

Comparison of Moral Education According to Ibn Hibban and Al Muhasibi

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Abstract

Moral education is an integral part of Islamic education, aiming to develop individuals of character, religious devotion, and good manners. Imam Ibn Hibban and Al-Harith bin Asad Al-Muhasibi provide unique perspectives on the goals, content, and methods of moral education. This study examines the differences and similarities between their views, focusing on intellectual and spiritual approaches in moral education. Imam Ibn Hibban emphasizes the role of knowledge and intellect in fostering a love for good morals and avoiding vice. He sees morality as a reflection of one's intellectual understanding, requiring education to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor elements. Conversely, Al-Harith bin Asad Al-Muhasibi approaches moral education through a Sufi lens, prioritizing the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) and closeness to Allah. He stresses the importance of controlling desires, introspection (muhasabah), and spiritual role models in shaping morals. Both scholars agree on the significance of manners and environmental influences in shaping behavior but differ in their emphasis on knowledge and manners as the foundation of morality. The findings underscore that Islamic moral education is rooted not only in knowledge but also in profound spiritual and moral dimensions.

Keywords: morality, intellect, soul purification

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Introduction

Education has become an essential need for humanity, serving as a vital tool for shaping and transforming life. Fundamentally, the purpose of education is to develop individuals' abilities and shape a nation's character and civilization with dignity. (Najmira et al., 2021) It seeks to enhance learners' potential to become people of faith, piety, noble character, health, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, and responsible citizenship. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education guides the natural growth of children, enabling them to achieve the highest levels of safety and happiness as humans and members of society. (Amaliyah, 2021) Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System defines education in Article 1, paragraph 1, as "a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that learners actively develop their potential to possess spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, the nation, and the state."

In Islamic teachings, morality is a key aspect and one of the primary objectives of the Prophet Muhammad's mission, as mentioned in his saying:

"I have been sent to perfect noble character" (HR Ahmad).

Thus, morality holds a central role in the general improvement of society (Bafadhol, 2017). An individual's morals serve as a measure of their faith, as stated by the Prophet:

"The most perfect believers in faith are those with the best character" (HR Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi). This means a person's faith in Allah is reflected in their daily conduct. Good morals in a Muslim are a mirror of their faith, as belief in Islam is always tied to faith in the Hereafter. Every action has consequences, leading to rewards or punishments in this world and the Hereafter.

According to Fauzi Rachman, education is a process of preserving and nurturing human nature, including the innate inclination toward truth, monotheism, and positive behavior, while developing individual potential. Human beings are born with an instinct or tendency toward goodness that continues until maturity (Rachman, 2014). This requires a continuous and tireless effort from all involved parties to form individuals with excellent thinking and behavioral patterns, thereby creating an intelligent generation as envisioned by the nation (The Preamble of the 1945 Constitution).

It has become common knowledge that crimes and violations of values are currently being committed by various groups across societal layers and aspects of life. Ironically, these crimes and violations of values are often perpetrated by individuals or groups who are supposed to set an example for the broader community, commonly referred to as white-collar crimes. These actions, which harm the general public, are crimes committed by educated individuals, entrepreneurs, or officials in the course of their roles and functions. In fact, white-collar crimes are more dangerous than those committed by blue-collar individuals—those who occupy lower social strata, are less educated, or lack formal schooling. (Ahmad, 2021)

Data from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in 2017 (CNN Indonesia, as stated by the Deputy Chairperson of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Laode M. Syarif, in Jakarta) revealed that most corruption cases in Indonesia were committed by those with advanced degrees, including master's (S2) and doctoral (S3) holders, as well as university graduates (S1). This data is alarming, as higher education institutions are expected to produce individuals with both intellectual capabilities and moral integrity, serving as agents of progress for the nation. The issue often lies in conventional education methods that neglect individuals' internal dimensions, focusing excessively on intellectual intelligence while overlooking behavior and emotional awareness. This negligence results in individuals who lack exemplary conduct and fail to uphold ethical standards. Education, which should be a strategic means of improving human quality and character, sometimes becomes a paradox in Indonesia's education system (Ali Yusuf, 2021). It produces individuals proficient in academics but deficient in moral character. True education should not only focus on intellectual achievements, such as excelling in multiplication tables or exam results, but also in cultivating noble character.

Morality refers to conduct or behavior (KBBI Online, accessed on June 2, 2024), often equated with ethics, character, or etiquette. However, these terms differ in how good and bad are weighed. Many social problems in our society stem from the weak instillation of moral values in the younger generation (Triandiva, 2023). The unresolved issue of brawls among students, often occurring among teenagers and school children, has already claimed many lives each year and tends to increase annually. Now, a new problem has emerged as a result of advances in communication technology: online gambling. In the past, gambling might have been limited to certain groups, but with the development of the internet today, gambling can be accessed by anyone. What is even more concerning is that the rapid advancement of technology has not been matched with strong character development for our younger generation. In fact, according to data, Indonesia ranks first in the number of online gamblers among other Asian countries (Tempo, 2024).

With such serious challenges that the world of education must face today, we must be able to find appropriate and effective ways to instill noble morals in our children because weaknesses in instilling noble morals have had broad social effects. Islam was born fourteen centuries ago and was once a pioneer in the advancement of human civilization with its mastery of science. Islam and its people, with a long history, have produced many figures in the field of education and also written works produced by Muslim scholars, both classical and contemporary, which discuss how we should instill noble morals in our children. By having a good concept, it is hoped that the results achieved will be good so that the goals of character education can be realized. And among the writings produced by classical scholars which discuss moral education are the books Raudhatul Uqala wa nuzhatul Fudhala by Imam Ibnu Hibban and

Risalatul Mustarsyidin by Al Harits bin Asad Al Muhasibi. Based on the background above, the problem can be identified into the following points:

- 1. What is the concept of moral education according to Imam Ibn Hibban?
- 2. What is the concept of moral education according to Al-Harith bin Asad Al-Muhasibi?
- 3. How does the concept of moral education compare between Imam Ibn Hibban and Al-Harith bin Asad Al-Muhasibi?

To avoid plagiarism, it is necessary for the author to search and identify previous research related to the same research object. From the search results, the researcher was unable to find the same thesis research title. As for the theme of comparative studies of moral concepts according to certain figures, the author found that a lot of research had been carried out, including:

- 1) Dissertation prepared by Taufik Helmi in 2021 with the title "The Concept of Moral Education in the Formation of Students' Character (Comparative Study of the Thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Muhammad Athiyah Al-Abrasyi". This dissertation examines the thoughts on moral education according to Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Muhammad Athiyah Al-Abrasyi, and comparing the similarities and differences between these two figures. Of course, research What the author did is similar to this dissertation, the difference lies in the characters studied.
- 2) Dissertation prepared by Roihan Alansyari in 2021 with the title "Character Education through Sufism and Akhlaki Perspective of the Qur'an". This dissertation results in the conclusion that instilling noble character should be done through a religious character education paradigm. This dissertation rejects the opinion of Aguste Comte (1857) who believes that humans are able to overcome life's problems (including character issues) without involving religion.
- 3) Thesis written by Abdul Halim in 2021 with the title "Comparison of the concepts of moral education of Sheikh Al Zarnuzi and Syed Naquib Al Attas". This thesis examines the goals of moral education according to these two figures using a qualitative approach.
- 4) Thesis written by Hisyam Mahmud in 2022 with the title "Comparative Study of Moral Education from the perspective of Ibnu Miskawaih and Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas". This thesis is not much different from the first, namely the discussion is related to the goals of moral education according to these two figures and how they are implemented in the world of education today.

Method

The research method employed by the author is classified as library research, which is conducted by utilizing library resources such as books, notes, and reports from previous research studies. Since this research involves literature studies, several approaches are used, namely: the expressive approach (related to the author), the objective approach (related to the text), the mimetic approach (related to universality), and the pragmatic approach (related to reader reception of the text).

The primary data sources in this research include works directly authored by the two figures under study, such as:

- 1. Raudhatul Uqala wa Nuzhatul Fudhala, written by Imam Ibn Hibban.
- 2. Risalatul Mustarsyidin, written by Al-Harith bin Asad Al-Muhasibi.

Based on its type, this research is library research employing content analysis. The collected data is examined, described, and then compared. According to Budd, content analysis is essentially a systematic technique for analyzing and processing messages or a tool for observing and analyzing the explicit content of communicators' behavior. Meanwhile, Berelson, followed by Kaliger, defines content analysis as a method for systematically, objectively, and quantitatively studying and analyzing visible messages in communication (Bungin, 2004).

The analysis in this research also involves referring to the thoughts of other figures who have analyzed similar issues as the subjects under study. Ultimately, the researcher provides their own

commentary as a response to the conducted research. The data analysis process, as stated by Kuntowijoyo and cited by Helma Fitri (n.d.), involves the following steps:

1. Verification

After collecting data sources, verification is conducted to critique the documents or validate the authenticity of the data sources.

2. Data Interpretation

The next step is interpreting the data, which includes analysis and synthesis. Once the authenticity of the data has been verified, the determined data is analyzed to provide the researcher's critical, sharp, and in-depth perspectives on the ideas and thoughts being studied.

Results and Discussion

Moral Education According to Imam Ibn Hibban

The purpose of education, according to Imam Ibn Hibban, is to make individuals aware that they are creations of Allah and to provide them with an understanding that Allah has specific intentions and objectives for creating humans on this earth. Allah created humans along with guidance on how they should live their lives. With this awareness, it is hoped that they will submit to and obey His commands and refrain from His prohibitions. He stated:

"It is obligatory for an intelligent person to utilize what is within their possession for the days to come through piety and good deeds." (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.19)

The next purpose of education is to awaken the potential within human beings, as every individual has been bestowed with a gift from Allah, namely intellect. When discussing Islamic education, most studies tend to focus on the heart or tazkiyatun nafs, with little attention given to the intellect. Meanwhile, in modern neuroscience studies, intelligence and emotional regulation are governed by the intellect, which in Western studies is equated with the brain (Sutrisna & Suyadi, 2022). Research indicates a strong relationship between behavior and the brain. Taufik Pasiak, as cited by Ebit Sutrisna (2022), explains that the brain has several parts, the first of which is the prefrontal cortex, located at the front of the brain. This part functions to connect human emotions and cognition. It plays a significant role in higher-order thinking processes, including problem-solving, determining character or traits, regulating emotional dimensions, and shaping personality.

According to Agus Mustofa, as cited by Lutfiyah, the intellect encompasses all potential intelligence possessed by an individual, which includes four aspects: (1) The ability to understand, (2) The ability to analyze, (3) The ability to make decisions, and (4) The ability to execute (Lutfiyah, 2017).

According to Imam Ibn Hibban, intellect is the knowledge of correct behavior and the avoidance of wrongful behavior.

"Intellect is the term given to the knowledge of correct behavior and the knowledge to avoid wrongful behavior." (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.8)

The intellect is a gift bestowed by Allah upon humankind, making them unique compared to other creatures on this earth. Imam Ibn Hibban stated:

"The greatest gift bestowed by Allah upon His servant is the intellect." (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.8)

The intellect is a tool for thinking. Through the knowledge and experiences gained via the senses, a person becomes capable of distinguishing between good and bad, as well as between right and wrong. It also enables individuals to seek solutions to their problems. The more learning experiences a person acquires, the easier it becomes for them to find resolutions to life's challenges. So, where is the intellect located? Human intellect resides in the heart, while the brain merely serves as a storage place for memories.

Meanwhile, according to Ibn Khaldun, the intellect is a precise scale whose results are definitive and reliable. However, using the intellect to measure matters related to the unseen is akin to using a jeweler's scale to weigh a mountain (Amin, 2018). This implies that the intellect has limitations in its application. It can only process what can be sensed or based on previously obtained information. Above the intellect is Divine revelation, which in the Islamic perspective holds a higher position than the intellect. This view contrasts with the belief held by Western thinkers, who often place the intellect as the highest authority. In Western philosophy, the intellect is typically confined to the realm of reason, accepting only knowledge that is rational while rejecting what is irrational. Nevertheless, some in the West also acknowledge the existence of the metaphysical realm.

As is well known, humans consist of two components: the physical (body) and the psychological (soul, spirit, intellect, and heart). In the Qur'an, the concept of the soul refers to the psychological aspect, which has two domains: al-ghadhabiyah and al-syahwaniyah. Al-ghadhabiyah is the force aimed at protecting oneself from all forms of harm. Al-syahwaniyah is the force that drives one to pursue all that is pleasurable. These two forces are often referred to as nafsu hayawaniyah (animalistic desires) (Ali, dkk., 2021)

How, then, can the intellect be kept alive? According to Abu Hatim, the key to maintaining the intellect's vitality is through knowledge.

"Therefore, it is obligatory for an intelligent person to nourish their intellect with knowledge." (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.10)

Knowledge serves as sustenance for the intellect, strengthening it just as food nourishes the human body. Similarly, just as the body will perish without nourishment, the intellect will wither without its sustenance—knowledge. The intellect inherently opposes base desires. It aids a person in the process of thinking and acts as a barrier against their desires. When faced with uncertainty between two choices, the intellect will steer the person away from the option that aligns more with their desires. By resisting their desires, a person purifies their conscience, and through the use of intellect, their inner self becomes clear, enabling them to perceive the truth.

An intelligent person holds a high status, even if they are our adversary. This is reflected in an Arab proverb, which states:

"An intelligent enemy is better for a person than a foolish friend." (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.12) There are three things that can damage the intellect: excessive laughter, excessive daydreaming, and poor beliefs. The essence of intellect lies in one's ability to foresee or contemplate potential outcomes before they actually occur. This means that a person must be able to evaluate the consequences of their actions—whether they will bring benefit or lead to harm.

According to Ibn Hibban, intellect is divided into two types: innate intellect and acquired intellect. Innate intellect refers to traits that a person is born with, including character, nature, personality, talents, and intelligence. These are inherent qualities often inherited from parents. While each individual has their unique characteristics shaped by their lineage, these traits can either be good or bad. Although innate characteristics are present at birth, they are not entirely immutable. However, changing them requires significant effort. In addition to genetic factors, a person's character can also be influenced by their environment. Thus, the purpose of education is to provide stimuli that encourage students to develop desirable character and morality.

If a person's innate character is already positive, there is little need for intense efforts to improve it. Instead, the focus should be on maintaining and strengthening these qualities so they become firmly embedded in their soul. Imam Ibn Hibban outlines four stages to achieving perfect

intellect. He states (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d.p.8): "A person, in the initial stage, is called adib (cultured), then arib (perceptive), then labib (wise), and finally aqil (intelligent)."

This statement illustrates the progression or stages in the intellectual and personal perfection of an individual. Each term reflects a higher trait or ability than the preceding one. Below is an explanation of each term:

- a) أديب (adīb) Cultured, derived from the word *adab*, meaning a person knowledgeable in etiquette, ethics, and good behavior. This is the foundational stage in intellectual and moral development.
- b) أريب (arīb) Skilled, knowledgeable, and can also mean intelligent, referring to someone who possesses the quick-wittedness to understand things rapidly. After gaining *adab*, one must sharpen their intelligence.
- c) لبيب (labīb) Derived from the verb بيب (meaning rational, and can also imply dwelling or remaining steadfast. According to the Al-Munawir dictionary, labīb means clever or smart. M. Dawam Rahardjo, as cited in M. Isnaini (Isnaini & Iskandar, 2021), states that the term ulul albaab is equivalent to intellectuals—people who possess and use their intellect to work or carry out activities.
- d) عاقل ('āqil) Rational, as mentioned in *Lisan al-Arab, al-aql* means *al-bijr*, which signifies restraint and self-control. It is also explained that *al-aqlu* conveys wisdom. This is the highest level, indicating a person who is not only wise but also possesses self-control, mature judgment, a profound understanding of the world and themselves, as well as moral drive and the ability to learn from lessons and derive wisdom.

This statement indicates that a person's intellectual development does not stop at intelligence but continues to grow toward wisdom and higher self-awareness. According to Agus Mustofa, the human mind has four levels corresponding to the quality of its consciousness (Lutfiyah, 2017):

- a. Sensory Awareness This is the lowest level of awareness, which relies solely on the function of the five senses.
- b. Rational/Scientific Awareness This level builds upon sensory awareness by incorporating empirical analyses. However, the essence remains the same: a person perceives with their physical eyes, albeit on a broader scale.
- c. Spiritual Awareness At this level, a person does not rely solely on their external vision but also utilizes their inner vision (the heart). This leads to the next level of awareness, which is:
- d. Tawhidic Awareness At this stage, a person recognizes the existence of a power that governs the universe, even though it is unseen.

Regarding educators, Imam Ibn Hibban emphasizes the importance of knowledge and good character that an educator must possess. An educator should be someone who has a deep love for knowledge and enthusiasm in seeking it. This enables them to impart knowledge effectively to their students. With piety and good morals, they can guide their students and serve as role models. An educator should have a sense of compassion for their students, which drives them to genuinely dedicate themselves to their students' development. It is inappropriate for an educator to display hostility or hatred toward their students, as this would hinder their goal of helping improve the students' shortcomings.

Meanwhile, according to Imam Ibn Hibban, students should understand the disgracefulness of ignorance and the nobility and virtue of knowledge and those who possess it. This understanding will inspire them to strive for learning and achievement. Moreover, they must exhibit patience in their pursuit of knowledge, as without patience, they will not be able to attain it. Additionally, a seeker of knowledge should avoid unnecessary matters so they can remain focused on their studies.

Methods of Moral Education

a) Instruction

The method of moral education, according to Imam Ibn Hibban, involves teaching and enlightening a person's intellect about the importance of embodying good character. According to him, morality arises from a sound intellect, and it is the intellect itself that leads a person to love good morals and detest bad ones. Imam Ibn Hibban (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.8)stated:

"Indeed, the source of a person's love for noble character and hatred for bad character is their own intellect."

Elkin and Sweet, as cited in (Ramayanti et al., 2023), explain that character education is a deliberate effort to help individuals understand, care about, and act upon fundamental values. According to them, discussing character formation means aiming for individuals to be able to discern what is right and then act on what they believe is right, even in the face of external pressures and internal temptations. Therefore, Imam Ibn Hibban (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.15)stated: "And the first thing a person must do to possess good character is to have intellect." From this, we can interpret that the first step is to teach about morality itself. Through learning, a person will be able to identify and distinguish between good and bad character. Knowledge removes ignorance within an individual. According to (Hasanah, 2021), teaching character means providing students with an understanding of a specific value structure, its virtues, and its benefits. This offers two advantages: first, it provides conceptual knowledge about values, and second, it allows students to compare this knowledge with their existing understanding.

Therefore, Islam strongly emphasizes the importance of seeking knowledge for its followers, even making it a compulsory duty (fardh 'ain). The knowledge in question is that which benefits its possessor, resulting in righteous deeds. With knowledge, a person can discern the truth, even amidst the darkness of uncertainty, as truth cannot always be seen with the naked eye. Through learning, one sharpens their intellectual ability, making it more precise. Learning also helps one develop a habit of systematic and logical thinking.

Once knowledge is acquired, the next stage is understanding. With good understanding, awareness to do good will naturally arise. If we refer to the educational theory by Benjamin S. Bloom, commonly known as Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), he categorized education into three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Ulfah & Arifudin, 2023). The cognitive domain relates to knowledge, thinking processes, and understanding. This domain is further divided into six levels: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) evaluation, and (6) creation. From this, we can see that the initial stage in learning is the process of acquiring knowledge, followed by understanding what has been learned. This process is closely linked to one's intellectual abilities.

Education should not be limited to the cognitive domain alone but must also address the affective and psychomotor domains. The knowledge imparted to students should transform their mindset, which, in turn, will produce attitudes aligned with the intended outcomes. Education must be comprehensive, not solely focused on enabling children to memorize every principle about commendable morals without application. Instead, the knowledge acquired should make them aware of the importance of practicing good morals. Education should not stop at the level of knowledge transfer, merely changing ignorance into awareness, limited to "transfer of knowledge."

b) Role Modeling

Imam Ibn Hibban said (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d.p.105): "It is obligatory for an intelligent person to avoid the ignorant and refrain from associating with foolish individuals, just as it is obligatory for him to be friend the wise." It is undeniable that friends and the environment significantly influence a person's character. As stated by William Stern in (Andriyanti, 2021), both

intrinsic and extrinsic influences are equally important in a child's development. Therefore, one must carefully consider with whom they predominantly associate, as reflected in the Prophet's hadith: "A person follows the religion of his close friend, so let him carefully consider whom he takes as a close friend." (Narrated by Ahmad) According to Langeveld in (Najili et al., 2022), education can be implemented in various ways, both positive and negative. Positive methods include setting a good example, practicing to form habits, giving orders, offering praise, and providing rewards.

c) Motivation

The next method that an educator must use is providing motivation. He (Muhammad bin Hibban, n.d. p.184) said: "The best companion is the one who offers the most advice." Advice is one of the remedies that can be given to someone suffering from emotional distress. It means teaching commendable morals, motivating their implementation, and explaining reprehensible behaviors while warning against them or enhancing goodness through actions that soften the heart (Nasution, 2020). Advice is a form of affection for those we care about and an effective way to nurture, educate, and protect children. Among the forms of advice is providing positive motivation (reward), such as: (a) Praise, given as a way to respond to someone's achievements. (b) Gifts, as a form of motivation and recognition for someone's behavior. (c) Recognition, announced in a special forum to honor their accomplishments. Another form of advice is punishment, given as a consequence of mistakes made (Fadilah & F, 2021).

Moral Education According to Al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi

According to Al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi, the goal of education in Islam is closely linked to the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and the cultivation of noble character. He said (Muhasibi Al, 1983 p.110): "I found that the corruption of the heart leads to the corruption of religion, and the root of a corrupted heart is neglecting self-accountability (*muhasabah*)." According to Al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi, education should assist individuals in purifying their souls from negative traits such as arrogance, envy, and greed. By understanding one's inner self, a person is expected to guard themselves from bad deeds, avoid sins, and find ways to heal their soul (Mahmud, 2007).

The ultimate goal of education is to achieve a pure heart that enables one to draw closer to Allah and make Him the sole purpose of all actions (Erina et al., 2022). He emphasized that humans should not seek mercy from anyone other than Allah, for there is none more merciful in this world than Allah alone. Therefore, education should lead a person to truly realize the greatness of Allah and make Him the only One to whom they turn for help. It is not considered true honor if a person still expects mercy from anyone other than Allah. Whoever places their trust and supplications solely in Allah will find Allah drawing closer to them (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p. 55). By understanding His greatness and omnipotence—that Allah has decreed everything that happens on this earth—one will experience the sweetness of faith. This is a bliss that can be felt by all people, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female, wherever and whenever they are, be it in the city or countryside, whether a high-ranking official or an ordinary person. This is a happiness that brings true peace, the ultimate contentment that humanity has been seeking throughout their existence.

There is a significant difference between the Sufism taught by Al-Muhasibi and other Sufi teachings. Many Sufis adhere to the belief that the goal of Sufism is for humans to unite with Allah. Furthermore, they tend to disregard the evidences found in the Qur'an and Hadith, leaving no room for rational thought. As a result, their teachings lack both *naqli* (scriptural) and 'aqli (rational) foundations, leading to the emergence of hululi (incarnationist) beliefs. Some even deviate from Sharia law, claiming that acts such as gazing at non-mahram women are a form of dhikr (remembrance of Allah's beauty) (Khasani, 2020).

In contrast, Al-Muhasibi's Sufi teachings are grounded in *naqli* evidence (Qur'an and Hadith). This is evident in his books, where he consistently incorporates scriptural foundations for righteous

actions, both from the Qur'an and Hadith. However, it is worth noting that some of the Hadiths he referenced were considered weak (*dha'if*), which drew criticism from figures like Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Nevertheless, Al-Muhasibi strongly advocated for adhering to the Sharia of Allah.

"Whoever Allah expands their chest, and whose faith reaches their heart, and who desires a path to Him, must follow the way of the wise by adhering to the boundaries of Sharia." (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.36) Education, according to Al-Muhasibi, must cultivate good character (akhlaq). For him, akhlaq is the essence of a Muslim's personality. Good character reflects piety to Allah and obedience to Sharia. According to Al-Muhasibi, human morality revolves around how one manages their nafs (self or soul) (Mahmud, 2007). While Al-Muhasibi did not provide a definitive definition of an-nafs (the soul), he believed that understanding it is the essential and initial step for someone embarking on the path of Sufism. He emphasized the famous principle: "Whoever knows themselves will know their Lord." To him, an-nafs is a vital spiritual element within a person, encompassing all aspects of traits, desires, character, and human will. It governs the outward physical body, which acts under its command. Therefore, for someone to control their akhlaq, they must first master their nafs (Khasani, 2020).

It is not an easy matter for someone to control their *nafs* (self or soul), as within humans lie two opposing natures. The first is the angelic nature, which constantly calls toward goodness and truth. The second is the animalistic nature, which occasionally leads to good but more often drives humans toward wrongdoing. These two forces perpetually battle within the human soul, striving to dominate one another (Khasani, 2020). The goal of moral education is to habituate humans to act with goodness, beauty, nobility, praiseworthy virtues, and integrity while avoiding bad, disgraceful, and despicable deeds. By studying morality, a person can discern the boundaries between good and bad, enabling them to place each in its proper context. Acting morally also becomes a means to achieve divine guidance (*taufik*), care (*inayah*), and enlightenment (*hidayah*), leading to happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Furthermore, morality does not inherently make a person good, but it can open their eyes to distinguish between good and evil, ultimately encouraging them to act rightly (Bahri, 2023). The purification of the soul and the development of noble character are deeply intertwined. As Abu Bakr Al-Kattani (d. 322 AH) stated (Izza, 2022),

"Sufism is character; thus, the better a person's character, the purer their heart becomes." Al-Muhasibi viewed knowledge as a tool to draw closer to Allah. However, knowledge must be accompanied by *adab* (ethics), for without *adab*, knowledge can become a source of destruction for the soul. Education, according to Al-Muhasibi, also involves developing critical and reflective thinking. An individual must be able to contemplate the greatness of Allah, understand the meaning of life, and control worldly desires and impulses. He said (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.100): "With every increase in knowledge, the fear (of Allah) also increases, and with every increase in deeds, humility grows." One of the key objectives of education, according to Hamka, is to cultivate submission and obedience to Allah and His Messenger in daily life (Mz, 2018). This includes fostering habits of worship, good social interactions, as well as emphasizing simplicity and sincerity. Overall, Al-Muhasibi highlights the importance of education that not only focuses on intellectual aspects but also on spiritual and moral dimensions, with the ultimate goal of shaping individuals who are pious and possess noble character. In his book *Risaalatul Mustarsyidin*, Al-Muhasibi cites a verse (Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 19) which mentions the virtues of those endowed with intellect.

"Indeed, it is only those endowed with understanding who can take heed." He aimed to emphasize that one of the blessings Allah has bestowed upon humanity is the intellect. He stated (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.167): "Whoever Allah wills goodness for, He grants them intellect and makes them love knowledge." Meanwhile, in his book Al-Washaaya, he states: "Intellect is a light in the heart that Allah places, enabling a person to distinguish between right and wrong." (Muhasibi Al, 1986)

Thus, a person who speaks the truth is considered intelligent, while one who speaks falsehood is deemed foolish. Intellect is not a physical part of the human body. It cannot be touched or seen as a tangible object, but its presence can be observed through one's actions. According to him, intellect is divided into two types: innate intellect and intellect derived from experience. A person's intellect can increase through learning, as learning is a form of experience (Muhasibi Al, n.d.). Therefore, whoever is endowed with intellect should adhere to the boundaries of Allah's Shariah in the Qur'an and follow the Sunnah of His Prophet. Furthermore, he believed that an educator should also possess extensive spiritual experience, enabling them to share knowledge and practical application in real life. Teachers hold a vital role in the tradition of Sufism, where it is even said that (Izza, 2022) "Whoever does not have a teacher, their guide is Satan."

As for the students, he emphasized that they must have a sincere intention, which is to improve themselves. As he stated (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.45):

"Let him examine his intention."

By having the correct intention, one will surely achieve what they aspire to, as every action is based on its intention. Furthermore, students must possess patience in learning, as it is the key to success. They should also not feel ashamed to ask about things they do not know, enabling them to master their knowledge.

The Method of Moral Education

a) Role Modeling

The first method in moral education, according to Al-Muhasibi, is role modeling. He stated (Muhasibi Al, 1983,p.58): "And do not be someone who invites others to the truth but is far removed from it yourself." An educator must be able to serve as a real-life example so that all the moral teachings conveyed do not remain mere fantasies or seem like tales from an imaginary land, impossible to realize. Role modeling is one of the most effective methods in moral education, and this was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (*) in educating his companions. As a result, the lessons deeply penetrated their hearts, yielding abundant fruits in the form of righteous deeds. This led to Islam spreading across the globe and remaining vibrant to this day. Providing good examples to children through words, attitudes, appearances, and noble actions offers them a tangible representation of virtuous behavior they can observe and emulate (Bahri, 2023). The importance of choosing companions in life cannot be overstated, as one's company reflects their character. Al-Muhasibi stated(Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.59): "Do not associate except with those who are wise and pious, and do not sit except with those who are knowledgeable." Indeed, we tend to prefer gathering with people who share similar inclinations and values. A companion can significantly influence a person, for better or worse. Many individuals fall into the pit of immorality and misguidance due to the influence of bad company. However, there are also countless cases of people receiving guidance and attaining goodness by associating with righteous friends.

b) Advice

Advice is another method that an educator must apply to their students. This method should be carried out with consideration of the situation and context, such as avoiding giving advice in public, delivering it with wisdom and gentleness, and showing care and compassion. When these aspects are fulfilled, the advice given will resonate positively in the hearts of the students (Mursalin et al., 2023). Providing advice to others is a right of a fellow Muslim. He stated (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.70): "Give advice for the sake of Allah and for the believers." Someone who gives us advice demonstrates their care for us. They do so because they do not want to see us fall into mistakes that could lead to harm or misfortune. Even though offering advice might sometimes result in being disliked or avoided, the person who advises us is, in fact, our true brother or sister.

c) Remembrance (Dzikir)

Al-Muhasibi said (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.62):

"Accustom yourself to remembering Allah (dhikr), and you will draw closer to Him." Continuously remembering Allah will undoubtedly have a positive impact on a person's soul. According to a psychoanalyst named A.A. Brill (Halimah, 2021), as quoted by Halimah, a person who practices religion correctly will never suffer from psychological illnesses. This is because they believe that all their affairs are in accordance with Allah's decrees. This belief ensures that all their actions align with Allah's Shari'ah, as they are always aware of being under His watchful gaze. There is no place hidden from Allah, even if one were inside the strongest fortress. Essentially, dhikr aims to make a person always mindful of Allah's greatness, whether through speech or by contemplating the signs of Allah's power, whether they are kauniyah verses (universal signs) or qur'aniyah verses (Qur'anic revelations). Dhikr with the tongue involves constantly uttering the names of Allah by saying tahmid (praising Allah), tasbih (glorifying Allah), takbir (declaring Allah's greatness), or tahlil (declaring Allah's oneness). As for dhikr through kauniyah verses, it involves observing the universe and everything within it. By reflecting on all of Allah's creations, we will realize our insignificance compared to the greatness of Allah, who created everything effortlessly. This realization will cause any arrogance that resides in our hearts to melt away like ice. The next form of dhikr is contemplating the verses of the Qur'an, which is considered the best form of dhikr. Reading the Qur'an purifies our hearts, akin to removing rust and stains from an old piece of iron affected by its environment. Similarly, our hearts can become filled with the stains of sin and immorality, blocking the entry of divine light into them. However, through recitation of the Qur'an, all such impurities in the heart are cleansed (Maududin et al., 2021).

d) Habituation

Morals are something that arises naturally within a person without requiring deep contemplation. Actions or attitudes that emerge are reactions or responses to what they experience. With frequent responses to certain situations, moral character is formed within them. Therefore, a habituation method is needed to instill noble morals in students. This process of habituation is more effective if implemented at an early age, as it is easier and more deeply ingrained in the heart. Once this habit is established, performing good deeds will no longer feel burdensome (Bahri, 2023). According to Thomas Lickona, as cited by (Idris, 2018), good character is knowing what is good, desiring what is good, and doing what is good. All of these elements are introduced and practiced continuously, forming good habits in thinking, feeling, and acting. These habits, in turn, shape the character of individuals or groups. Therefore, moral education cannot rely solely on teaching theoretical knowledge; it must go beyond that to establish all good habits—whether in words, actions, or attitudes. Reflecting on this, it becomes clear that moral education demands much more time and effort compared to ordinary teaching.

e) Controlling Desires

To cultivate good morals, it is essential to control oneself—our desires, impulses, and aspirations—in order to act for the benefit of others. Controlling one's desires is the key to achieving success in moral education. Desires are hidden forces, and those who can overcome these hidden adversaries will also be able to defeat visible enemies. Al-Muhasibi once said (Muhasibi Al, 1983, p.52): "You will not attain what you hope for (goodness) unless you abandon what you desire." If humans were to pause and reflect for a moment, thinking and searching for who their greatest enemy truly is, they would realize that their greatest enemy lies within themselves: their own desires. It is these desires that have always prevented them from doing good and constantly driven them toward wrongdoing. Yet, due to human ignorance, they tend to blame others when they refuse to do good and eagerly pursue evil.

Even though humans have been endowed with a perfect intellect for reasoning, their desires often dominate, clouding their judgment and making it difficult for them to accept truth and good advice. Worse still, their behavior can become far more despicable than that of animals (Mz, 2018).

f) Self-Reflection (Muhasabah)

Anyone who seeks to improve themselves, distance themselves from sin, and recognize the wrongs they have committed must consistently engage in *muhasabah* (self-reflection). Muhasabah is the process of evaluating one's actions and words, determining what is loved by Allah and what is despised by Him. The goal of this self-evaluation is self-improvement by assessing whether one's actions bring goodness or harm. If the actions are good, they should be repeated; if bad, they should not be repeated (Mahmud, 2007). Through muhasabah, we can also identify our flaws and weaknesses, enabling us to address and correct them. To engage in effective self-reflection, one must cultivate a sense of concern about their shortcomings, reduce their faults, and aspire for greater virtues. According to (Mutmainah, 2021), the practice and cultivation of spiritual development in Sufi psychology involve three stages: (1) *Takhalli*: Cleansing oneself of disgraceful actions and heart-based sins. (2) *Tahalli*: Developing praiseworthy behaviors as habits. (3) *Tajalli*: Striving to draw closer to Allah. Al-Muhasibi likens this process to that of a merchant who continually inspects their merchandise, driven by a fear of potential losses and the hope of abundant profit (Muhasibi Al, 1986).

Conclusion

Moral education is an effort to instill intelligence in thinking, behaving, internalizing, and practicing actions grounded in divine values and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Discussions about morals will always persist throughout time, with nearly identical issues; only the time and actors differ. This indicates that humanity will always need guidance toward noble morals. Moral education should be a lifelong process, not limited to school years. Unlike the current practice, where learning morals is often confined to schooling, particularly up to high school, and after that stage, efforts toward moral education are rare or nearly non-existent. Morals can be categorized into two types: first, innate morals that are deeply ingrained and require no effort to acquire but can be altered or changed. Second, acquired morals, developed through continuous habituation, eventually becoming deeply rooted in the soul. This is the role of education, whether formal, non-formal, or informal. To cultivate noble morals, one should begin with purification of the soul and enlightenment of the intellect. Every action a person performs originates from the heart (intention), which then directs other body parts. Thus, the heart is the king over the rest of the body. The intellect reinforces belief in truth and the consequences of implementing noble morals. The moral education concepts proposed by Abu Hatim and Al-Muhasibi remain highly relevant to today's moral education. It is hoped that future researchers will study more of the thoughts of figures, both previous and new, because what they write is the result of the research they have carried out. The results of this research can be used as material for discussion regarding moral studies and also its application both at school level and for adults.

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