative research methods with a content analysis approach, data was collected through purposive selection of key texts in Ihya Ulumuddin that were selected thematically and interpreted using Carol D. Ryff's psychological well-being framework. The Psychological Well-Being (PWB) model emphasizes eudaimonic dimensions, such as self-acceptance, life purpose, and self-development, as its foundation. The results of the study reveal that Al-Ghazali formulated a psychotherapeutic mechanism in which the internalization of the qualities of qanaah (self-satisfaction) and tawadlu (humility) function as interventions to reduce distress caused by greed and ujub, which ultimately leads individuals to a state of ma'rifat as the pinnacle of happiness. These findings have practical implications for Islamic psychology to develop Sufi-based psychotherapy, as well as for modern psychological therapy to integrate spiritual concepts in achieving inner peace.

**Keywords:** Well-being, Happiness; Al-Ghazali; Ihya Ulumuddin; Spirituality.



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### Introduction

The results of a survey conducted by the United Nations in 2014 with a research sample of 9,500 people from various cultures and countries, stated that finding or striving for happiness is the main goal of human life (Fitria et al., 2023). Al-Ghazali defines happiness not as a material condition, but as a spiritual and intellectual state. Material happiness and worldly pleasures are acknowledged, but are not considered essential and can even prevent the soul from reaching its highest potential (Arroisi et al., 2023).

In modern psychology, happiness is closely related to life contentment, whereby individuals who consider their quality of life to be high are defined as happy people (Gundelach & Kreiner, 2004). Happiness has physiological aspects, such as serotonin production in the brain, and psychological aspects,

<sup>1\*</sup> Corresponding Author: Lailatul Risqiyah, email: [lailatulrisqiyah19@gmail.com](mailto:lailatulrisqiyah19@gmail.com), Tasawwuf and Psychotherapy, Walisongo State Islamic University, Semarang, Indonesia. Whatsapp number: 085879100804

which require a sense of security and the fulfillment of prerequisites (Grinde, 2002). Happiness is understood as the result of the interaction between positive emotions such as joy and trust; negative emotions such as sadness and hatred; and life satisfaction. Thus, happiness is achieved when there is a prevalence of positive emotions over negative emotions, accompanied by a high level of life satisfaction (Özgenel & Yılmaz, 2020).

Psychology discusses happiness through two main approaches, namely hedonistic and eudaimonistic (Ryff et al., 2021; Shinde, 2017). The hedonistic approach views happiness as subjective well-being, which is characterized by more positive emotions than negative emotions (Veenhoven, 2003). In contrast, the eudaimonic approach views happiness as psychological well-being, which focuses on individuals' efforts to effectively utilize their potential, achieve self-actualization, and find meaning in life (Amaliya, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Happiness also has profound implications for spiritual well-being (Edwards et al., 2020; Lata & Chaudhary, 2021). This has led to the rapid development and revision of the concept and the various aspects that affect it in recent years (Chang & Arisanti, 2022; Clark & Hunter, 2019; Soleimani et al., 2019).

The relationship between happiness and spirituality has been a focus in psychology, often discussed through the concept of spiritual well-being (SWB). SWB is a significant predictor of happiness. Özgenel, in his study, mentions that transcendence, defined as an individual's surrender to an entity greater than themselves, was found to positively and significantly increase happiness. Conversely, the dimension of Anomie, described as the erosion of values, alienation, and despair, has been shown to significantly decrease levels of happiness (Özgenel & Yılmaz, 2020).

Well-being is a multidimensional construct that represents a holistic condition of individual happiness and balance in various aspects of life, which includes physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, mental, and occupational dimensions. (Kitko, 2001; Rahmat et al., 2022). The high and low condition of a person's well-being is influenced by religious rituals. So the better the quality and quantity of one's worship, the better the state of well-being. The good understanding and practice of one's worship, also affects the level of relationship with the environment which can increase the sense of solidarity between group members and strengthen family ties, so that it will increase one's level of well-being or happiness.

Aspects of psychological well-being from a Sufism perspective can also be found through spiritual practice and self-development. Sufism is one of the formulations in Islamic disciplines that emphasizes the development of individual spirituality and its relationship with God. Imam Ghazali became one of the famous figures in the development of Sufism, which is a scholar or academic and also a great Sufi from the 11th century H. Imam Al Ghazali said that the highest welfare in Sufism is the ultimate goal as the path of Sufis as a result of knowing Allah SWT (Al-Ghazali, 2001).

Carol Ryff (1989) developed a theory of psychological well-being that includes six main dimensions; self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life goals, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Some of the factors that affect well-being are age, personality, social support (Nurhaeda, 2023, p. 565; Rohimatuzahroh, 2024), gender (Munandar, 2022, p. 369) and religiosity (Trianto et al., 2020, p. 113).

Imam Al Ghazali in his book, "*Ihya Ulumuddin* (Reviving the Sciences of Religion)", discusses various aspects of human life, including psychological well-being. In his book, Al Ghazali provides an understanding of happiness and how to achieve true happiness. In *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Al Ghazali suggests

that the path to happiness or well-being is knowledge and charity (Zaini, 2017). Imam al-Ghazali's concept of happiness is also widely studied as a scientific treasure that continues to be preserved and developed.

Well-being in the context of Islam or Sufism has also been studied in many previous studies. Fitriani (2016) shows a positive relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being, where individuals who have a strong religious commitment tend to be better able to cope with stress and trauma. Research by Fatmah Bagis (2024) states that Islamic principles are a positive source that fosters satisfaction, help, and God's forgiveness, which is called the concept of Islamic Spiritual Well-Being (ISWB) (Bagis et al., 2024). Lavenda Azalia's research (2018) also shows that love of the world does not affect psychological well-being. That psychological well-being is influenced by aspects of worship, morals, experience, and spirituality (Azalia et al., 1970). *Tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification) (Abqorina et al., 2024), and *tawakal* as aspects of psychological well-being in Islam (Elmaria & Raudatussalamah, 2023). Nurjamilah confirms that psychology as a scientific framework, and concepts such as *zuhud* (going forth/treasure), *ma'rifatullah* (self-recognition of God) as a way of spiritual well-being in the perspective of Sufism. (Nurjamilah et al., 2024). Sayyid Muhammad Indallah's research (2024) compares the *saadah* (happiness) perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali in the book of *Kimiyaus Saadah* with Martin Seligman's well-being. (Indallah, 2024). Isma Aulia's research (2024) states that dhikr and prayer in Al-Ghazali's perspective are also used as psychological therapies in achieving tranquility (Aulia, 2024).

Although previous studies have linked Sufi concepts such as *tawakal* (trust in God), *zuhud* (asceticism), and *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) with psychological well-being, these studies tend to be partial. On the other hand, modern psychological literature presents various different frameworks, such as Carol Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which focuses on self-actualization, and spiritual happiness, which emphasizes transcendence. Often, there is no clear conceptual bridge between these modern frameworks and the concept of happiness (*sa'adah*) in classical Islamic thought. Al-Ghazali's book *Ihya Ulumuddin* not only discusses the "spiritual dimension" but also offers a framework for spiritual happiness that culminates in *ma'rifatullah* (knowing Allah). There is a research gap that specifically constructs how Al-Ghazali's complete framework in *Ihya Ulumuddin* can provide a synthesis or deep enrichment to the PWB model and contemporary spiritual happiness.

Therefore, indepth research is needed to examine the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts in *Ihya Ulumuddin*, which offers a spiritual dimension as the main foundation of well-being, an approach that has not been fully integrated into modern psychological theory. This research is important because it not only analyzes Al-Ghazali's views normatively, but also focuses specifically on constructing a conceptual model of Al-Ghazali's psychological well-being based on *Ihya Ulumuddin*. This focus will be analyzed comparatively to bridge Al-Ghazali's concept of *sa'adah* with modern frameworks, particularly the eudaimonic dimension of Carol D. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and the concept of spiritual happiness. This research will examine how key Sufi concepts such as *qanaah*, *tawadlu*, and *ma'rifat* function as applied methods for achieving true happiness, thereby offering practical relevance for the development of Islamic psychology and modern psychological interventions.

## Method

This study uses library research with a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach (Moleong, 2018), to construct a conceptual model of happiness (*sa'adah*) in Imam Al-Ghazali's book *Ihya Ulumuddin*. The

researcher uses thematic analysis to examine the text through the lens of Sufism. This method is suitable for exploring the meaning, definition (Renz et al., 2018), such as interrelationships between spiritual concepts of happiness in the thoughts of Al-Ghazali and Carol D. Ryff's Well-being. Thematic analysis is used to examine selected parts of the text thematically, focusing on the core concept of sa'adah (happiness) and related keywords, such as qanaah, tawadlu, ujub, and ultimately, ma'rifat. This approach allows researchers to identify patterns, major themes (Seixas et al., 2017), and specific methods proposed by Al-Ghazali for achieving happiness and spiritual happiness concepts.

Data collection involved purposive selection of text passages from primary sources (Sugiyono, 2014), such as Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin, and secondary sources, such as Bidyat al-Hidaya, Kimiya as-Sa'adat, and Minhaj al-'Abidin, thematically in accordance with the focus of the study. The researcher then analyzed Imam al-Ghazali's views on happiness and presented them descriptively as a concept of spiritual happiness from a Sufi perspective and a personal Islamic psychotherapy model. This analysis is used to identify the relationship between the concept of happiness from al-Ghazali and Carol D. Ryff's Wellbeing with Spiritual Happiness. The results of this analysis are presented in a narrative that explains the conceptual framework of psychological well-being in Al-Ghazali's thinking and the implementative methods for achieving it.

## Result

### Al-Ghazali's Concept of Sa'ada

This study specifically uses the term *sa'adah* (سعادة) as a central keyword. This term was chosen because it is authentic terminology used by Imam al-Ghazali himself, for example in *Mizan al-'Amal*, to refer to the concept of happiness. Etymologically, it means 'the absence of suffering or not misery.' In Mahmud Yunus Arabic-Indonesian dictionary, the meaning of happiness is identified etymologically from the word *falahun*, which means victory, that is triumph or happiness, and *muflihun*, which means happy or successful (Munawwir & Fairuz, 2007). In modern psychology, happiness often refers to a hedonistic state, momentary positive emotions, while PWB Ryff's model refers to a eudaimonic state, namely the fulfillment of life's meaning and the actualization of one's potential. Al-Ghazali's concept of *sa'adah*, defined as a "spiritual and intellectual state" culminating in *Ma'rifatullah* (knowing Allah), conceptually far exceeds hedonistic happiness and is more in line with eudaimonic PWB, but with a more explicit spiritual foundation.

This terminology has been extensively studied for example, Indallah, 2024, who compares it with Seligman (Indallah, 2024). An important finding from these various studies is that sa'adah has a deeper meaning than its equivalents. Although etymologically it means absence of suffering and is often associated with the term *falāh*. *Sa'adah* in Al-Ghazali's framework is not merely a positive psychological state characterized by comfort. Rather, it is a condition of achieving the highest goal of human existence, which is essentially eternal happiness (*ukhrawi*).

Happiness, then, is the opposite of misery, squalor, misfortune, hardship, and misfortune. More broadly, it can also be interpreted as an effort to realize delicacy, goodness through regulatory methods, fruitful activities, and social cooperation. While happiness in al-Ghazali's view is essentially the happiness of the hereafter. This sa'adah according to al-Ghazali contains several meanings. The following is al-Ghazali's definition of happiness extracted from a number of pages in his book *Mizan al-'Amal*. First,

happiness is eternity without temporality, enjoyment without fatigue, joy without sorrow, wealth without poverty, perfection without deficiency, glory without humiliation (Al-Ghazali, 1989).

Second, afterlife happiness can be defined as everything that is idealized as the goal and enjoyment desired by humans. Eternity in this context is not limited by time or period. Because of its nature, the attainment of happiness in the hereafter actually does not require any special encouragement or recommendation, and there is no reason to blame negligence after realizing the existence of such happiness (Al-Ghazali, 1989).

Third, according to Al-Ghazali, happiness is considered a hope and need that is inherent in humans throughout the ages. Al-Ghazali believes that in order to achieve happiness, humans must understand a theory and apply it in daily life (Al-Ghazali, 1989). Well-being as hope is also emphasized by (Sosialita & Hamidah, 2019) and used as a subject to reduce stress in people with Diabetes Mellitus Tpe 2.

Fourth, Al-Ghazali states that happiness is *wusul* or the moment the veil is lifted through inspiration from God, which can be achieved when the heart is clean from impure passions. Thus, a person can see the beauty of heaven even while still in this world, because the highest heaven is in his heart. He has the ability to overcome and control his lusts, freeing himself from their shackles. In addition, man will also focus on *tafakkur*, analyzing, and conducting an in-depth study of the kingdoms of heaven and earth. In fact, he will investigate himself and look at His creation which is so fascinating (Al-Ghazali, 1989).

Fifth, bliss involves understanding all or most of these qualities without effort and without difficulty, and even achieving oneness with God (*wahdatul wujud*) in a very short time. This is the highest level attainable by prophets and is the happiness attainable by human beings (Al-Ghazali, 1989).

Sixth, the happiness and perfection of the *nafs* (soul) is the attachment of the essence of Allah or *al-Umur al-Ilahiyat* (divine matters) with his soul (Al-Ghazali, 1989). It is as if the soul is Allah. This concept is like *manunggaling kawula gusti* in the concept of Islam in Jawa.

Seventh, the perfection that can be achieved is the ability to be with the angels in the higher dimension (*ufuq al-alam*), which is close to Allah. Eight, everything that leads to goodness and happiness is sometimes also referred to as happiness (Al-Ghazali, 1989). Although al-Ghazali did not specifically divide the levels of happiness above, in several definitions mentioned by al-Ghazali there are several dimensions of happiness, which the author divides into several parts and levels. The author presents this in Table 1.

**Table 1. Dimensions and Concept of Happiness According to Imam al-Ghazali**

Dimensions or Level	Concept of Happiness	Characteristic
Akhirat (Afterlife Peak)	Absolute Eternity	A state of eternity without temporality and pure enjoyment without fatigue; the total antithesis of worldly suffering.
	Ideal Goal	Everything idealized as the ultimate goal and peak enjoyment that no longer requires external encouragement to pursue.
Transcendence	Wahdatul Wujud	The achievement of spiritual unity with God in a short time; dissolving the boundary between the servant and the Creator.
	Angelic Dimension	The soul's ability to ascend to the higher dimension (ufuq al-alam) alongside angels in close proximity to God.
	Divine Attributes	The attachment of divine matters (al-Umur al-Ilahiyat) to the soul, as if the soul reflects God's attributes .
	Wusul (Unveiling)	The moment the divine veil (hijab) is lifted when the heart is purified of lust; seeing "heaven" within the heart through self-control .
Foundation	Inherent Hope	An inherent human hope and need across ages that must be theoretically understood and applied in daily life
	Instrumental Means	All means, self-regulatory methods, and productive activities that lead a person toward goodness and happiness.

### Advice on Happiness in Ihya Ulumuddin

Imam Ghazali in his book *Ihya' Ulumuddin* also provides a lot of advice related to psychological well-being (wellbeing). The author finds that there are two pieces of advice in the form of recommendations for good traits and two pieces of advice to abandon despicable traits to obtain well-being.

The first is being *qanaah*. The concept of *qanaah* includes an attitude of gratitude and contentment with what one has, without wanting too much or pursuing excessive material desires. Basically, *qanaah* reflects the mental and emotional attitude of a person who is able to feel satisfied and grateful with what he currently has, without constantly seeking happiness in material things or seeking excessive satisfaction (Al-Ghazali, 1963a). *Qanaah* is a praiseworthy trait found in the Book of *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. *Qanaah* denies that happiness comes from wealth. However, *qanaah* provides guidance so that we can make peace with the situation, whether poor or rich, we are taught to be sincere and accept and enjoy it. So that there is a process of acceptance that leads to peace and happiness of the soul. For example, by happily accepting the food, drink, clothes or house he has. So Al-Ghazali provides guidance in order to be *qanaah* as the foundation of life. *Qanaah* can be familiarized with being patient with the shortcomings we have, grateful for what Allah has given us, without reducing behavior to continue to do good deeds with modest assets and with our energy (Al-Ghazali, 1963a). So al-Ghazali's advice in the context of well-being is to

provide guidance to us to be roomy to accept Allah's gifts, whether it is difficult or happy, we should still feel happy because what comes from Allah certainly has its own wisdom if we can be patient and grateful. Research by Rida Eka Apriningrum (2021) explains, in practice, this attitude of acceptance is an effort to reduce stress or burnout (Apriningrum & Utami, 2021).

As stated in the book *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Chapter on the Repugnance of Grandeur and Vanity in Matters that Destroy, al-Ghazali explains, "Nothing can be decided hope for humans, except with *qana'ah* (feeling satisfied with what one has). So whoever is *qana'ah*, surely he does not need humans. And if he does not need other people, his heart will not be preoccupied with them. And he will have no value in maintaining his position in the hearts of others. And he will not be able to completely abandon pride except through contentment and cutting off hope in other people." (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

Second is the attitude of *tawadlu*. *Tawadhu* is a value or trait that is highly valued in Islamic teachings and is often associated with the values of modesty, humility, and acceptance of God's destiny. *Tawadhu* includes the awareness and recognition that humans are weak and vulnerable servants of Allah. A person who is *tawadhu* humbles himself before Allah, realizing his limitations and depending entirely on Allah's greatness. In *Ihya*, the discussion of *Tawadhu* is explained by quoting QS. Asy-Syuara verse 215, al-Ghazali interprets *tawadlu* by humbling himself towards his believing followers, and not being proud of what he has. (Al-Ghazali, 1963a). The attitude of *tawadhu* makes us realize our poverty, that what we have is essentially entrusted by Allah to us and some of it is also to be distributed to others. *Tawadlu* brings the concept of acceptance of oneself and the situation at hand. A humble person accepts reality and finds happiness in simple things without chasing too many material desires (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

So in the context of well-being, al-Ghazali's advice on *tawadlu* can be an important foundation for creating emotional, mental, and social balance that supports a meaningful and fulfilling life. In the context of well-being, *tawadlu* can play an important role in creating a healthy mental and emotional atmosphere. *Tawadlu* can help protect mental health by encouraging positive and humble thoughts. A healthy sense of self can reduce stress and anxiety that can affect mental well-being. *Tawadlu* helps in building and maintaining healthy social relationships. The importance of maintaining mental health and social relationships in research (Purba & Jatmika, 2024) Humbleness is an effort to improve one's sense of well-being and reduce the risk of suicide. Humble people tend to communicate more easily, listen to others, and appreciate others' contributions, which can improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. *Tawadlu* brings the concept of acceptance of oneself and the situation at hand. A humble person accepts reality and finds happiness in simple things without chasing too many material desires.

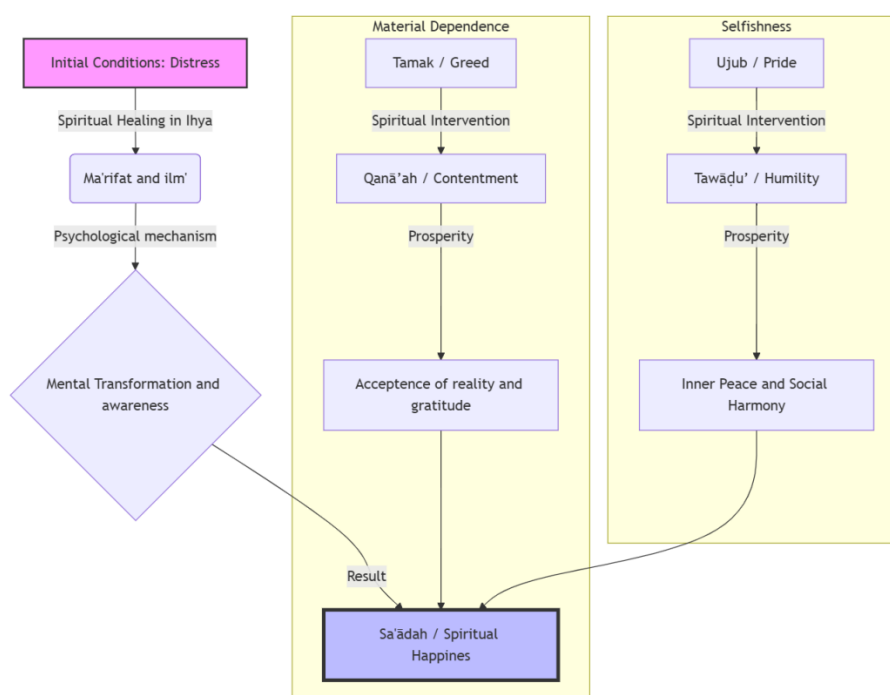
Al-Ghazali also gave advice in the form of a prohibition to avoid covetous behavior and *ujub* (Al-Ghazali, 1963b) page 648 - 688. Covetousness refers to an unlimited drive or desire to have more, especially in the context of possessions, wealth or power. Greedy people tend to never feel satisfied with what they have and always want to get more without considering sufficiency. Greed is often considered a negative trait, as it can lead to unethical behavior or harm to oneself and others. The analogy of covetousness can be compared to a person who is thirsty and drinks sea water. He thought that drinking seawater would quench his thirst. However, the more he drinks seawater, rather than diminishing, his thirst grows. The meaning of seawater is water, while thirst is human greed. The more man treads the path of success, the greater his thirst will be to accumulate more and more wealth (Al-Ghazali, 1963b).

In the context of wellbeing, Imam Al Ghazali warned against covetousness. Because covetousness is often considered a factor that can be detrimental to one's mental and emotional well-being. Greedy people tend to never be satisfied with what they have. They are always in pursuit of more, without taking into account sufficiency. This can lead to ongoing dissatisfaction and reduced levels of happiness and life satisfaction. The desire to constantly chase the world for more, can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety. This can have a negative impact on mental and physical well-being. In order to achieve greedy goals, one may be tempted to commit unethical acts or engage in behavior that harms oneself or others. This can undermine moral and moral values, which in turn can affect wellbeing.

Al-Ghazali's advice regarding *ujub* in Ihya' is a sense of pride or arrogance in one's knowledge and deeds. *Ujub* is a form of pride that arises from the belief that one has reached a high level of knowledge or charity, and this can lead to belittling others or feeling better than them. In Islam, pride in one's knowledge and deeds is considered a negative trait because it contradicts the values of modesty, *tawadhu* (humility), and the recognition that all knowledge and goodness come from Allah. These traits are encouraged in Islamic teachings to prevent one from falling into arrogance and belittling others. The more desirable attitude in Islam is one of gratitude and *tawadhu* towards one's knowledge and deeds. This means recognizing that all knowledge and good deeds are gifts from Allah, not the result of one's own excellence or greatness. This attitude helps guard the heart against diseases of the heart such as *ujub* and stimulates the spirit to continue learning and developing. In practice, a person with knowledge or good deeds should use their knowledge to do good to others and contribute positively to society, not to belittle or feel better than others. Therefore, it is important for a person to guard his heart and intentions in the pursuit of knowledge and charity so as not to fall into the harmful trait of *ujub* (Al-Ghazali, 1963b).

Imam Al Ghazali's explanation of *ujub* reminds us that *ujub* is an action that is not recommended in Islam because it harms oneself and others, and also has an impact on psychological wellbeing. It can create pressure on oneself to always maintain an image of superiority. This can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety as individuals always feel the need to prove or maintain their superiority. People who feel overly proud of themselves may find it difficult to feel satisfied with their achievements or current circumstances. They tend to constantly pursue praise or recognition, which can lead to chronic dissatisfaction.



**Figure 1. Imam al-Ghazali's diagram of advice for happiness in Ihya Ulumuddin**

### Knowledge and *Ma'rifat* as The Peak of Happiness

Knowledge or *ilm'* is the peak of spiritual happiness in the book *Ihya Ulumuddin* by Imam Ghazali. It is explained in the chapter on knowledge in the section on the virtues of knowledge, in a hadith “*that knowledge adds nobility and elevates a slave to the level of kings.*” (Al-Ghazali, 1963b). The hadith explains that people who are noble or have privileges of rank, lineage, and others can become more noble or high (degrees) if they have knowledge. Likewise with a slave who because of his knowledge is analogous to being able to reach the level of a king.

It is also explained that a knowledgeable person who can be useful for himself and for his environment is the best human being. Al-Ghazali quotes a hadith which means “*The best man is the knowledgeable mu'min, if needed he is useful. And if not needed, then he can take care of himself.*” (Al-Ghazali, 1963b). This hadith explains how the virtue of knowledge for a person, where he will benefit and be needed by those around him. Even if a knowledgeable person is isolated from the surrounding life, the knowledge he has will benefit himself, and become a comfort in his loneliness. Knowledge here is not limited to those who are highly educated but the indicator of knowledge is the usefulness or charity of that knowledge. Because knowledge is useless if it is not practiced.

Al-Ghazali added an explanation with another hadith and emphasized how the Prophet Muhammad gave a comparative distance between *ahlul ilmi* (people of knowledge) with ‘*abid* (worshipers). Namely by analogizing the knowledgeable person like the Prophet Muhammad and the ‘*abid* as the lowest person (his rank) among the companions. The Prophet Muhammad in another hadith also compared the two to the full moon and the stars at night.

However, it is also explained in the sixth part of *Ihya*, *Kitabul Ilmi* about the dangers of knowledge, explaining the signs *ulama akhirat* and *ulama su'* (evil). Al-Ghazali quoted the Prophet David's (*Daud*)

words from Allah SWT. Allah said to David, “*The least I can do with a knowledgeable person when he chooses his lusts over loving Me, is that I forbid him the pleasure of communing with Me. O David! Do not ask Me of a knowledgeable person who has been intoxicated by the world, so he prevents you from the path of My love. They are the robbers of My servant. O David! When you see a student for Me, then you shall be his errand boy. O David! Whoever returns to Me one who has fled, I will write him down as one who knows the truth, and I will not punish him forever.*” (Al-Ghazali, 1963b).

These words of Allah, in the explanation of the highest pleasure, in *Ihya*, Al-Ghazali explains that happiness has been spread on knowledge and *ma'rifah*. So, the person who is associated with anything about knowledge, even if it is small, is joyful news and is often proud of it. Conversely, if he is associated with ignorance, even if it is trivial or small, he will undoubtedly grieve. So humans choose to compete for praise from others in order to recognize their intelligence and the superiority of their understanding of knowledge, starting from the smallest things. All of this is due to the enjoyment of knowledge and what brings humans to inner satisfaction or what in this context is called psychological wellbeing, as the peak of happiness (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

Knowledge is also mentioned as a specialty in the attributes of Allah, and is associated with complete perfection. For this reason, human nature usually feels happy when praised as smart and knowledgeable. This is because it shows the nobility of the person and his knowledge as a form of perfection. The Happiness of the knowledgeable person who has felt close to Allah. Al-Ghazali explains in *Ihya*, by quoting one of the *qudsi* hadith narrated by Imam Bukhrari. The Prophet Mummah SAW said: Allah said:

أَعَدَدْتُ لِعِبَادِي الصَّالِحِينَ مَا لَا عَيْن رَأَتْ وَلَا أذن سَمِعَتْ وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ

Meaning: “*I have prepared for My righteous servants (those with knowledge) what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived.*” HR. Al-Bukhari dari Abu Hurairah) (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

So the person who has *ma'rifat* does anything that leads him to the path that leads to Allah until he meets Him. Sufis call it *thoriqoh*, which is an Arabic term meaning “path”. *Ma'rifat* is knowing the highest secret of what has never been felt, seen, and thought of before by humans, namely the pleasure of meeting Allah. If they succeed in achieving it, then all forms of distress and all lusts disappear, finally the heart of the *ma'rifat* person will feel immersed in happiness and pleasure. Even if for example they are thrown into hell, then thrown then he will not feel the heat and suffering. Because he has been immersed in the happiness of being with his Lord. The highest happiness of inner well-being is not being a leader, gaining praise or glory in this world, and achieving victory, but the highest is knowledge and *ma'rifat* to Allah, but some people consider being a leader to be more important.

As for the meaning of *ma'rifat* to Allah, His attributes, His celestial kingdom, and His secrets, it is considered the ultimate and greatest happiness. However, Al-Ghazali adds in a later discussion that he said “*By my age, the seeker of knowledge, even if they do not occupy themselves with the ma'rifat of Allah, they have indeed smelled the delicacy of ma'rifat.*” This can be obtained because ahl al-knowledge has succeeded in uncovering difficulties, opening up confusion, and giving confidence in the majesty of Allah. Al-Ghazali also called it part of *ma'rifat* and knowledge, although this knowledge has not made him noble as the noble saints of Allah who are noble because of the knowledge of divinity (*al-ma'lumat al-ilhaiyah*).

**Table 2. Levels of knowledge According to Imam al-Ghazali in Ihya Ulumuddin**

<b>Level of Knowledge</b>	<b>Characteristics and Focus</b>	<b>Impact on Spiritual Happiness</b>
<i>'Ilm</i> (Knowledge)	Theoretical cognitive understanding. Intellectual understanding is limited to definitions, principles, and memorization of concepts without inner understanding. Focuses on mastery of information and outward Sharia law. Prone to spiritual diseases such as <i>ujub</i> if not accompanied by good deeds.	Happiness is intellectual but not yet stable or fluctuating. It is still vulnerable to anxiety about social status, competition, and dependence on human praise.
<i>'Amal</i> (Implementation of Knowledge)	Practical ethical understanding. The transformation of knowledge into concrete actions manifested in worship and moral improvement. Focus on the use of knowledge for self-discipline ( <i>mujahadah</i> ) and benefiting the social environment. Serves as a cleanser of the heart from worldly impurities.	Happiness comes from a sense of self-efficacy and peace in performing religious duties. It is a source of comfort in times of loneliness.
<i>Ma'rifat</i>	Experiential spiritual understanding. Direct inner experience ( <i>dhawq</i> ) that unveils the veil of divine mystery ( <i>mukasyafah</i> ). Focus on the intuition of the heart that witnesses the majesty of Allah beyond the limits of rational logic. It is the essence of the soul that has attained perfection of nature.	As the peak of happiness ( <i>Sa'adah</i> ). Total inner satisfaction, physical suffering is no longer felt because the heart is immersed in the delight of feeling Allah.

Al-Ghazali makes a clear distinction between *'ilm* and *ma'rifat*. Fundamentally, *'ilm* is a cognitive process of knowing the essence of something. Al-Ghazali explains in the chapter on the virtues of *'ilm* that knowledge adds to a person's glory, and can even elevate a slave to the level of a king. Knowledge is the starting point, it is a tool for distinguishing between what is true and false. However, knowledge has two potentials, it can become worldly knowledge that traps its owner in arrogance (*ujub*) if it is only used to pursue social status, which Al-Ghazali refers to as *ulama su'*, or it can become useful knowledge that leads to good deeds.

Whereas *ma'rifat* is a higher and more specific level. *Ma'rifat* is defined by Al-Ghazali as "knowing the highest secrets about what has never been felt, seen, or thought of before by humans, namely the pleasure of meeting Allah." If knowledge is the path, then *ma'rifat* is the goal or result. *Ma'rifat* is the condition of unveiling (*mukasyafah*) the veil between the servant and God, where the heart feels spiritual bliss that eliminates all worldly sorrows and desires.

By the author, this *ma'rifat* condition is termed a person's wellbeing condition where they can feel adequate, calm, and happy from a psychological aspect. The condition of well-being in psychology is referred to as mental well-being, which can be seen from indicators of well-being including; level of happiness, life satisfaction, social support, physical health, and stress coping. (Devitasari & Utami, 2022). Some of these indicators have been fulfilled by people who are *ma'rifat*, for example in the level of

happiness, people who are ma'rifat consider love for Allah as the pinnacle of happiness, who automatically feel life satisfaction because they are no longer interested in what is not related to Allah, including the pleasures of the world. In practice, students who are able to control their emotions and can fulfill their needs tend to feel satisfied and have high levels of well-being (Qumairi et al., 2021).

Al-Ghazali in the chapter *ma'rifat* gives a description of people who have reached the peak of happiness by taking the story in Surah Ali Imran verses [3] 169 - 170, which means, *"And do not think that those who fall in the way of Allah are dead; in fact they are alive, in the sight of their Lord receiving sustenance, they rejoice in the bounty that Allah has given them, and are pleased with those who remain behind who have not caught up with them, that there is no fear in them and they do not grieve."* (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al Misbah explains the meaning of the verse as a response to the previous verse which explains the ridicule of the hypocrites. Indeed, if the fateful moment of death has come, any effort no longer has any meaning. At that time, sadness over the departure of a loved one must envelop the human heart, but the grief can be treated by realizing that the loved one is in a good state. This is especially true for those who died in the cause of Allah or martyrdom, who fought in defense of divine values. The message contained in this verse is that it is a command or warning to anyone, including the Prophet Muhammad, to maintain the notion that those who are martyred for jihad and fall in battle in the cause of Allah have died. But those who have died in the battle of Uhud or other wars are still alive and even alive in the side of Allah with abundant sustenance according to the size of their struggle to defend the religion of Allah. They are still living a different life, blessed by their Great Lord with sustenance in accordance with the conditions of their current place and in line with the value of struggle and the mercy of Allah. They live with the joy of having received the indescribable gift of words from their Sustaining Lord, and they truly feel happiness every moment (Shihab, 2005a).

Al-Ghazali also narrates the story of a wali who is ma'rifat to Allah in the chapter Ma'rifat. Al-Ghazali narrates that a man named Sufyan Ats-Tsuri asked Rabi'ah bint Ismail Al-Adawiyah, *"What is the essence of your faith?"*. She replied, *"I do not worship Allah out of fear of His hell, nor out of love for His paradise. So that I am like a slave who is not rewarded for evil. Rather I worship Him out of love and longing for Him."* (Al-Ghazali, 1963a). The story of Rabiah who has reached the highest happiness because of the love of Allah proves the indicator of *ma'rifat* as a condition of a person's well-being according to the view of Al-Ghazali.

Allah has promised to perfect His favors to His servants. What humans need to do as His servants is to realize that what Allah gives is a blessing. If humans accept sincerely, the end result will be true happiness, namely happiness in the hereafter. Imam Ibn al Qoyyim stated that the three indicators of happiness are: gratitude when getting blessings, patience when getting trials or calamities, and repentance when making mistakes or sins (Noordin & Rahman, 2017).

No matter how many gifts Allah has given, if one is not grateful, one will not feel satisfied and happy; one will always feel deprived and tend to complain. Likewise, no matter how small a trial or test Allah gives, without the patience to face it, a person will feel down. For individuals who believe, the true happiness they desire lies in the happiness of the hereafter, because happiness in this world is only temporary, while happiness in the hereafter is eternal and everlasting (Al-Ghazali, 1963a).

By getting closer to Allah and surrendering to Him for everything that is given, the happiness obtained is not only limited to the world, but also includes happiness in the hereafter. In the Islamic perspective, happiness is considered a real thing and can be achieved by humans. There are two types of happiness in general, namely temporary happiness that can be found at any time, and true happiness which is not limited by death and will continue until humans face their death (Rector, 2012). In the teachings of Islam, it is said that true happiness for a Muslim is to be united with God.

According to Sufis, reaching the peak of happiness lies in encountering God. The form of the encounter varies according to the experience and understanding of the individual Sufi. Although the terms used by Sufis are different, the essence remains the same, which is to become one with God. Meeting God is considered true happiness. The spiritual experience of meeting God is considered the most significant moment, so that when compared to other happiness, the others become less significant. The spiritual experience of meeting God must be preceded by cleansing the heart (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), because only a clean soul will be called by God to unite with Him (Noordin & Rahman, 2017).

Islam categorizes the two in a way that, on the one hand, it advocates the pursuit of happiness in the hereafter, however, this is done without neglecting the worldly aspects. Gaining happiness in the hereafter is not necessarily followed by happiness in the world, and vice versa, achieving happiness in the world does not guarantee gaining prosperity in the hereafter, and both forms of happiness can also involve protection from physical and mental punishment. Prosperity in the world is considered a step towards achieving happiness in the hereafter. Happiness cannot be achieved instantly, but rather is the result of various factors and experiences that a person undergoes. In addition, happiness is dynamic because the perception of happiness can change over time according to the events experienced. Happiness can change due to changes in one's aspirations, where aspirations reflect what one wants to achieve.

## Discussion

### Al-Ghazali's Method of Achieving Spiritual Happiness

Welfare is a condition that is an essential need for humans during their lifetime. Any activity, if it does not produce a feeling of happiness, is considered imperfect. There are various approaches proposed by several philosophers and scholars to achieve happiness, although the end goal is the same. One of them is al-Ghazali, who developed a specific method known as *kimiya' al-sa'adah*, consisting of eight key elements. One of the key elements is self-knowledge, where understanding oneself is considered the key to knowing God. Al-Ghazali emphasized that no one is closer to the self than oneself, and awareness of the self is the first step to knowing others. The first step in understanding the self is to realize that the self consists of a physical dimension and an inner dimension.

The outer form is referred to as the body, while the inner form is referred to as the heart or spirit. The heart in question is not a piece of meat on the left chest, but rather the core that controls all the other faculties in a human being. In essence, the heart is not something that can be seen sensually, but rather something that is invisible. Knowledge of the nature and existence of the heart is considered the key to knowing God. Some understanding of the nature of the heart or spirit can be gained by closing one's eyes and forgetting everything around, focusing only on oneself. In this way, man can realize the limitations of his own nature. However, few know that the spirit is an unbreakable essence and belongs to the realm of the invisible. An accurate philosophical understanding of the spirit is not the first step in the journey of spiritual life.

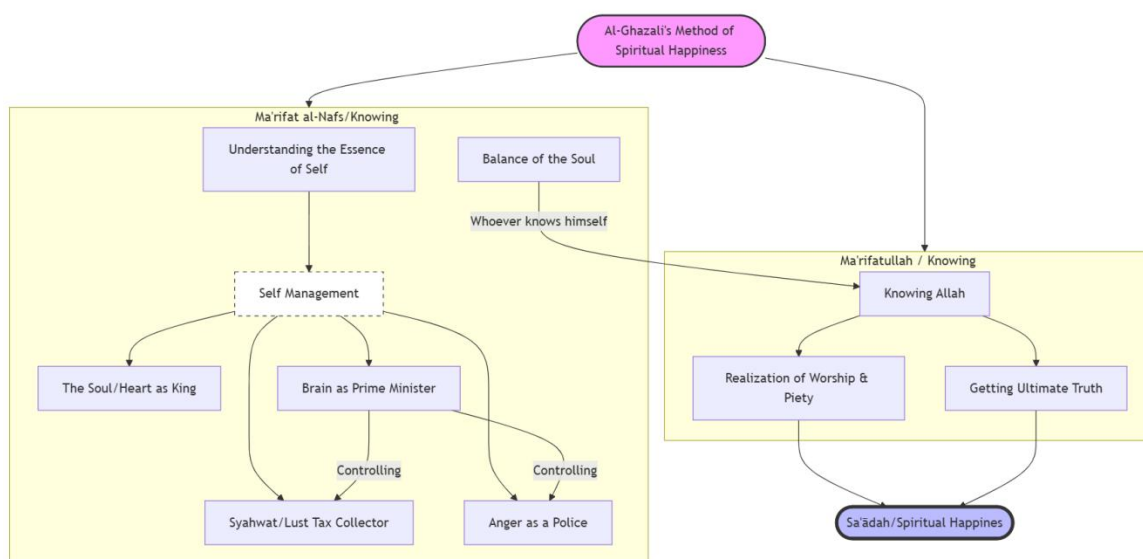
Knowledge can be gained through self-discipline and patience in undertaking the spiritual journey. To understand more deeply the inner struggle, it is important to truly know oneself and God (Al-Ghazali, 1963b, p. 60). Man can see his body as a kingdom, with the soul as the ruler and the senses as the army. Reason can be considered the prime minister, while lust acts as the tax collector and anger as the policeman. In this framework, lust always tries to grab everything for its own sake, while anger tends to be harsh and violent. While tax collectors and police should remain under the control of the king, they need not be eliminated or suppressed, as each has a role to fulfill. However, if lust and anger overpower the intellect, the soul will collapse. A soul that allows the lower faculties to rule over the higher ones can be likened to someone who hands over an angel to a dog, or a Muslim to a tyrannical pagan king.

Al-Ghazali gave a very comprehensive explanation of how to achieve happiness. According to him, happiness can be obtained by someone when they have reached the level of *ma'rifah* Allah, which is knowing Allah. Al-Ghazali emphasized that to achieve *ma'rifah* Allah, the first step that needs to be taken is through the stage of *ma'rifah* al-nafs, which is knowing oneself. Al-Ghazali's striking statement is *"Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord."* This emphasizes the importance of understanding oneself as the main foundation in knowing God. By understanding oneself, one can open the door to a deeper recognition of God's existence (Al-Ghazali, 1963b, p. 560).

Knowledge of Allah is the single highest subject of knowledge, so one who succeeds in understanding it is bound to feel the pinnacle of happiness. Any individual who observes this will realize that true happiness is inseparable from the knowledge or *ma'rifat* of Allah. Every faculty present in man tends to favor certain things. The *shahwat*, for example, likes to satisfy its lustful desires, the anger likes revenge, the eyes tend to enjoy beautiful sights, and the ears take pleasure in hearing melodious sounds. The human soul was created for the purpose of digesting the truth, and that truth is close to the pinnacle of happiness (Al-Ghazali, 1963b, p. 562).

Explained, in QS. Ali Imran [3]: 102, QS. al-Taubah [9]: 16, QS. al-Mukminun [23]: 70, and QS. al-Talaq [65]: 2-3 (Shihab, 2005b, pp. 200–270), that whoever is pious will be rewarded with glory and happiness in life. Happiness is not automatically given by Allah or realized without effort, but involves steps that need to be taken. God-fearing individuals are those who have vertical awareness, which is a good relationship with Allah SWT, and horizontal awareness, which shows a positive relationship with fellow humans. If these two aspects of consciousness can be maintained properly, then the door to piety is wide open. The path to piety is more open when every step is followed by hard work to realize compassion and love for Him. KH. Abdullah bin Nuh, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, in his book *al-Mahabbah*, wrote: *"Every beautiful thing is loved. But the absolute beautiful is only One. The One and Only. Happy is the one who has perfected his mah}abbah for Him. The perfection of his mah}abbah is because he realizes the inner correspondence between himself and Him."*

## Figure 2. Al-Ghazali's Method of Spiritual Happinnes



## Conclusions

This study concludes that the concept of sa'adah in *Ihya Ulumuddin* transcends the modern eudaimonistic model by placing ma'rifatullah as the pinnacle of mental health. Evaluatively, Al-Ghazali views well-being as an ontological status achieved through spiritual transformation from destructive traits (greed and *ujub*) to constructive ones (*qanaah* and humility). Its main theoretical contribution is the identification of specific psychotherapeutic mechanisms such as *qanaah* as a reduction of material anxiety and *tawadlu* as ego regulation. These findings fill a gap in positive psychology literature that often overlooks the role of heart purification. The practical implications offer a foundation for the development of Sufi-Based Psychotherapy Interventions and new psychological measurement tools relevant to Muslim populations. The methodological limitations of this literature review recommend further quantitative or experimental empirical research to validate the effectiveness of this model in real clinical settings.

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