

# The Urgency of Loyalty to the Masyayikh Al-Ghazali's Perspective

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**Abstract:** This research focuses on analyzing the urgency of students' and alumni's loyalty to their teachers as an important foundation for achieving blessings, success, and true happiness from Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective. The research aims to identify and describe the philosophical and ethical foundations in Al-Ghazali's view that establishes complete obedience and faith in the teachers as an absolute obligation for the salvation of this world and the hereafter. This research uses a qualitative method with a qualitative approach. library research(literature study). Data were obtained from primary sources of Al-Ghazali's thought and analyzed descriptively and analytically. The results of the study indicate that loyalty to the Masyayikh is a non-negotiable obligation, manifested in obedience and compliance with every instruction. The Masyayikh acts as a spiritual guide who shows the path to salvation. This obedience is the foundation for obtaining the blessings of knowledge and leading students to success and true happiness in this world and the hereafter. Specifically, in Imam al-Ghazali's view, even though the Masyayikh's guidance sometimes seems inappropriate, it is still better and more beneficial than taking steps based on the student's personal views, because the teacher's guidance is based on more mature spiritual experience.

**Keywords:** Loyalty, Masyayikh, Al-Ghazali.

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## Introduction

Islam is a religion that highly honors teachers, as they serve as spiritual guides, moral instructors, and inheritors of the knowledge of the prophets (Arfandi, 2020). A student's success in pursuing knowledge is not solely determined by intellectual intelligence, but also by the role of the masyayikh, a form of spiritual recognition of the authority and blessings of the knowledge they possess. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) provide an understanding that students' loyalty to the masyayikh is an integral part of the etiquette of seeking knowledge and serves as a means of purifying the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) which opens the door to blessings and makes it easier to understand the essence of knowledge (Madarik & Puadi, 2024).

As time progresses significantly, people's perspectives on the authority of teachers as educators in Indonesia have changed. The currents of modernization and globalization of information

foster rational, critical, and individualistic thinking that often negates the spiritual dimension of education (Johan et al., 2024). This tendency has given rise to a generation of students who value knowledge more than their mentors, and who view teachers solely as conveyors of information, rather than as builders of character. Indirectly, students' obedience to teachers is fading, even though this value is at the heart of Islamic education, which emphasizes a balance between knowledge and manners (Ghifari, n.d.). This loss of obedience results in a moral and spiritual crisis, where knowledge no longer leads to inner peace, but is merely a tool for worldly achievement.

Al-Ghazali's thinking emerged as a response to this phenomenon. As a great scholar who emphasized the unity of reason, heart, and deeds, he believed that the educational process should not stop at mastering material things but should also include spiritual development through the guidance of a pious and knowledgeable teacher

(Mujrimin & Ali, 2025). In his monumental work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he emphasized that even though the guidance of the community sometimes seems less precise, it is still better and more beneficial than taking steps based on the personal views of the students (al-Ghazālī, 2016). This shows that a student must show full obedience to his teacher, because obedience is a form of sincere surrender to receive guidance towards the perfection of the soul. He believes that a teacher is not just a teacher (*murobbi*), but also as a guide (*murobbi*) namely a figure who develops the souls of students so that they are able to know God and themselves..

Previous research has explained the importance of students' respect and obedience to their teachers in maintaining the blessings of knowledge. According to Fikri, the values of students' manners towards their teachers include politeness, exemplary behavior, respect, and loyalty in pursuing knowledge (Aziz, 2025). However, this study differs because it focuses on identifying and describing the philosophical and ethical foundations in Al-Ghazali's view that establishes full obedience and faith in the Masyayikh as an absolute obligation for the salvation of this world and the hereafter. This study aims to analyze the urgency of obedience to the Masyayikh from Al-Ghazali's perspective by examining the underlying philosophical, ethical, and spiritual foundations. The results of this study are expected to reveal the relevance of the concept of obedience for strengthening character and forming manners in the contemporary Islamic education system as a path to blessings and the approval of the Masyayikh.

### Materials and Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach, namely an in-depth study of Imam Al-Ghazali's primary works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Minhāj al-Muta'allim*, and *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim* along with relevant secondary literature. All data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques, namely interpreting the contents of the text, exploring Al-Ghazali's philosophical and ethical concepts about obedience to masyayikh, then connecting them to the context of

contemporary Islamic education. The research procedure includes collecting sources, verifying the validity of the literature, organizing data, and thematic analysis to find the meaning, principles, and relevance of obedience in Al-Ghazali's perspective.

## Results and Discussion

### The Concept of Obedience from an Islamic Perspective

Obedience (*tā'ah*) is a fundamental value in Islamic teachings that encompasses spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Etymologically, obedience means submitting and complying with righteous commands with full sincerity (Asna, 2023). The Qur'an affirms that "*O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.*" (QS. An-Nisā' [4] : 59), which emphasizes that obedience has a hierarchy, namely, first to Allah, then the Messenger, and to the leader or authority who guides humans to the truth. Primary obedience is directed to Allah SWT, His Messenger, and the righteous leader.

Obedience to teachers is a manifestation of this principle. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as spiritual guides, guiding students toward an understanding of the essence of life (Istiqomah, 2025). Teachers serve as a bridge to a purposeful human being and make knowledge useful. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) place masyayikh (religious leader) as a key pillar of educational success. Students are taught not only to comprehend knowledge but also to emulate their teachers' morals (Manidhom Et Al., 2024). Obedience creates a continuous spiritual connection between teacher and student, which creates blessings for knowledge and fosters noble character.

Obedience, from an Islamic perspective, is not a form of suppression of freedom of thought, but rather a process of moral and spiritual maturity. Obedient students are not passive, but rather aware that the teacher's guidance is a means to attain truth. True obedience fosters independence of spirit and intelligence of the heart. Obedience teaches humility, respect for knowledge, and placing all authority in a proper place. In this way, obedience

becomes a path to the depth of knowledge and true wisdom.

### **Philosophical and Ethical Basis of Obedience According to Al-Ghazali**

Imam Al-Ghazali placed obedience at the core of spiritual education, which aims to shape a civilized personality (Jadidah, 2024). The relationship between teacher and student is not merely a cognitive process, but a spiritual journey that demands sincerity and surrender. The teacher's role is as "*murabba*" which leads students toward cleansing their hearts and recognizing God (Thobroni et al., 2025). Obedience to the teacher is a spiritual practice that subdues the ego and diminishes intellectual arrogance. Students who sincerely submit will receive the blessings of knowledge and inner clarity.

In the book *Minhāj al-Muta'allimīn* Al-Ghazali emphasized that obedience to teachers is obligatory for students, except in cases of deviation (al-Ghazālī, 2021). It is crucial for students to obey their teachers in order to receive blessed knowledge. Therefore, a student who refuses to obey their teacher is like someone who has shut themselves off from the source of spiritual life. Obedience is not a form of coercion, but rather a manifestation of sincerity that yields both physical and spiritual benefits.

In the book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* Al-Ghazali emphasized that although the guidance of the masyayikh sometimes seems inappropriate, it is still better and more beneficial than taking steps based on the personal views of the students (al-Ghazālī, 2016). This opinion shows the belief that teachers have a broader and deeper inner view because they have gone through a long process of soul purification and a student should believe that obedience to the teacher is a form of spiritual trust in wisdom born of experience and sincerity. The book *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim* supports Al-Ghazali's opinion that Sayyidina Ali bin Abi Tholib was of the opinion that "*I am a slave to the one who teaches me one letter; if he wishes, he can free me, hold me, or make me a slave forever.*" (al-Zarnūjī, 2021). This shows that obedience to a teacher has a significant impact on a student.

Al-Ghazali's viewpoint concludes that obedience is not a form of blind fanaticism, but rather a

spiritual practice that leads students to the highest moral awareness. Students are encouraged to be patient, think clearly, and understand the meaning behind each teacher's advice. A student should never be hasty in judging their teacher's guidance, as a teacher's guidance stems from profound spiritual experience.

### **The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Views for Modern Islamic Education**

Al-Ghazali's thoughts on obedience are highly relevant to contemporary Islamic education, which faces the challenges of modernity and digitalization. The information age has shifted the current paradigm of learning, shifting from easily accessible knowledge without teacher guidance (Jadidah, 2024). This situation often produces students who are intellectually intelligent but morally and spiritually weak. This phenomenon demonstrates a loss of etiquette toward teachers and a declining awareness of the importance of scholarly authority. This contradicts Al-Ghazali's view that etiquette and obedience are prerequisites for receiving knowledge and the means to attain blessings.

Obedience in al-Ghazali's perspective is not just formal obedience, but spiritual awareness to subdue the ego and accept guidance with respect. The teacher is not just a teacher, but a guide of the soul "*murobbi*" which guides students towards wisdom (Thobroni Et Al., 2025). Through obedience, students obtain the blessing of knowledge that leads to an understanding of the essence. Al-Ghazali emphasized that obedience is the path to the blessing of knowledge, happiness, and true success (Aulia Fitridah Et Al., 2023). In the context of modern education, obedience can be interpreted contextually as learning discipline, willingness to accept guidance, and respect for academic authority (Yugo, 2024). Education is no longer merely pursuing cognitive competence, but also shaping character and spiritual integrity (Maulana Et Al., 2025). This is crucial to addressing the moral and pragmatic cultural crisis plaguing the contemporary world of education.

Al-Ghazali emphasized the need for a balance between intellectual and spiritual aspects in education (Isbah, 2025). Both can only be effective if there is a harmonious relationship between teacher

and student. Modern technology cannot replace the spiritual role of a teacher as a role model. Therefore, revitalizing the value of obedience is a strategic step to return Islamic education to its true purpose: to produce individuals who are knowledgeable, moral, and happy both physically and spiritually.

### Conclusions

Loyalty and obedience to Masyayikh in the perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali is a spiritual foundation that determines the blessing and success of the educational process. Obedience is not merely formal compliance, but is a spiritual exercise to subdue the ego, purify the heart, and open the door to a deeper understanding of the nature of knowledge. Through the study of the books *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Minhāj al-Muta'allim*, and *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* that Al-Ghazali positions teachers as moral and spiritual guides who have the authority of knowledge and inner experience that cannot be equated with mere rational knowledge. This study shows that although the guidance of Masyayikh sometimes seems less aligned with the views of students, such guidance is still safer and more beneficial because it is based on the depth of spiritual experience. In the context of modern Islamic education, this concept of obedience is relevant as an effort to return the orientation of education to adab, respect for teachers, and a balance between intellectual intelligence and spiritual maturity. Revitalizing the value of obedience is believed to be a solution to the moral crisis, loss of manners, and weakening of scientific authority in the digital era.

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