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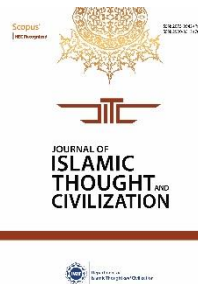
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# Al-Ghazali's Concept of Happiness in *The Alchemy of Happiness*

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## Abstract

Al-Ghazali's book entitled *The Alchemy of Happiness* describes happiness. It often becomes a reference of behavior of mysticism and psychology, especially Islamic psychology. However, there are no studies that specifically examine this book. This study analyzes al-Ghazali's concept of happiness in *The Alchemy of Happiness*. The research data sources consist of literature having *The Alchemy of Happiness* as their main references. The researcher uses the content analysis method to analyze the data. The research results show that (1) Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness refers to the Qur'an, Hadīths, Islamic philosophy, Sufism teachings, and al-Farabi's leadership concept. (2) Al-Ghazali's principle of happiness is twofold: that happiness must be pursued and tiered. Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness consists of four aspects: appetite, reason, heart, and love for Allah. (3) Furthermore, the method of achieving happiness has three stages, (1) recognizing the nature and character of the self, (2) placing the heart as the leader of the self, and (3) contemplation of God. Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness has several advantages, namely use many Quarnic references; does not eliminate the potential for lust; and does not teach fatalism. In fact, he motivates people to pursue their happiness.

**Keywords:** Al-Ghazali, *Alchemy of Happiness*, Concept of happiness, aspects of happiness, Methods of achieving happiness

## Introduction

There are three reasons why it is important to study happiness, especially al-Ghazali's concept of happiness in *The Alchemy of Happiness*. Firstly, to attain happiness is everyone's dream. The research of Kumar, West, and Byström stated that a happy life is the desire of every individual.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, happiness can give a person immunity so that he/she becomes strong to face heavy pressure. In similar manner, Johnson and Stapel stated that happiness could strengthen an individual's physical and psychological resilience.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, *The Alchemy of Happiness* is a book written by al-Ghazali (1058-1111) that specifically explains the problem of happiness from a certain perspective. According to Elton L Daniel, al-Ghazali's *The Alchemy of Happiness* describes a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup>Prashant Kumar, "Happiness," *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation*, no. 14757192 (February 12, 2020): 1513-18, <https://doi.org/10.37200/IJPR/V24I2/PR200454>; Keaton West, "The How of Happiness," *Journal of College Orientation, Transition, and Retention* 22, no. 1 (January 1, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.24926/jcotr.v22i1.2883>; Hans Byström, "Happiness and Gold Prices," *Finance Research Letters* 35 (July 2020): 101599, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2020.101599>.

<sup>2</sup>Camille S. Johnson, and Diederik A. Stapel, "Happiness as Alchemy: Positive Mood Leads to Self-Serving Responses to Social Comparisons," *Motivation and Emotion* 35, no. 2 (June 2011): 165-80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-011-9216-y>.

worldview from an Islamic perspective and specifically shows that religious beliefs guide human behavior to achieve salvation and happiness.<sup>3</sup>

Several studies have examined al-Ghazali's concept of happiness. Among other things, (i) Yahya examines the elements of happiness in al-Ghazali's perspective.<sup>4</sup> (ii) Mirsepasi and Lim focuses on the relationship between al-Ghazali's concept of happiness with secularism and nationalism.<sup>5</sup> (iii) Baig, Shah, and Yahya compares al-Ghazali's concept of happiness (1058-1111) with those of Jalaluddin al-Rumi (1207-1273), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and Maslow (1908-1970).<sup>6</sup> (iv) Khismatuln focuses on the influence of al-Ghazali's concept of happiness on the teachings of the Naqshbandi order.<sup>7</sup>

The aforementioned descriptions show that no research examines al-Ghazali's concept of happiness in *The Alchemy of Happiness*. This study aims to fill these gaps and to analyze al-Ghazali's concept of happiness. Specifically, this study discusses three things. (1) references used by al-Ghazali in formulating his concept of happiness. (2) Principles and aspects of happiness in al-Ghazali's perspective; and (3) how his concept dealt with the method of pursuing happiness.

*The Alchemy of Happiness* written by al-Ghazali is often cited in psychology and Islamic mysticism. A detailed study of this book can (1) make a valuable theoretical contribution to psychology, especially Islamic psychology; (2) show that psychological problems, especially related to happiness, have been studied by classical Muslim scholars, in this case, al-Ghazali. (3) in addition, it can be an alternative psychological approach to the current development of Western psychological studies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Definition, Factors, and Influence

Happiness is usually defined as a peaceful life or a pleasant psychological state and free from painful feelings. Elizabeth B. Hurlock (1898-1988) defines happiness as an accumulation of

<sup>3</sup>Elton L. Daniel, "Preface," in *The Alchemy of Happiness*, ed. Elton L. Daniel (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), xi-xli.

<sup>4</sup>Norhashimah Yahya et al., "Element of Happiness by Al Ghazali and Relation in Islamic Psychospiritual," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 11 (November 29, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v10-i11/8202>.

<sup>5</sup>Ali Mirsepasi, and Tadd Graham Fernée, "Deen (Faith) and Donya (the Secular): Al-Ghazālī's the 'Alchemy of Happiness,'" *English Studies at NBU* 5, no. 1 (June 2019): 9-39, <https://doi.org/10.33919/esnbu.19.1.1>; John Lim, "The Ghazālian Alchemy of an Islamic Nation," *Journal of Islamic Governance* 1, no. 1 (2015): 10-22, <https://doi.org/10.53105/jig.1-2>.

<sup>6</sup>Huma Baig, "A Comparison between the Ideas of Love Found in Al-Ghāzālī's *The Alchemy of Happiness* and the First Volume of Rumi's *Masavi-Yi Ma'navi*," in *Love and Poetry in the Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755640973.0012>; Rania Shah, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and Imam Al-Ghazali on the Attainment of Happiness," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 6, no. 2 (2015): 15-29, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v06i02/51138>; Norhashimah Yahya et al., "The Concept of Human Will According to Al-Ghazali and Abraham Maslow: A Comparative Study," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 10 (October 2018), <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v8-i10/4715>.

<sup>7</sup>Alexei A. Khismatuln, "'The Alchemy of Happiness': Al-Ghazālī's Kīmiyā and the Origins of the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyya Principles," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal* (BRILL, 2005), 227-71, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047407263\\_015](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047407263_015).

acceptance, affection, and achievement attitudes.<sup>8</sup> In line with that, Martin Seligman (b. 1942) describes happiness as a person's positive psychological condition towards life. There are six elements of happiness according to Seligman: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.<sup>9</sup>

Happiness is attributed to many factors, such as external and internal ones. Jeong and Chen's research shows that family, place of residence, environment, and warm friendship relationships are some of the external factors giving happiness.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the level of education, self-motivation, health, optimism, and age maturity are internal factors leading to happiness. Midgley and Nakanishi opined that these internal factors do support happiness.<sup>11</sup> However, Steiner confirms that internal factors arising from within are more powerful in giving happiness as compared to external factors.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Fan Yang and Robson confirms this opinion by stating that happiness is related to the heart.<sup>13</sup>

Happiness has a great impact on the individual. For instance, it gives immunity to one's body and psyche so that it becomes strong to face heavy pressures. Johnson and Tapel shows that happiness is an important aspect that strengthens individual resilience.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, it positively affects a person's health, i.e., happy people tend to be healthier than others. Steptoe supports the conclusion that happiness significantly affects an individual health.<sup>15</sup> In addition, it can increase work productivity. Vallina states in this regard that people who feel happy are more productive than those

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<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth B. Hurlock, *Characteristic of Senescence Developmental Psychology a Life-Span Approach* (McGraw-Hill, 1984).

<sup>9</sup>Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (Free Press, 2004).

<sup>10</sup>Hae Kyung Jo, Hyun Kyoung Kim, and Ji Na Jeong, "Factors Affecting Happiness Among Rural Residents: A Cross Sectional Survey," *Community Mental Health Journal* 56, no. 5 (July 2020): 915-24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-020-00555-1>; Shuyan Chen et al., "Assessing the Relative Importance of Factors Influencing Travel Happiness," *Travel Behaviour and Society* 16 (July 2019): 185-91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tbs.2019.01.002>.

<sup>11</sup>André P. Calitz, Margaret D. M. Cullen, and Cordene Midgley, "Exploring the Factors That Affect the Happiness of South African Veterinarians," *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jvme-2020-0033>; Maki Tei-tominaga and Miharu Nakanishi, "Factors of Feelings of Happiness at Work among Staff in Geriatric Care Facilities," *Geriatrics and Gerontology International* 21, no. 9 (September 2021): 818-24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.14247>.

<sup>12</sup>Katherine G. Denny and Hans Steiner, "External and Internal Factors Influencing Happiness in Elite Collegiate Athletes," *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 40, no. 1 (March 2009): 55-72, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-008-0111-z>.

<sup>13</sup>Fan Yang, Joshua Knobe, and Yarrow Dunham, "Happiness Is from the Soul: The Nature and Origins of Our Happiness Concept," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 150, no. 2 (February 2021): 276-88, <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000790>; David Robson, "The Pursuit of Happiness," *New Scientist* 253, no. 3370 (January 2022): 38-47, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079\(22\)00106-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079(22)00106-3).

<sup>14</sup>Johnson and Stapel, "Happiness as Alchemy: Positive Mood Leads to Self-Serving Responses to Social Comparisons."

<sup>15</sup>Andrew Steptoe, "Happiness and Health," *Annual Review of Public Health* 40, no. 1 (April 2019): 339-59, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-044150>.

who feel less happy.<sup>16</sup> All these assertions show that happiness is an important inner state of mind that significantly influences individual activities.

## 2.2. Muslim Perspective

Some classical Muslim scientists have formulated the meaning of happiness. Al-Kindi (801-873) states that the human soul is pure because it comes from God. When this soul enters the self, it can turn dirty or remain clear due to the influence of the person's behavior. Three potentials in the soul affect individual behavior, namely lusts, outrage, and rationale. To achieve happiness, man must use his rationale to keep his soul close to God. The key to happiness in al-Kindi's concept is to behave according to common sense, keep the heart clean, and be with Allah.<sup>17</sup>

Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030) examines happiness with the concepts of goodness and virtue. Goodness is an activity carried out according to the rules, while virtue is a moderate attitude between two bad behaviors. For example, generosity is a moderate attitude between being stingy and extravagant. Happiness is a manifestation of good behavior based on intelligence. In addition, happiness is also a manifestation of the purity of the heart so that it is lasting.<sup>18</sup> Oliver Leaman asserts that happiness in Ibn Miskawayh's concept manifests goodness, intelligence, clarity of heart, and is lasting.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, according to Ayob and Zaini, Ibn Miskawayh rejects happiness in animals because animals are not intelligent creatures.<sup>20</sup>

Ibn Sina (980-1037) relates the concept of happiness to three levels of enjoyment, namely pleasures of lust such as sex and eating; intellectual pleasures; and spiritual pleasures. He asserts that enjoyment of each level can lead to happiness. However, the quality of happiness differs according to the level of pleasure felt.<sup>21</sup> These three individual potentials can feel happiness, but the quality is different. Idris Zakaria confirms this description, namely that Ibn Sina's concept of happiness is hierarchical and it culminates in the love of Allah as the highest object of love.<sup>22</sup> Ibn Sina's concept of happiness is different from that of al-Farabi. Khademi states that the difference between Ibn Sina's and al-Farabi's concepts of happiness lies in the potential that feels happiness. Happiness in Ibn Sina

<sup>16</sup>Andrés Salas-Vallina, and Joaquín Alegre, "Happiness at Work: Developing a Shorter Measure," *Journal of Management and Organization* 27, no. 3 (May 2021): 460-80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2018.24>.

<sup>17</sup>Ibn Ishaq al Kindi, "Al-Qaul Fi Al-Nafs Al-Mukhtasar Min Kitab Aristu Wa Aflatun," in *Rasail Al-Kindi Al-Falsafiyah*, ed. Muhammad Abdul Hadi Abu Ridah (Mesir: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1950), 270-81.

<sup>18</sup>Abu Ali Ibn Miskawaih, *Tahdhīb Al-Akhḷāq* (Beirut: Dar al-Maktabah al-Hayat, 1977).

<sup>19</sup>Oliver Leaman, "Ibn Miskawayh, the Soul, and the Pursuit of Happiness: The Truly Happy Sage," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 2021): 124-25, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etaa041>.

<sup>20</sup>Mohd Annas Shafiq Ayob, Noor Syahida Md Soh, and Mohd Norazri Mohamad Zaini, "Perspektif Ibn Miskawayh Dan Al-Ghazali Mengenai Kebahagiaan (Perspective of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali on Happiness)," *UMRAN - International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021): 39–53, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2021.8n1.460>.

<sup>21</sup>Ali Ibn Sina, *Al-Isharat Wa Al-Tanbihat.*, ed. Sulaiman Dunya (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1963).

<sup>22</sup>Idris Zakaria, "Divinity, Prophethood and Happiness According to Ibn Sina," *Islamiyyat The International Journal of Islamic Studies* 32 (2010): 135-56, <https://ejournal.ukm.my/islamiyyat/article/view/1868>.

can be felt by all individual potentials, while happiness in al-Farabi only occurs in intellectual potential.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Methods

The focus of this research is al-Ghazali's concept of happiness. The primary data of this research is *The Alchemy of Happiness (Kimyā al-Sa'ādah)* by al-Ghazali. Supporting data is al-Ghazali's concept of happiness written in his other books, especially *The Revival of the Religious Science (Ihyā Ulūm al-Dīn)*. Researcher also uses other references related to the subject matter.

Data from primary and secondary sources were then analyzed using the content analysis method.<sup>24</sup> This analysis explains al-Ghazali's concept of happiness as written in *The Alchemy of Happiness*. The researcher also cross-checks the primary data with other secondary data to anticipate the possibility of misunderstanding the primary source.<sup>25</sup>

The research results are described and discussed using interpretative analysis method.<sup>26</sup> In this section, the researcher further criticizes al-Ghazali's concept of happiness by tracing his background, predicting the logical consequences, or comparing it with other theories using the comparative analysis method.<sup>27</sup> Based on this, the researcher draws important conclusions.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. References based on Qur'an, Hadīth, *Tasawwuf*, Islamic Philosophy and Al-Farabi's Leadership

Al-Ghazali based his thoughts on happiness on several references. First, referring to the Qur'an. Al-Ghazali refers to several verses of the Qur'an in his explanation of happiness. One of them is Surah Fussilat, 53, "We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this 'Qur'ān' is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a Witness over all things?" Al-Tabari (839-923) states that this verse is Allah's response to the disbelievers who reject His truth. Indeed, God's truth can be found everywhere, in heaven and earth, even within man himself.<sup>28</sup> Al-Ghazali uses this verse as a basis for understanding that within the individual, there are potentials that show the greatness of Allah. Research on these potentials becomes important and can introduce humans to God.

The second reference is the Hadīth of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Al-Ghazali refers to a statement considered a Hadīth of the Prophet, "Whoever knows himself will know his Lord" (Yahya

<sup>23</sup>Einollah Khademi, "A Study of the Views of Farabi and Ibn Sina on the Definition of Happiness and Its Relation to the Faculties of the Soul," *Religious Inquiries* 4, no. 7 (2015): 65–75, [https://ri.urid.ac.ir/article\\_33869.html](https://ri.urid.ac.ir/article_33869.html).

<sup>24</sup>Satu Elo et al., "Qualitative Content Analysis," *SAGE Open* 4, no. 1 (January 2014): 215824401452263, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>.

<sup>25</sup>Robert G. Turner, "Double Checking the Cross-Check Principle," *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology* 14, no. 05 (May 2003): 269-77, <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0040-1715737>.

<sup>26</sup>Audrey Alejandro, "Reflexive Discourse Analysis: A Methodology for the Practice of Reflexivity," *European Journal of International Relations* 27, no. 1 (March 2021): 150-74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066120969789>.

<sup>27</sup>Dean C. Adams, and Michael L. Collyer, "Phylogenetic Comparative Methods and the Evolution of Multivariate Phenotypes," *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics* 50, no. 1 (November 2019): 405-25, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-ecolsys-110218-024555>.

<sup>28</sup>Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Mustafa Bab al-Halabi, 1954).

ibn Muad).<sup>29</sup> Al-Nawawi (1233-1277) states that even though this Hadīth does not reach the degree of authenticity, a Hadīth with this qualification can be used. Al-Nawawi states that the weak Hadīth could be used as a basis for motivation to do good deeds.<sup>30</sup> Al-Ghazali uses this Hadīth to ensure that some qualities and potentials are important to know within the individual. This knowledge of nature and self-potential is the basis for knowing God and pursuing happiness.

The third refers to *Tasawwuf* teaching about self-potential. It teaches that every individual has four psychological potentials: spirit, heart, ratio, and appetite. Each potential has its own character and tendencies. Appetence always invites evil; reason invites knowledge; and heart invites glory. These three potentials are encapsulated in the spirit. A spirit is a place that accommodates these three potentials, even those who are responsible for actions in the afterlife.<sup>31</sup> The researcher analogizes these four potential relations in the form of court work. Appetence is like a public prosecutor; the reason is a lawyer; the heart is a judge who makes decisions. If the judge is objective and obtains a logical judgment from reason, his decision will be correct. On the other hand, if the judge's soul is dirty and controlled by the prosecutor, the decision can be wrong. However, whatever the judge's decision is, the court's decision, the judicial body is the spirit.

Fourth, referring to the teaching of Islamic philosophy about reality. Ibn Sina (980-1037), one of the eminent Muslim philosophers, stated that the existence of reality could be classified into two forms: necessary and possible. Allah is a necessary being, while all other than Allah is a possible existence.<sup>32</sup> Suhrawardi (1154-1191), the creator of the illuminative philosophy, later stated that reality might have to approach God as a necessary reality to be valuable and meaningful.<sup>33</sup> Through these teachings, al-Ghazali stated that humans must direct themselves to Allah in order to pursue happiness because Allah is the absolute reality and the true source of happiness.

Fifth, referring to the concept of al-Farabi's leadership (870-950). Al-Farabi, in his book *Perfect State*, described several leadership models at that time, namely democracy, tyranny, plutocracy, and timocracy. Al-Farabi criticized the four leadership models and stated that these systems could not bring people happiness. Al-Farabi then proposed a new leadership model called the ultimate leader. The main leader of al-Farabi is a leader who has certain qualifications, both in nature and enrichment, so that he can lead his people to happiness and prosperity.<sup>34</sup> Al-Ghazali used al-Farabi's concept to explain the leader's qualifications and his duty to direct people to Allah and happiness. In the context of al-Ghazali, the mentioned leader is the heart which acts as self-control to achieve happiness.

<sup>29</sup>Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, "Kimyā Al-Sa`ādah," in *Majmū`ah Al-Rasā'il* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996), 418-28.

<sup>30</sup>Muhyi al-Din Abu Zakaria al Nawawi, *Kitāb Fatāwā Al-Nawāwī*, ed. Muhammad al- Hajjar (Beirut: Dar al-Bashair, 1996). 248.

<sup>31</sup>Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, *Ihyā Ulūm Al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995).

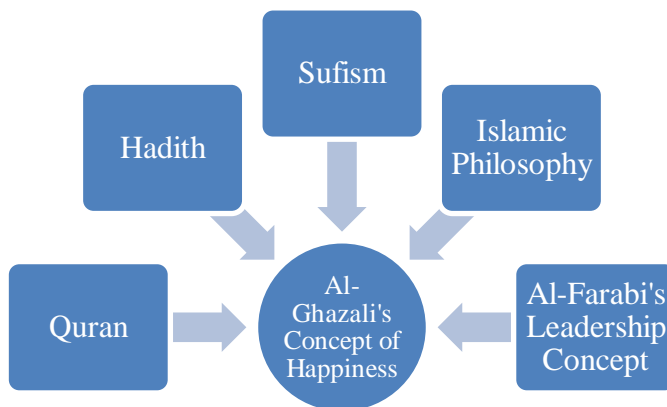
<sup>32</sup>Ali Ibn Sina, *Remarks and Admonitions*, ed. Shams C Inati (Colombia: Colombia University Press, 2014), <https://libolutions.net/book/2361461/f00fbb?signAll=1&ts=1329>.

<sup>33</sup>Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination a Study of Suhrawardī's Hikmat Al-Ishrāq* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), [https://openlibrary.org/works/OL4446549W/Knowledge\\_and\\_illumination](https://openlibrary.org/works/OL4446549W/Knowledge_and_illumination).

<sup>34</sup>Abu Nasr al- Farabi, *Mabādi' Arā' Ahl Al-Madīna Al-Fādīlī*, ed. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Abu Nasr al- Farabi, "Tahsīl Al-Sa`ādah" (The Attainment of Happiness)," in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (USA: The Free Press of Glence, 1962), 13-52; Achmad Khudori Soleh, "Pemimpin Utama Menurut Al-Farabi," [The Main Leader According to Al-Farabi], in *Bunga Rampai Manajemen Strategik Sebuah Kajian Dalam Pendidikan Islam*, ed. Slamet (Malang: Literasi Nusantara, 2021), 140-49.



The description above shows that al-Ghazali's reference source is complete, which includes not only the verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad but also other sources. Al-Ghazali also mentioned Sufism, Philosophy, and Management of Science to support his concept of happiness. The comprehensiveness of this reference seems to make the concept strong and used by later generations. The book entitled Chemistry of Happiness is still being read by many academics in Indonesia and Islamic boarding schools. It has also become a reference in Islamic psychology.



**Figure 1.** References of Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness

#### 4.2. Principles and Aspects of Happiness

Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness consists of two principles. First, happiness does not simply come, but efforts should be made. Al-Ghazali emphasized that one must perform certain activities to achieve happiness, namely spiritual effort (*mujāhadah*) and seek spiritual mentor or guide (*Murshid*). Al-Qushairi (986-1072) defines *mujāhadah* as a physical and spiritual effort to subdue the will of appetite (*nafs*) so that *nafs* can be led to good deeds and get closer to Allah. The spiritual teachers help guiding Muslim *sufi* in the spiritual journey toward Allah.<sup>35</sup> Al-Ghazali asserted that, without spiritual effort and spiritual teachers, an individual would not reach Allah and achieve happiness.

Second, happiness is tiered. Al-Ghazali stated that happiness is related to contentment and pleasure. Pleasure is related to the nature of each potential. The pleasure of the eye is seeing attractive objects, the pleasure of the ear is hearing a melodious voice, the pleasure of desire is fulfilling sexual desires and food, the pleasure of the mind is thinking, and the pleasure of the heart is witnessing the greatness of Allah. Al-Ghazali explicated that physical and material pleasures would be ended with death. Therefore, material happiness and physical happiness are in a low position. The pleasure of thinking is also ended by death, but it can still give benefit after death. The quality of the pleasure of thinking is higher than material happiness. The greatest happiness is witnessing the greatness of Allah with the heart because this happiness continues even after death.<sup>36</sup>

There are at least four aspects of al-Ghazali's happiness. The first is the aspect of appetite. Al-Ghazali asserted that happiness does not come by without involving appetite. Therefore, appetite should not be removed from humans' soul. However, the involvement of appetite must be in a

<sup>35</sup>Abd Karim Qushairi, *Al-Risālah Al-Qushairiyah Fi Ilm Al-Tasawwuf*, ed. Ma`ruf Zariq (Beirut: Dar al-Khair, 1995).

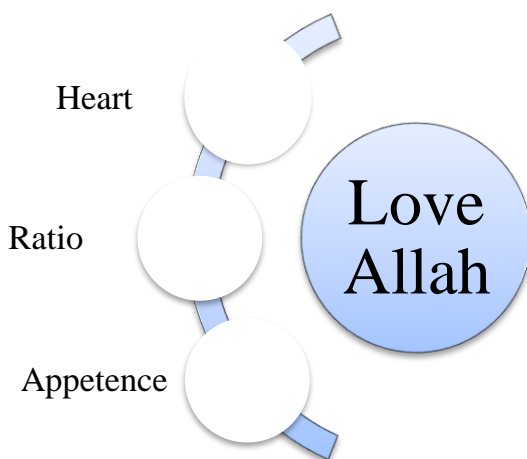
<sup>36</sup>Ghazali, "Kimyā Al-Sa`ādah."



proportional measure; it should not be excessive because the aspect of appetite always leads to disobedience. If appetite dominates the soul, it destroys happiness. The second is the aspect of reason. Al-Ghazali explained that reason is a great gift given by God to humans. Humans are allowed to become caliphs to prosper the earth. Through reasoning, humans attain knowledge, goodness, and glory. Furthermore, with their knowledge and glory, humans attain happiness. Happiness in this world and the hereafter will not be achieved except by maximizing the role of reasoning.<sup>37</sup>

The third is the heart. Al-Ghazali stated that heart is a part of the nature of commandments that Allah has embedded into humans. The heart is the only potential of the soul that can witness the magnificence of Allah as a source of happiness. Hence, eternal happiness in this world and the hereafter cannot be achieved without the clarity of heart. The happiness associated with the heart is stronger and will not disappear because of death.<sup>38</sup> The fourth is love towards Allah. Al-Ghazali emphasized that loving Allah is the main aspect of happiness. It is related to the human relationship with God. Furthermore, he mentions four reasons why loving Allah is the main aspect of happiness:

- all individuals love perfection; no one is perfect, but Allah;
- every individual wants support, and no one can give strong support except Allah;
- the result of reflection on policy and goodness. Goodness and human wisdom are reflections of the majesty of God
- there is a resemblance between man and God.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 2.** Aspects of happiness

#### 4.3. Methods to Achieve Happiness

There are three stages of methods for achieving Happiness in al-Ghazali's concept. The first stage is to recognize the nature and potential of oneself. Al-Ghazali explained that every individual has four characteristics, namely the nature of cattle, the nature of wild animals, the nature of Satan, and the nature of angels. The habits of cattle are eating, drinking, and sex. Rude and hostile behavior

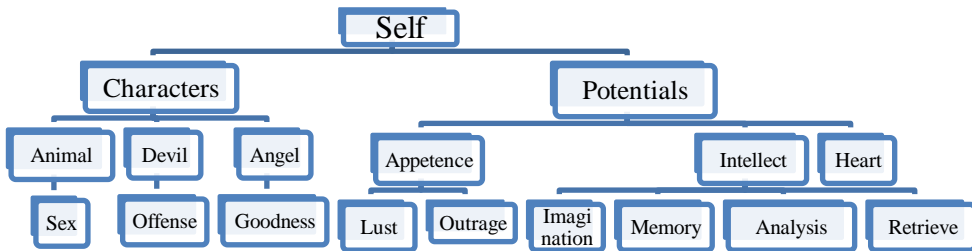
<sup>37</sup>Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, *Mizān Al-Amal* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1964).

<sup>38</sup>Ghazali, "Kimyā Al-Sa'ādah."

<sup>39</sup>Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, ed. Elton L. Daniel (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

are the behaviors of a beast, and Satan's behaviors are inflaming evil, deceit, and lies. While, the angels always spread kindness, develop scientific knowledge and express God's majestic attributes. Al-Ghazali stated that the nature of angels is human identity; it is not the nature of animals and even Satan. The nature of animals and devils existing in individuals should not be put into actions; it is a means of developing the nature of angels within themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Each individual also has psychological potentials used for activities, namely the heart, ratio, and appetite. The heart is a spiritual potential that can be related to God and serve as an intuitive knowledge. Whereas, ratio is a psychological potential that functions as a rational knowledge and gives a logical consideration through the heart before one makes a decision. Appetence is a psychological potential that encourages one to do certain activities. These three potentials are found in every human being and influence his/her activities.<sup>41</sup> Al-Ghazali emphasized that, to achieve happiness, one must know his/her nature and character. If one does not know one's nature and character, how can one achieve happiness?



**Figure 3.** Characters and potentials in oneself

The second stage to achieve happiness is to put the heart as a leader. Al-Ghazali describes human being as a government structure consisting of the lowest servants, middle-class officials to top leaders. The potential for appetite, which consists of lust and anger, is placed at the lowest position. Al-Ghazali equates lust as a tax officer and anger as a policeman. Both are needed for the country's survival, but these potentials tend to be corrupt and violent. Therefore, lust should not be a ruler because it will destroy the country. Ratio is placed in the second position, right above lust. Al-Ghazali describes ratio as a minister in the government system. The ratio is in charge of monitoring the behavior of appetite and giving the heart logical consideration. Ratio is not the ruler; the supreme leader is the heart.<sup>42</sup>

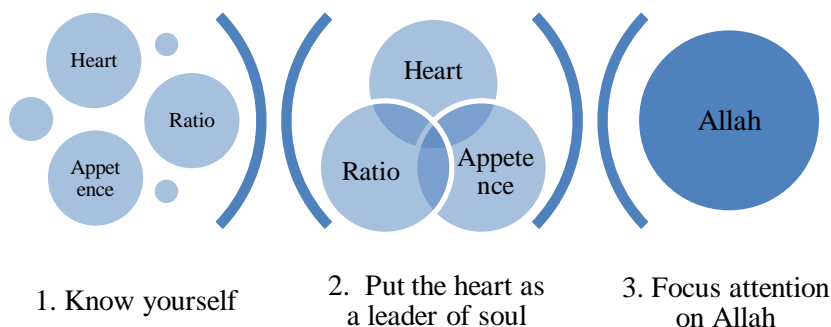
Al-Ghazali asserted that those who want to be happy must put parts of their body as a servant, lust as a vehicle, the mind as a supervisor, and the heart as a leader. The heart itself must do a self-cleaning in order to carry out its duties properly. (1) The heart must get rid of the influence of worldly passions and desires. (2) The heart must strive to be with and close to God. In the tradition of Sufism, this self-cleaning process is called stations (spiritual stations). If the heart does not do self-cleaning, then it is affected by appetite and in turn will not be able to lead to happiness.

<sup>40</sup>Ghazali, "Kimyā Al-Sa'ādah."

<sup>41</sup>Ghazali, *Ihyā Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

<sup>42</sup>Ghazali, "Kimyā Al-Sa'ādah."

The third stage to achieve happiness is to focus one's attention on Allah. Al-Ghazali stated that Allah is the source and essence of reality. The universe's existence comes from God, and the beauty of reality manifests God's beauty. The heart, as the substance of the soul, was created to witness God's beauty. Therefore, there is no other way to achieve happiness except to focus oneself on Allah as the source of happiness. This stage is related to the fourth aspect of al-Ghazali's concept of happiness, namely loving Allah.<sup>43</sup>



**Figure 4.** Stages of achieving happiness

## 5. Discussion

The first one is about the sources used by al-Ghazali as a reference. The results showed that al-Ghazali used five references, namely the Qur'an, Hadith, *Tasawwuf*, Islamic philosophical thought, and the concept of leadership from al-Farabi (870-950). Al-Ghazali's reference is different from previous thinkers, such as al-Kindi (801-873), Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030), and Ibn Sina (980-1037). Soleh's research states that the thoughts of al-Kindi and Ibn Sina tend to refer to Greek philosophical thought, especially Aristotle (384-322), in addition to the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>44</sup> Al-Ghazali's reference source is close to that of Ibn Miskawayh, who used *Tasawwuf*, Philosophy, Qur'an and Hadith. This statement is in line with the results of Ayob's research above. However, al-Ghazali still refers to the concept of leadership of al-Farabi. This description shows that al-Ghazali's reference sources are more comprehensive than previous thinkers.

The second is about the principles of happiness of al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness consists of two principles; happiness must be cultivated, and it is hierarchical. This principle that must be sought is the same as the concept of stations in Sufi. There are terms like stations and conditions in *Tasawwuf* teachings. Stations are the stages in which *Tasawwuf* must go through to get closer to Allah, while conditions are spiritual conditions experienced by a Sufi. There are at least seven stages that a Sufi must go through, namely repentance, devotion, ascetic, poverty, patience, reliance, and contentment. These stations must be nurtured by a Sufi, while conditions (*ahwāl*) are a

<sup>43</sup>Ghazali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*.

<sup>44</sup>Achmad Khudori Soleh, *Filsafat Islam Dari Klasik Hingga Kontemporer (Islamic Philosophy from Classical to Contemporary)* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2016).

gift of Allah. This principle ensures that individuals must work hard if they want to be happy, not only wait for happiness to come.

Meanwhile, the principle stating that happiness is hierarchical requires that happiness is not singular. It means that all potentials within oneself can feel happiness, but the quality of each happiness is different. The highest happiness is witnessing the greatness of Allah as the source of true happiness. This thought is the same as Ibn Sina's (980-1037) concept of happiness above. Ibn Sina states that all potentials within oneself can feel happiness, but the highest level of happiness is loving Allah as the highest object of love.<sup>45</sup>

- I. The third one is about the aspects of happiness from al-Ghazali. Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness consists of four aspects: appetite, ratio, heart, and love for Allah. These aspects necessitate two things: the potential for appetite that tends to be evil must not be removed from the individual. Al-Ghazali emphasized that appetite must be guarded, educated, and given a proportional role within the soul because happiness will not be realized without the role of appetite.
- II. The potential for appetite, ratio, and heart alone are not enough to achieve happiness. These potentials must be directed to Allah as the source of happiness. Daniel affirmed that the potentials within human beings' souls should not be left in order to merely seek pleasure and happiness on their own, but they must be guided by religious teachings to achieve true salvation and happiness.

The fourth one is about al-Ghazali's method of achieving happiness. This study shows that the method of achieving happiness in al-Ghazali's concept consists of three stages: recognizing oneself, placing one's heart as a leader, and focusing attention on Allah. Al-Ghazali places self-knowledge as the first stage of achieving happiness for three reasons. (1) based on the teachings of the Qur'an that, within humans, there are signs of the greatness of Allah.<sup>46</sup> (2) based on the statement that whoever knows oneself will know one's God. (3) Based on the belief that the person who understands himself/herself the most is ourselves. Based on these three reasons, al-Ghazali stated that knowing oneself is important. A person may be unable to understand other people and even knows Allah, before recognizing his/her essence of identity.

In addition, Al-Ghazali's teaching about self-knowledge requires three things:

- Knowing oneself is meant to be more psychic and spiritual, not only knowing the body's physical anatomy,
- religious experience in *Tasawwuf* becomes crucial. *Tasawwuf* is a part of Islamic teachings that emphasizes religious experience and spirituality. The study of *Tasawwuf* is still an exclusive study of certain circles of people; it has not been a general study of the community yet.
- Academically, the discipline of psychology examining the potentials of the soul becomes important. Islamic universities in the world must have and develop the science of Psychology. Currently, Psychology is still considered a non-religious science and is not considered an important science in Islam.

The second method for achieving happiness, placing the heart as a leader, aligns with al-Farabi's leadership concept (870-950). Al-Ghazali seems to have adopted al-Farabi's concept even though al-Ghazali strongly criticized al-Farabi's thinking of metaphysics. Al-Farabi stated that a leader must have qualified characters and innate traits that can ensure that one can become a good leader. These traits and characteristics are needed so a leader can transform his people to be good people and

<sup>45</sup>Khademi, "A Study of the Views of Farabi and Ibn Sina on the Definition of Happiness and Its Relation to the Faculties of the Soul."

<sup>46</sup>Fussilat 41:53.

achieve happiness. Al-Ghazali ensures that the leadership of the heart can lead to happiness. In the current context, the ability to carry out this transformation is known as transformational leadership.<sup>47</sup>

The third method, focusing attention on Allah, requires three things. (1) All activities are not carried out for personal gain, nor for others, but for a specific purpose, namely Allah as the ultimate goal. Abd Wahab al-Sha'rani (1492-1565) affirmed that individuals must direct all intentions to Allah to obtain best results in this world and the hereafter.<sup>48</sup> (2) The intention made towards Allah must be pure, not interfering with other interests. *Tasawwuf* teaching refers to this pure intention with the term sincerity (*ikhhlās*). Al-Ghazali explains that one of the principles to get closer to Allah is to purify the intention made towards Allah, not to mix with other interests.<sup>49</sup> (3) Philosophically, this method ensures that nothing is value-free. Each activity has a goal to be achieved based on certain motivations and contains believed moral values.

### 5.1 Conclusions

Based on the abovementioned description, several things have been asserted. First, al-Ghazali's concept of happiness is created based on various references including the teachings of the Qur'ān, Hadīth, *Tasawwuf*, Islamic philosophy, and the concept of leadership from al-Farabi. Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness is created based on two principles and four aspects. The two principles are (1) happiness must be nurtured and (2) happiness is hierarchical. Its aspects are appetite, ratio, heart, and love for Allah. Moreover, the method of achieving happiness consists of three stages, namely (1) self-recognition, (2) placing the heart as a leader, and (3) directing one's attention to God.

Al-Ghazali's concept of happiness raises certain consequences, which are the findings of this study. (1) that happiness is not a gift that can be easily attained or received rather it must be sought in certain ways. One has to work hard if he/she wants to achieve happiness. (2) acknowledges the existence of physical and other material happiness but shows the existence of the highest level of and lasting happiness, which is witnessing the greatness of Allah. (3) that appetite, which is considered destructive, is not eliminated from the aspect of happiness. Appetence becomes an important aspect of happiness, but it must be managed proportionally.

Secondly, this research provides few important contributions. It provides complete data on al-Ghazali's concept of happiness, namely sources of reference, principles, aspects, and methods of achieving it. Al-Ghazali's concept of the nature and potential of oneself can be a reference for Psychology or other alternatives to the concept of conventional Western Psychology. His concept of the heart as a leader of the soul is to strengthen or even precede the concept of transformational leadership in contemporary management.

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<sup>47</sup>Fong-Yi Lai et al., "Transformational Leadership and Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement," *SAGE Open* 10, no. 1 (January, 2020): 215824401989908, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019899085>.

<sup>48</sup>Abdul Wahab al Sya'rani and Achmad Khudori Soleh, *Menjadi Kekasih Tuhan*, ed. Achmad Khudori Soleh (translit) (Yogyakarta: Mitra Pustaka, 1997).

<sup>49</sup>Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, "10 Prinsip Laku Sufi (Al-Qawā'id Al-Ashr)," in *Skeptisme Al-Ghazali*, ed. Achmad Khudori Soleh (transl) (Malang: UIN Malang Press, 2009), 143-49.

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