



Children Education in Qur'anic Perspective: Al-Ghazali's Pedagogical Thought and M. Quraish Shihab's Tafsir Al-Misbah

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Purpose

This study compares the child education pedagogy of Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, as articulated in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and Ayyuhal Walad, with M. Quraish Shihab's Qur'anic exegesis of child education verses in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, while clarifying the distinct exegetical status of each scholar's engagement with the Qur'anic text.

Method

Using a qualitative library research design, primary sources were analysed through thematic coding organised around the five pedagogical domains of QS. Luqman (31:13–19), then compared using content-analysis principles adapted for textual, hermeneutic data.

Results/findings

Al-Ghazali develops five methods—habituation, exemplary conduct, narrative and counsel, proportional discipline, and environmental supervision—organised across three developmental phases (0–2, 2–7, and 7–15 years), oriented toward tazkiyat al-nafs as a foundation for individual piety and social responsibility. Shihab develops five complementary methods—dialogue, affection, contextualisation of values, cultivation of fitrah, and integration of knowledge and faith—oriented toward forming a socially engaged khalifah. Both converge on tawhid as the foundational goal, parental exemplariness, and rejection of excessive punishment.

Conclusion

The study proposes a three-phase integrative model combining Al-Ghazali's habituated depth with Shihab's dialogical responsiveness, offering a conceptually grounded framework for Islamic education in Indonesian madrasah, pesantren, and family contexts.

Keywords

Child Education, Qur'anic exegesis, Al-Ghazali, M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*

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Abstrak

Tujuan

Penelitian ini membandingkan pemikiran pendidikan anak Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, sebagaimana termuat dalam Ihya' Ulumuddin dan Ayyuhal Walad, dengan penafsiran M. Quraish Shihab atas ayat-ayat pendidikan anak dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah, sekaligus memperjelas status penafsiran masing-masing tokoh atas teks Qur'ani.

Metode

Menggunakan desain penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif, sumber primer dianalisis melalui koding tematik yang disusun berdasarkan lima domain pedagogis QS. Luqman (31:13–19), kemudian dibandingkan menggunakan prinsip analisis isi yang diadaptasi untuk data tekstual-hermeneutis.

Hasil/temuan

Al-Ghazali mengembangkan lima metode—pembiasaan, keteladanan, kisah dan nasihat, hukuman proporsional, dan pengawasan lingkungan—yang disusun dalam tiga fase perkembangan (0–2, 2–7, dan 7–15 tahun), berorientasi pada tazkiyat al-nafs sebagai fondasi kesalehan individual dan tanggung jawab sosial. Shihab mengembangkan lima metode yang saling melengkapi—dialog, kasih sayang, kontekstualisasi nilai, penguatan fitrah, dan integrasi ilmu-iman—berorientasi pada pembentukan khalifah yang aktif secara sosial. Keduanya bertemu pada tauhid sebagai tujuan fondasional, keteladanan orang tua, dan penolakan hukuman berlebihan.

Kesimpulan

Penelitian ini mengusulkan model integratif tiga-fase yang memadukan kedalaman pembiasaan Al-Ghazali dengan responsivitas dialogis Shihab, menawarkan kerangka konseptual bagi pendidikan Islam di madrasah, pesantren, dan keluarga Muslim Indonesia.

Kata kunci

Pendidikan Anak, Tafsir Qur'ani, Al-Ghazali, M. Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Misbah.

المخلص

الهدف

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى المقارنة بين المنهج التربوي للطفل عند أبي حامد الغزالي -كما ورد في كتابي "إحياء علوم الدين" و"أيها الولد"- وبين رؤية محمد قريش شهاب المستمدة من التفسير القرآني لآيات تربية الطفل في كتابه "تفسير المصباح"، مع توضيح الطابع التفسيري المتميز لكل من العالمين في تعاملهما مع النص القرآني.

المنهجية

اعتمدت الدراسة منهج البحث النوعي المكتبي، حيث حُللت المصادر الأولية باستخدام الترميز الموضوعي المنظم وفقاً للمجالات التربوية الخمسة الواردة في سورة لقمان (الآيات 13-19)، ثم أجريت المقارنة باستخدام مبادئ تحليل المحتوى المُكيفة لتناسب البيانات النصية والتأويلية.

النتائج

طوّر الغزالي خمسة أساليب تربوية -وهي: التعويد، والقُدوة الحسنة، والقصص والموعظة، والتأديب المتناسب، والرقابة البيئية- موزعة على ثلاث مراحل نمائية (من الولادة إلى سنتين، ومن 2 إلى 7 سنوات، ومن 7 إلى 15 سنة)، وتتمحور جميعها حول "تزكية النفس" كأساس للتقوى الفردية والمسؤولية الاجتماعية. وفي المقابل، طوّر شهاب خمسة أساليب مكملة -وهي: الحوار، والمودة، وربط القيم بالسياق، وتنمية الفطرة، والجمع بين المعرفة والإيمان- تهدف إلى تكوين "خليفة" فاعل اجتماعياً. ويلتقي العالمان عند اعتبار "التوحيد" الغاية الجوهرية، وأهمية القدوة الوالدية، ورفض العقاب المفرط.

الخلاصة

تقترح الدراسة نموذجاً تكاملياً ثلاثي المراحل يجمع بين عمق الغزالي في أسلوب "التعويد" ومرونة شهاب القائمة على "الحوار"، مما يوفر إطاراً نظرياً رصيناً للتربية الإسلامية في سياقات المدارس النظامية (المدارس)، والمعاهد الدينية التقليدية (البيسانترين)، والأسرة في إندونيسيا.

الكلمات الرئيسية

تربية الطفل؛ التفسير القرآني؛ الغزالي؛ محمد قريش شهاب؛ تفسير المصباح

INTRODUCTION

Child education occupies a foundational position within Islamic civilisation, representing one of the oldest and most intensely debated questions in Islamic intellectual history. In the contemporary era, defined by digital disruption, accelerating globalisation, and rapid socio-cultural transformation, the stakes of this question have become considerably higher. The proliferation of screen-based media, the erosion of parental authority in the face of algorithmic content, the fragmentation of religious identity among Muslim youth, and the tension between global popular culture and local Islamic moral tradition have rendered the challenge of educating Muslim children both urgent and multi-dimensional (Nuh et al., 2022; Hasanah, 2023). These pressures demand more than reactive responses; they require a coherent, theoretically grounded, and practically applicable Islamic educational framework that can simultaneously draw on the depth of classical tradition and respond with contextual intelligence to contemporary realities. These challenges are especially pronounced in Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, where madrasah, pesantren, and family-based religious education must simultaneously preserve classical pedagogical heritage and respond to a uniquely plural, rapidly digitalising society (Nuh et al., 2022; Hasanah, 2023). It is within this specific context that the present study situates its comparative inquiry into classical and contemporary approaches to Qur'anically grounded child education.

The Qur'an positions child education as a divine trust (*amanah*) incumbent upon parents and the broader Muslim community without exception. Surah Al-Tahrim (66:6) commands believers to protect themselves and their families from hellfire—a charge that classical scholars read as an ontological obligation to liberate the child's soul from the domination of base desires, while contemporary scholars interpret as a call to form individuals capable of functioning as Allah's vicegerents (*khulafa'*) in the world. Surah Luqman (31:13–19) provides the most elaborated Qur'anic model of child education, presenting a multi-generational pedagogical dialogue that integrates dimensions of tawhid, ethics, worship, and social responsibility. These verses have served as the shared textual foundation for Islamic educational thought across fourteen centuries—a fact that itself testifies to their inexhaustible hermeneutical richness.

The Islamic intellectual tradition has generated an extraordinarily rich legacy of pedagogical thought. Scholars of the calibre of Ibn Sina, Ibn Khaldun, al-Jawziyyah, and Al-Ghazali each formulated systematic child education frameworks grounded in deep engagement with Qur'anic hermeneutics and prophetic practice. Among these, Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE) stands as the most pedagogically systematic and spiritually comprehensive figure—a philosopher, theologian, jurist, mystic, and educator whose synthesis of Sufi-spiritual, psychological, and jurisprudential insights in the *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and *Ayyuhal Walad* constitutes the most sustained treatment of child education in the classical Islamic canon. His influence on subsequent Islamic educational thought, from medieval madrasah curricula to contemporary pesantren pedagogy, is difficult to overstate (Nurhayati & Sabariah, 2024).

From the contemporary horizon, Shihab (1994) emerges as Indonesia's most influential and widely-read Qur'anic exegete. His fifteen-volume *Tafsir Al-Misbah*—the first complete Indonesian-language tafsir authored by a single scholar—employs a thematic-contextual (*maudu'i*) approach that integrates classical tafsir scholarship with insights from modern developmental psychology, communication science, and social theory. His exegesis of child education verses, particularly in Surah Luqman and Al-Isra', offers readings that honour the classical tradition while responding to the psychological and social realities of Muslim families in twenty-first century Indonesia. His work has generated a substantial scholarly literature examining its educational implications (Gusmian, 2003; Mustaqim, 2019; Fatimah & Maarif, 2021; Mawangir, 2018).

A critical survey of the existing literature reveals a persistent and significant gap. Studies of Al-Ghazali's educational thought tend to focus on spiritual-ethical dimensions with-

out systematically reconstructing the pedagogical framework implicit in his homiletic use of Qur'anic verses, nor its contemporary applicability (Nurhayati & Sabariah, 2024). Studies of Quraish Shihab's educational thought address general values and contemporary implications without systematically engaging the classical tradition comparatively (Mawangir, 2018; Fatimah & Maarif, 2021; Pratama, 2023). Few of these studies, moreover, examine whether and how a formal exegete's methodology such as Shihab's converges or diverges with the insights of modern developmental and educational psychology, despite Shihab's own explicit engagement with such literature in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* (Anwar & Riyadi, 2020; Pratama, 2023). No existing study has systematically compared Al-Ghazali's pedagogical thought with Shihab's formal Qur'anic exegesis while carefully distinguishing the two scholars' different modes of engaging the Qur'anic text—homiletic-theological in the former case, exegetical-contextual in the latter—nor proposed a developmentally staged, integrative synthesis model grounded in the convergences and complementarities between them.

This study addresses three research questions: (1) What methods of child education does Al-Ghazali develop through his engagement with Qur'anic verses in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* and *Ayyuhal Walad*, and how are they systematically organised across the developmental span from infancy to adolescence (here understood, following both scholars' own periodisation, as the years from birth to approximately fifteen)? (2) What methods does Quraish Shihab derive from his formal exegesis of child education verses in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, and in what specific respects do these methods align with or depart from insights of modern developmental and educational psychology that Shihab himself invokes? (3) What are the fundamental convergences and divergences between the two figures, and how can a theoretically grounded synthesis of their methodologies inform contemporary Islamic educational practice? The study aims to produce a conceptually rigorous and practically applicable integrative model of Islamic child education that is simultaneously rooted in Qur'anic authority and responsive to the twenty-first century Muslim context in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research (*kajian kepustakaan*) design, appropriate for systematic conceptual analysis of primary textual sources within the Islamic scholarly tradition (Zed, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Library research of this kind is not mere literature review; it constitutes a rigorous form of conceptual inquiry that systematically applies analytical frameworks to canonical texts in order to generate new theoretical contributions.

Primary sources for Al-Ghazali include *Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Vol. III, *Kitab Riyad al-Sibyan wa Tarbiyatihim*) and *Ayyuhal Walad*, both of which deal directly and extensively with the upbringing and instruction of children, rather than the ascetic-devotional literature Al-Ghazali addressed to adult spiritual seekers. These texts were selected as the most direct and authoritative expressions of Al-Ghazali's child education methodology. Primary sources for Quraish Shihab include *Tafsir Al-Misbah* (15 vols., with particular focus on Volumes 7, 8, and 11 for Luqman- and Isra'-related exegesis), *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, and *Secercah Cahaya Ilahi*. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Sinta 1–2 and Scopus published primarily between 2019 and 2024, supplemented without temporal restriction by foundational biographical and critical monographs on both figures (Watt, 1963; Smith, 1944; Al-Attas, 1999), since these older works remain the essential scholarly reference points for locating Al-Ghazali and Shihab within their respective intellectual traditions. Systematic database searches were conducted in the Sinta, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases using the following search terms: *Islamic child education*, *tafsir tarbawi*, *Al-Ghazali pedagogy*, *Shihab educational thought*, *Luqman education*, and *Islamic educational methods Indonesia*. Of thirty-seven sources identified, thirty-two met the inclusion criteria of direct relevance, meth-

odological quality, and relevance within the specified temporal range or foundational status.

Although Miles and Huberman's (2014) interactive model was originally developed for field-based qualitative data such as interviews and observations, its three generic analytic operations—data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification—have been widely adapted in Islamic studies for the systematic coding of textual and hermeneutic corpora, and are employed here in that adapted, document-based sense rather than as a claim to empirical fieldwork methodology. First, data condensation: relevant passages were identified and coded from primary texts using a framework of pedagogical propositions—defined as any explicit or implicit claim about methods, conditions, goals, or agents of child education. Second, data display: coded data were organised into thematic matrices aligned with the five pedagogical domains identified in QS. Luqman: 13–19; passages whose pedagogical content fell outside these five domains—such as Al-Ghazali's treatment of play, physical training, and habituation in the *Ihya'*—were coded separately and are discussed in the findings alongside the Luqman-based matrix rather than being excluded by it. Third, conclusion drawing and verification: patterns of convergence and divergence were identified, interpreted, and verified against the full set of primary and secondary sources.

The comparative framework draws on Langgulung's (1986) three-principle evaluative criteria for Islamic educational methods: conformity with *fitrah*, developmental gradualism (*tadarruj*), and integration of spiritual-intellectual-physical dimensions. These criteria provided the evaluative lens through which both scholars' methodologies were assessed for their internal coherence and their mutual complementarity. Methodological rigour was ensured through source triangulation (comparing multiple primary and secondary texts for each analytical claim), conceptual saturation (analysis continued until no new pedagogical categories emerged from the data), and reflexive transparency (all significant interpretive decisions are made explicit in the findings section).

RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Foundations

The concept of *tarbiyah* in the Qur'an constitutes the epistemological foundation for this study and for both scholars examined within it. Etymologically derived from *rabbayrubbu* (to nurture, cultivate, and guide toward the perfection latent in a being's nature), *tarbiyah* in QS. Al-Isra' (17:24) encompasses physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously and continuously (Ramayulis, 2008). The term is distinguished from *ta'lim*—the transmission of knowledge—and *ta'dib*—the formation of ethical character and social propriety—with Al-Attas (1999) arguing persuasively that *ta'dib* is the most precise concept for Islamic education's ultimate aim, since it integrates both the intellectual and ethical-moral dimensions of human formation. This study adopts *tarbiyah* as the most inclusive umbrella concept, precisely because both Al-Ghazali and Shihab operate within its broadest range of meaning: the holistic cultivation of the human person across all dimensions of their God-given potential.

A methodological clarification is necessary before proceeding. Al-Ghazali was not a *mufassir* in the technical sense and did not compose a structured work of *tafsir*; his engagement with Qur'anic verses throughout the *Ihya'* and *Ayyuhal Walad* is homiletic and theological—verses are cited illustratively, in the course of a broader spiritual-ethical argument, rather than expounded through the systematic verse-by-verse or thematic procedures that define the *tafsir* genre (Watt, 1963; Smith, 1944). Shihab, by contrast, is a formally trained exegete whose *Tafsir Al-Misbah* follows the *maudu'i*-contextual method derived from Al-Farmawi (1977), reading Qur'anic themes across multiple *surahs* in an integrated fashion and actively incorporating insights from modern social science, psychology, and linguistics (Gusmian, 2003; Anwar & Riyadi, 2020). This study therefore

compares two genuinely different, though textually complementary, modes of deriving child education guidance from the Qur'an: Al-Ghazali's homiletic-theological use of scripture, embedded within a broader Sufi-ethical psychology oriented toward spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and Shihab's formal exegetical method, which reads the text as a living guide responsive to social and psychological situations the classical scholars could not have anticipated. Treating these as a single undifferentiated *tafsir paradigm* would obscure precisely the methodological contrast that makes their comparison instructive.

In QS. Luqman (31:13–19), the Qur'an presents what may be understood as its most holistic and systematically structured model of child education, organised around five pedagogical domains that form the comparative framework of this study. The first domain is *aqidah-tawhid* education through the prohibition of *shirk* as the greatest injustice (*zulm azim*). The second domain is affective-relational education through commands of gratitude to Allah and of honouring parents. The third domain is epistemological education demonstrating Allah's omniscience—that no deed, however small as a mustard seed, escapes His knowledge. The fourth domain is worship education centred on the establishment of *salat* as the pillar of religious life. The fifth domain is social-character education through commanding good (*amr bi al-ma'ruf*), forbidding evil (*nahy 'an al-munkar*), and the prohibition of arrogance and disdain in conduct. Both Al-Ghazali and Shihab draw extensively from these five domains, though their hermeneutical approaches and consequent pedagogical emphases differ substantially (Fatimah & Maarif, 2021; Hasanah, 2023).

Al-Ghazali's Child Education Methods

Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (450–505 H / 1058–1111 CE) lived and wrote at the epicentre of one of Islam's most turbulent intellectual and spiritual crises. The ascendancy of Aristotelian philosophy as mediated by Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina threatened, in Al-Ghazali's assessment, to undermine the foundations of Islamic *aqidah*; the *Batiniyyah* movements claimed esoteric authority to override the apparent meanings of Qur'anic texts; and the legal-scholarly establishment, while formally orthodox, had in Al-Ghazali's view become spiritually arid—a formalism of *fiqh* without the animating spirit of genuine God-consciousness. It was into this context of triple crisis—philosophical, esoteric, and spiritual—that Al-Ghazali brought his extraordinary synthesis of *kalam*, philosophy, *fiqh*, and Sufism (Watt, 1963; Smith, 1944). His personal existential crisis, which drove him to abandon his prestigious professorship at the *Nizhamiyyah* Baghdad for years of wandering and spiritual retreat (*khalwat*), permanently shaped his pedagogical conviction: authentic education is fundamentally a process of inner transformation, beginning not with the accumulation of knowledge but with the purification of the heart (Zamhariroh et al., 2024).

Qur'anic Foundations of Al-Ghazali's Pedagogy

Al-Ghazali's child education thought draws homiletically on three Qur'anic passages, invoked in the course of his broader ethical-spiritual argument rather than expounded through systematic exegesis. First, QS. Luqman (31:13–19) is invoked as a comprehensive paradigm for nurturing the three fundamental dimensions of the child's humanity: *ruhiyah* (spiritual), *'aqliyah* (intellectual), and *jismiyah* (physical) (Al-Ghazali, n.d). The wisdom of Luqman, in Al-Ghazali's usage, is not treated as a list of moral instructions but as a structured map for the formation of a complete human being whose inner and outer dimensions are in a state of harmonious alignment.

Second, QS. Al-Tahrim (66:6)—"Protect yourselves and your families from hellfire"—is treated by Al-Ghazali as the most fundamental of all parental obligations: a charge not merely to enforce religious compliance but to actively liberate the child's soul from the tyranny of *nafs ammarah* (the commanding self that inclines toward heedlessness and sin)

through systematic, patient, and loving moral formation. Al-Jawziyyah's *Tuhfah al-Mawdud* (2007), composed within the same broadly Ghazalian ethical-spiritual tradition, elaborates this obligation in comparable terms and is drawn on here as a complementary, though not identical, source. In this framework, parental duty is not an external legal formality but an expression of the deepest parental love—to prioritise the child's eternal wellbeing over their temporal comfort.

Third, QS. Al-Baqarah (2:233) grounds his sustained emphasis on the period of infancy and early childhood (0–2 years) as the most critical window of personality formation. Al-Ghazali argues that the quality of maternal care during this period does not merely satisfy the child's physical needs but instils emotional stability, spiritual tenderness, and the foundational capacity for relational trust that will underpin the child's entire subsequent development—an emphasis on the affective significance of early maternal bonding that later finds an independent parallel in modern attachment theory, though the two frameworks rest on different anthropological premises and should not be conflated (Al-Ghazali, 2005; Bowlby, 1969; Nurhayati & Sabariah, 2024).

The Five Core Methods of Al-Ghazali

Based on systematic analysis of the *Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Vol. III) and *Ayyuhal Walad*, Al-Ghazali's child education methodology comprises five interrelated methods that constitute a coherent and mutually reinforcing pedagogical system. The first method is Habituation (Ta'wid). Al-Ghazali grounds this method in his concept of *malakah*—the deep-seated dispositional quality, analogous to Aristotle's *hexis* or Bourdieu's *habitus*, that is formed through consistent and repeated moral action until it becomes second nature to the soul (Sulaiman, 1986). He insists that character—including spiritual character—is not given but cultivated: through consistent daily prayer at prescribed times, regular Qur'an recitation, the ritual invocation of Allah's name before eating, the practice of courteous speech, and the performance of daily acts of generosity and gratitude. This habituating process is not mechanical conditioning but the deliberate construction of a spiritual ecology within which the child's soul can grow. Al-Ghazali's memorable formulation—"whoever is habituated to something in childhood will grow into a person who embodies that habit"—resonates remarkably with contemporary habit formation research, particularly Duhigg's (2012) findings on automaticity in moral behaviour, though Al-Ghazali's framework is explicitly and irreducibly teleological: habits are formed for the sake of nearness to Allah (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

The second method is Exemplary Conduct (Uswah). Al-Ghazali argues with characteristic directness that children learn primarily and most powerfully through imitation (*muhakaah*)—the child is, in a profound sense, a living mirror that reflects the values, attitudes, and behaviours it observes in those closest to it, above all its parents and teachers (Al-Ghazali, 2005). The pedagogical consequence is unambiguous: parents and teachers must embody Islamic values in every dimension of their daily lives—not merely in formal teaching situations or moments of explicit moral instruction, but in the texture of their ordinary conduct, conversation, and demeanour. Verbal instruction that is contradicted by observable behaviour teaches the child not virtue but hypocrisy; and Al-Ghazali, with characteristic psychological acuity, notes that a learned person who does not practise what they teach is more corruptive to the student than an ignorant person, precisely because they model the dissociation of knowledge from character. This emphasis on observational learning finds a later, independently derived parallel in Bandura's social learning theory, though Al-Ghazali's account is embedded in an explicitly spiritual rather than behavioural framework (1986).

The third method is Narrative and Counsel. Al-Ghazali recommends the stories of the prophets, the companions (*sahabah*), and the righteous predecessors (*salaf al-salih*) as the primary vehicle for moral value transmission to children (Al-Ghazali, 2005). The pedagogical power of narrative is distinctive and irreplaceable: it engages the child's emotional

imagination and rational intelligence simultaneously, creating moral memories that prove far more durable than abstract didactic instruction. Narrative also provides the child with concrete, humanly embodied role models—real historical figures who demonstrate through their own life stories how Islamic values are lived under the actual conditions of human struggle, failure, and perseverance. Al-Ghazali is attentive to the affective context of storytelling, emphasising that moral narratives must be shared in an atmosphere of warmth, delight, and relational security—never in the context of threat or compulsion.

The fourth method is Proportional Discipline. Al-Ghazali occupies a nuanced and carefully calibrated position on the question of disciplinary correction (Al-Ghazali, nd). He neither endorses permissiveness nor advocates harsh punitivism. Disciplinary measures may be applied only under specific conditions: repeated failure of habituation and counsel to produce any change; the disciplinary action must be strictly proportionate to the offence and must avoid any form that causes disproportionate physical or psychological harm; it must never be administered in a state of anger or emotional dysregulation; and it must never involve public humiliation, which Al-Ghazali identifies as permanently damaging to the child's dignity and sense of self. He gives equal—arguably greater—emphasis to positive reinforcement: sincere praise, appropriate material rewards, and expressed parental pride and gratitude must be offered promptly and consistently when the child acts well, thereby cultivating intrinsic motivation rather than mere fear-based compliance.

The fifth method is Environmental Supervision. Al-Ghazali emphasises with notable urgency the formative influence of the social ecosystem in which the child develops (Assegaf, 2013). He draws on the classical Arabic proverb of the good and bad companion—one like a seller of musk who benefits all who approach, the other like a blacksmith whose smoke harms even those who do not enter his forge—to illustrate that moral character does not develop in a vacuum but is always shaped by the quality of social relationships and environmental influences surrounding the child. Parents bear an active, non-delegable obligation to construct a socially conducive moral ecology for their child: selecting educational institutions with care, monitoring the quality of peer relationships, limiting exposure to harmful cultural influences, and actively cultivating spaces and occasions for virtuous social interaction. In the contemporary digital context, this environmental responsibility extends directly and unavoidably to the regulation and mediation of children's online environments (Nuh et al., 2022; Hasanah, 2023).

Developmental Stage Framework

Al-Ghazali articulates a three-phase developmental model with distinct pedagogical priorities for each stage, constituting one of the earliest stage-based theories of child education in any intellectual tradition (Al-Ghazali, nd). Phase One (0–2 years) centres on the primacy of maternal care and affection. In Al-Ghazali's account, the quality of the mother-infant bond during this phase determines the child's foundational emotional stability, relational capacity, and basic existential trust—an emphasis on early affective bonding that, as noted above, finds an independently derived parallel in Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. During this phase, the parent also begins introducing the child to the *kalimat tawhid*—*La ilaha illallah*—as the soul's first and most essential nourishment.

Phase Two (2–7 years) is the period of habituation of *adab* and consolidation of early religious memory. The child is gradually introduced to Islamic social etiquette (*adab al-akl*, *adab al-shurb*, *adab al-libas*), short Qur'anic memorisation, daily supplications (*du'a*), and the names and attributes of Allah. Al-Ghazali issues a characteristic warning against pedagogical overreach in this phase: the child must not be coerced or burdened beyond the limits of their developmental capacity, as excessive pressure generates resistances and emotional aversions that can impede spiritual development for years or decades afterward.

Phase Three (7–15 years) constitutes the intensification of intellectual education and

the graduated assumption of religious responsibility. The child now engages more seriously with the core disciplines of Islamic knowledge—fiqh, Qur'anic sciences, sirah nabawiyah, and other branches of learning relevant to their formation as a Muslim adult. Religious obligations are introduced incrementally in preparation for the full assumption of adult responsibility at puberty (bulugh), so that the young person arrives at that threshold already spiritually formed and practically equipped.

Shihab's Child Education Thoughts

Shihab (b. 16 February 1944, Rappang, South Sulawesi) completed his undergraduate education at Al-Azhar University, Cairo (Lc, 1967), before returning to Indonesia for a period of teaching and scholarly work. He subsequently returned to Al-Azhar, completing his doctoral dissertation on the *i'jaz* (inimitability) of the Qur'an with summa cum laude distinction and first-class honours in 1982 (Gusmian, 2003). His intellectual formation at the centre of the global Sunni scholarly tradition gave him an exceptional command of the classical tafsir corpus, which he then brought into productive and rigorous dialogue with the realities of Indonesian Muslim life. His *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, composed over decades of continuous scholarly engagement and published between 2000 and 2004, is distinguished not only by its extraordinary scope—covering all 6,236 verses of the Qur'an—but by its methodological rigour, linguistic sensitivity, contextual intelligence, and accessibility to non-specialist readers. His child education pedagogy emerges from a *maudu'i*-contextual hermeneutic that integrates classical tafsir wisdom with insights from developmental psychology, communication theory, and social science (Mustaqim, 2019; Anwar & Riyadi, 2020).

Hermeneutical Foundations in Tafsir Al-Misbah

Shihab's reading of QS. Luqman (31:13–19) departs methodologically from Al-Ghazali's homiletic approach by foregrounding the socio-linguistic, rhetorical, and psychological dimensions of the text with sustained analytical attention. He draws particular attention to Luqman's mode of address—the diminutive affective expression *ya bunayya* (literally "my beloved little son," a *tashghir* or diminutive form expressing tenderness rather than condescension)—arguing that this linguistic choice is not a mere stylistic flourish but itself constitutes a methodological statement: love and gentleness are the primary language and environment of effective education (Shihab, 2002). The structural sequence of Luqman's counsel—beginning with *tawhid* and proceeding through ethics, epistemology, worship, and social conduct—is read by Quraish Shihab not as an arbitrary arrangement but as a deliberate pedagogical architecture: inner conviction must precede and ground outer conduct.

His reading of QS. Al-Isra' (17:24)—"lower to them the wing of humility through mercy"—deconstructs any model of the parent-child relationship as a hierarchy of power demanding unquestioning compliance, reconstituting it instead as a relationship of *mawaddah wa rahmah* (mutual affection and active mercy) (Shihab, 2002). In this relational model, the parent's authority is not denied but its quality is transformed: it becomes an authority exercised in love rather than domination, oriented toward the child's flourishing rather than the parent's control. Quraish Shihab's interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah (2:233) emphasises the child's inalienable right to have their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs adequately met as a precondition for optimal *fitrah* development—a reading that converges with contemporary developmental psychology's emphasis on the primacy of secure attachment as the foundation of healthy personality (Fatimah & Maarif, 2021; Bowlby, 1969).

The Five Core Methods of Quraish Shihab

First, the Method of Dialogue (Hiwar). Quraish Shihab identifies dialogue as the Qur'an's own primary and characteristic pedagogical mode—the vast majority of the Qur'anic message is delivered dialogically: between Allah and the human being, between prophets and their communities, between Luqman and his son (Shihab, 2000). The deployment of hiwar as a child education method constitutes, at a deeper level, an ontological acknowledgement of the child as a rational, dignified subject who possesses the right to be heard, to question, and to understand. It does not circumvent parental authority; it exercises that authority through conversation rather than command. The hiwar method cultivates critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, active knowledge construction, and reasoned moral commitment—aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development and with contemporary Islamic educational reformers' emphasis on participatory and dialogical pedagogy (Hasanah, 2023; Anwar & Riyadi, 2020).

Second, the Method of Affection (Mawaddah wa Rahmah). Shihab insists that genuine, consistently expressed affection is not a supplement to effective education but its indispensable foundation (Shihab, 1994). Drawing on QS. Al-Rum (30:21)—where mawaddah and rahmah describe the deepest bond between human beings—he applies this relational dynamic to the parent-child relationship, arguing that children raised in a climate of genuine emotional warmth and secure affection develop what Bowlby (1969) would later term the secure base: the internal confidence that enables exploration of the world, risk-taking, authentic learning, and graceful recovery from failure. Crucially, Shihab is precise in distinguishing affection from permissiveness: mawaddah wa rahmah does not mean eliminating all difficulty, disappointment, or boundary from the child's experience, but creating the emotional safety within which authentic growth—including growth through challenge—becomes possible (Fatimah & Maarif, 2021).

Third, the Method of Contextualisation of Values. Shihab argues consistently that Islamic teachings must be presented in language, examples, and frameworks that are directly and immediately relevant to the child's actual lived experience (Shihab, 2002). Values delivered as abstract dogma disconnected from the child's daily reality will not persuade; they must be shown to be relevant, necessary, and life-enhancing within the specific social and cultural contexts the child actually inhabits. The effective Islamic educator, in Shihab's account, is one who can answer the child's inevitable "why?"—why is honesty necessary when dishonesty appears to succeed? why is salat worth preserving in an overwhelmingly busy daily schedule?—with answers that engage reason, move the heart, and inspire genuine and voluntary moral action (Mawangir, 2018).

Fourth, the Method of Fitrah Cultivation. In contrast to Al-Ghazali's emphasis on character formation through the external imposition of discipline, Shihab foregrounds a fundamentally inside-out approach: the recognition, respect, and systematic development of each child's innate divinely-gifted potential (Shihab, 1996). Grounding this method in QS. Al-Rum (30:30)—"the fitrah of Allah upon which He has fashioned humankind"—Shihab maintains that every child is born with a natural and constitutive inclination toward truth (haqq), goodness (khayr), and beauty (jamal). The educator's responsibility is therefore not to impose a predetermined external template of the ideal Muslim onto the child, but to identify with sensitivity and develop with care the unique constellation of gifts and potentials that Allah has already embedded in each particular child. This method bears a loose thematic resemblance to Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences theory and to humanistic educational psychology's commitment to the intrinsic dignity of the individual learner, though fitrah and Gardner's construct rest on distinct metaphysical foundations—the former is an innately God-given spiritual-moral disposition, the latter a taxonomy of cognitive capacities—and the parallel should be read as suggestive rather than equivalent (Pratama, 2023).

Fifth, the Method of Knowledge-Faith Integration. Shihab firmly and repeatedly rejects the inherited dichotomy between religious knowledge ('ulum shar'iyah) and general or secular knowledge ('ulum 'aqliyyah or kawniyyah), a dichotomy that in his view has

caused incalculable damage to the intellectual and spiritual development of Muslim communities across the modern era (Shihab, 2002). In his framework, all branches of legitimate human knowledge—whether derived from divine revelation or generated through empirical observation, rational analysis, and scientific inquiry—ultimately manifest truth originating from the single divine source. Child education that reinforces a split between religious and general knowledge produces psychologically and intellectually bifurcated individuals: Muslims who feel compelled to live a double life, compartmentalising their religious and professional identities. Early and consistent integration of knowledge and faith, by contrast, forms Muslims who are simultaneously devout in their personal lives and intellectually rigorous and professionally excellent in their contributions to human civilisation (Anwar & Riyadi, 2020; Nuh et al., 2022).

The Centrality of Family as the Primary Educational Institution

Quraish Shihab devotes sustained attention to the irreplaceable role of the family as the foundational educational institution—one that no formal schooling, however excellent, can substitute (Shihab, 1994). In his account, the father's role is that of the visionary educational leader—not in an authoritarian sense, but as an engaged, attentive, and emotionally present partner in the child's formation who provides direction, stability, and moral consistency. The mother is the *madrasah al-ula*—the first school—an institution in the fullest sense: not merely a caregiver but a living curriculum that transmits values, emotional intelligence, spiritual orientation, and a way of being in the world through the accumulated density of daily interaction. The quality of communication within the family—whether it is warm or cold, dialogical or monological, honest or performative—is, in Shihab's view, the single most consequential variable in the child's entire educational formation.

Comparative Analysis: Convergences and Divergences

Table 1 systematically summarises the methodological comparison between both scholars across nine analytical dimensions.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Al-Ghazali and Shihab's Child Education Methodology

Aspect	Al-Ghazali	M. Quraish Shihab
Mode of Qur'anic engagement	Homiletic-theological (not formal tafsir)	Maudu'i-Contextual
Methodological basis	Habituation & spiritual discipline	Dialogue & fitrah cultivation
View of the child	Good fitrah, vulnerable to nafs	Active subject with unique potential
Role of child's reason	Limited; imitation of teacher	Active; critical thinking encouraged
Pedagogical relationship	Hierarchical-Authoritative	Egalitarian-Dialogical
Educational goal	Tazkiyat al-nafs; akhirah orientation	Khalifah function; social contribution
Disciplinary method	Proportional; conditionally permitted	Avoided; motivation-based
Family role	Mother dominant in early phase	Father & mother; dialogic communication
Attitude to modern sciences	Not elaborated	Actively integrated

Substantive Convergences

Despite their distinct historical contexts, intellectual formations, and methodological paradigms, Al-Ghazali and Quraish Shihab demonstrate four substantive convergences that constitute the enduring and non-negotiable core of Islamic child education across all contexts and periods.

First, both scholars privilege QS. Luqman (31:13–19) as their primary and most authoritative Qur'anic reference for child education. This convergence across a gap of nearly nine centuries is theoretically significant: it demonstrates the text's extraordinary and trans-historical hermeneutical authority, and it confirms the existence of a continuous *tarbawi* tradition of Qur'anically grounded educational thought—flowing from Al-Ghazali's homiletic-theological usage in the classical period to Shihab's formal exegetical treatment in the contemporary one—even as its methodological expressions change (Zamhariroh et al., 2024; Fatimah & Maarif, 2021). The text, in other words, does not merely tolerate diverse interpretations; it actively generates them while maintaining a stable core of educational insight.

Second, both affirm *tawhid* as the non-negotiable foundation and highest goal of all child education. For Al-Ghazali, *tawhid* is both the starting point and the culmination of *tazkiyat al-nafs*: the truly monotheistic human being is one whose heart has been so thoroughly purified and oriented toward Allah that nothing else exercises ultimate dominion over it. For Quraish Shihab, *tawhid* is the axiological ground of all social ethics, civic virtue, and civilisational contribution: the truly monotheistic human being is one who, precisely because they acknowledge Allah's absolute sovereignty, takes their responsibility as *khalifah* with complete seriousness. Although the paths to and the expressions of *tawhid* differ between them, both affirm with equal conviction that without a deep and internalized *tawhidic* orientation, the entire edifice of Islamic education—however sophisticated its methods—rests on an unstable and ultimately hollow foundation.

Third, both insist on parental and teacher exemplariness as the single most indispensable pedagogical instrument available to the Islamic educator—an instrument that no methodology, curriculum, or institutional structure can replace. Al-Ghazali articulates this principle with characteristic directness in the eleventh century; Shihab confirms it with equal conviction from the perspective of contemporary developmental psychology (Wan Daud, 1998). The convergence is independently validated by Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which demonstrates empirically—through a body of research that would have surprised no classical Islamic educator—that observational learning through credible and relationally close role models constitutes the primary mechanism of character acquisition in childhood.

Fourth, both categorically reject excessive physical violence as a legitimate or effective tool of child-rearing, though their argumentative routes to this shared conclusion differ characteristically. Al-Ghazali grounds his rejection in the divine attribute of *rahmah* and in the explicit practice and instruction of the Prophet Muhammad SAW whose known approach to children was consistently gentle, playful, and affectionate. Shihab grounds his rejection in the substantial body of psychological evidence demonstrating that violent discipline is consistently counterproductive—producing compliance through fear rather than virtue through conviction, and destroying the relational trust that is the indispensable prerequisite for healthy personality formation (Nurhayati & Sabariah, 2024). Despite different foundations, both arrive at the same conclusion: excessive punishment represents not a pedagogical tool but a pedagogical failure—a failure of the educator's capacity to understand and respond appropriately to the nature and needs of the child.

Fundamental Divergences and Points of Productive Tension

The most fundamental divergence between the two scholars resides in their contrasting philosophical-anthropological orientations, which underpin and determine the character of their entire pedagogical systems. Al-Ghazali proceeds from a Sufi-Islamic anthropology

that understands the human being primarily as a spiritual entity (al-ruh) endowed, especially in earliest infancy, with a fragile spiritual tenderness and capacity for relational trust (as discussed above in relation to QS. Al-Baqarah 2:233); yet as the child matures and worldly desire awakens, this original tenderness becomes increasingly exposed to the pull of the *nafs ammara*—the self that commands toward heedlessness, desire-satisfaction, and spiritual self-neglect. The two descriptions are not contradictory but sequential: the very fragility of the child's early spiritual disposition is what makes sustained habituation and discipline necessary as the child grows, precisely in order to protect and consolidate that original tenderness rather than to rescue a soul assumed corrupt from birth. This anthropology generates a pedagogy of protective cultivation and discipline: education is the systematic and spiritually supervised process of safeguarding and strengthening the child's soul against these encroaching tendencies through structured habituation, supervised imitation, and graduated spiritual practice. The pedagogical relationship is accordingly hierarchical and to a degree authoritative: the teacher and parent hold genuine spiritual authority that the student and child must respect as a condition of their own growth (Smith, 1944).

Shihab proceeds from a more holistic and psycho-socially sensitive anthropology. The child is, from the beginning, an active subject who arrives in the world already bearing a divine-given *fitrah* and a set of unique, God-granted potentials. This is not a being who requires rescue from their own nature but one who requires nurture and guidance toward the fullest realisation of what Allah has already placed within them. Education is therefore fundamentally a facilitative process—the educator enables, accompanies, and enriches rather than commands, corrects, or constraints. The pedagogical relationship is accordingly egalitarian and dialogical: the parent and teacher are partners in the child's unfolding rather than architects of a predetermined outcome (Pratama, 2023). This divergence in anthropological starting points generates cascading differences across virtually every dimension of their pedagogical systems.

A second divergence concerns the relationship of each methodology to modernity and contemporary knowledge systems. Al-Ghazali—operating in a twelfth-century intellectual world—formulates his educational methodology entirely from within the resources of the Islamic intellectual tradition, drawing on Qur'an, hadith, classical *fiqh*, *kalam*, and Sufi spiritual psychology. He had no access to, and no occasion to engage with, the findings of modern developmental psychology, attachment theory, cognitive science, or educational research. His methodology is therefore both extraordinarily deep in its engagement with the Islamic tradition and necessarily limited in its responsiveness to insights that would not become available for centuries after his death. Shihab, writing in the twenty-first century with full access to the modern scholarly literature, actively and selectively brings developmental psychology (Piaget's stages of cognitive development, Bowlby's attachment theory, Erikson's psychosocial development), communication science (dialogical communication theory), and educational research into productive dialogue with the Qur'anic message (Anwar & Riyadi, 2020; Pratama, 2023). This is not a departure from Qur'anic authority but, in his view, an enrichment of its reception—since all truth, wherever it originates, ultimately derives from the same divine source.

A third divergence concerns the relative starting point, rather than the ultimate scope, of individual versus social dimensions in the goals of child education. Al-Ghazali's framework begins from the individual soul and its purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*): education aims first to form a person who is pious (*wara'*), spiritually disciplined, and inwardly pure. This individual purification is not, however, an isolated endpoint—the *Ihya'* treats it explicitly as the foundational prerequisite for the child's subsequent capacity to fulfil communal obligations such as commanding good and forbidding evil (*amr bi al-ma'ruf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*); social virtue, in Al-Ghazali's account, flows from and depends upon inward rectitude rather than standing apart from it. Shihab, by contrast, foregrounds the social and civilisational dimensions of Islamic education from the outset: the well-educated Muslim child is one who grows into an adult capable of being a productive, just,

intellectually rigorous, and actively contributive member of the Muslim community and of humanity as a whole (Hasanah, 2023). The divergence, properly stated, is therefore sequential and emphatic rather than a strict opposition between an individual telos and a social one: Al-Ghazali moves from purified interiority toward social duty as its natural consequence, while Shihab foregrounds social and civilisational participation as the explicit aim from which pedagogical priorities are derived. This difference in emphasis reflects both the influence of the *maudu'i* approach—which reads Qur'anic themes in terms of their social and communal implications—and the specific Indonesian context in which Shihab operates, where Islam has always existed in dynamic relationship with a plural, multi-religious, and rapidly developing society.

An Integrative Synthesis Model for Contemporary Islamic Child Education

The comparative analysis conducted above makes clear that Al-Ghazali and Shihab are not simply rivals or alternatives between whom a choice must be made. They are, rather, complementary resources whose respective strengths correspond to each other's limitations in a way that opens the possibility of a genuinely integrative synthesis. Al-Ghazali's methodology provides what Shihab's lacks: a deep, systematically structured, and spiritually grounded system of habituation and discipline that builds the internal moral architecture of the child's soul from the earliest years. Shihab's methodology provides what Al-Ghazali's cannot offer: a contextually sensitive, psychologically informed, dialogical approach that respects the child's subjectivity and equips them with the critical thinking and relational skills needed to navigate the complexity and plurality of modern life.

The synthesis is not merely theoretically attractive; it responds to specific and pressing practical needs in the Indonesian Muslim context. Al-Ghazali's spiritual discipline and habituation system address with particular force the crisis of *ibadah* commitment and moral accountability among contemporary Muslim youth—a crisis documented in numerous recent studies of Indonesian Muslim adolescent religiosity (Azra, 2012; Nuh et al., 2022). Young people who have not been habituated to consistent worship practice from childhood will, when they encounter the intense social pressures, ideological challenges, and lifestyle alternatives of adolescence and early adulthood, find themselves without the internal resources to sustain a coherent and resilient Islamic identity. Habituation of worship is not, in this framework, a form of coercive indoctrination that violates the child's autonomy; it is the deliberate conferral of a spiritual heritage that will serve as a source of existential strength, moral orientation, and interior peace throughout life.

Conversely, Shihab's dialogical approach, *fitrah*-centred pedagogy, and commitment to the contextualisation of Islamic values are essential for equipping the Muslim child to navigate the specific challenges of digital-age plurality (Hasanah, 2023; Mawangir, 2018). In an environment where children encounter, from the earliest years, an overwhelming diversity of worldviews, moral frameworks, and lifestyle options through their digital devices, a purely habituated approach—one that provides routines without cultivating the capacity for critical ethical reflection—will leave them intellectually defenceless when those routines are challenged or when they encounter questions their childhood formation did not prepare them to answer. Children who understand not only what Islamic values require but why—and who have developed the intellectual confidence and relational skills to engage with alternative views without either capitulating to them or dismissing them—will be far better equipped to sustain and deepen their Islamic identity through the full complexity of contemporary life. Table 2 presents the three-phase integrative synthesis model recommended by this study.

Phase One (Foundation, 0–7 years) is characterised by the relative dominance of Al-Ghazali's approach, adapted within the affective climate that Shihab identifies as the non-negotiable condition of all effective education, and preserves the two-stage structure Al-Ghazali himself describes for this period. In Foundation I (infancy, 0–2 years), the construction of a strong and secure emotional bond between parent and child and the earliest introduction of the *kalimat tawhid* are the primary pedagogical priorities. In Foundation II

Table 2. Three-Phase Integrative Synthesis Model for Contemporary Islamic Child Education

Phase	Age Range	Dominant Methodology	Core Methods	Integrative Element
Foundation I (Infancy)	0–2 years	Al-Ghazali dominant	Maternal bonding, tawhid introduction (kalimat tawhid)	Mawaddah wa rahmah affective climate (Shihab)
Foundation II (Early Childhood)	2–7 years	Al-Ghazali dominant	Habituation, uswah, narrative, adab formation	Mawaddah wa rahmah affective climate (Shihab)
Development	7–15 years	Balanced integration	Ibadah discipline + hiwar, value contextualisation	Fitrah cultivation + critical reflection (Shihab)
Maturation	15+ years	Shihab dominant	Dialogue, knowledge-faith integration, social contribution	Spiritual foundation + disciplined habitus (Al-Ghazali)

(early childhood, 2–7 years), habituation of daily worship, the formation of Islamic social adab, Qur'anic memorisation, and narrative-based value transmission become the dominant pedagogical activities, building on the affective foundation established in the preceding stage. Across both sub-phases, habituation is embedded not in an atmosphere of stern authority but in the warmth and delight of mawaddah wa rahmah—the child experiences the practices of Islamic life as expressions of love rather than as impositions of obligation.

Phase Two (Development, 7–15 years) represents an equal and increasingly dynamic integration of both methodologies. Ibadah discipline and moral habituation are maintained and deepened from Phase One, while the hiwar method, exploration of the reasons and meanings behind Islamic values, and systematic development of the child's fitrah-based unique potential are progressively intensified. This integration corresponds to the child's growing cognitive capacity for abstract reasoning, causal understanding, and moral reflection—what Piaget identifies as the transition from concrete to formal operational thinking (Pratama, 2023). The child in this phase is increasingly invited to be an active participant in their own formation, not merely a recipient of it.

Phase Three (Maturation, 15+ years) is characterised by the relative dominance of Quraish Shihab's approach, sustained by the spiritual foundation and disciplined habitus constructed in Phases One and Two. The young person is now engaged as a genuine intellectual and moral subject: capable of critical engagement with ideas, of making substantive ethical decisions independently, and of actively contributing—through their knowledge, skills, and character—to the wellbeing of their family, community, and society. The spiritual architecture built through years of habituated practice, and the relational trust built through years of dialogical engagement together provide the young adult with both the internal resources and the interpersonal skills needed to navigate the full complexity of their life as a Muslim in the contemporary world.

In the context of formal Islamic education in Indonesia—madrasah and pesantren—this synthesis model can be operationalised through curricula that combine tahfidz programmes and structured ibadah habituation with project-based learning, deliberative discussion, and contextual application exercises connecting Qur'anic values to concrete contemporary social challenges. In the context of informal family education, Indonesian Muslim parents are encouraged to cultivate warm, consistent, and genuinely dialogical communication with their children while maintaining clarity and consistency in the religious values and daily spiritual routines of family life. The balance is, in the end, the essence of synthesis: structures without warmth produce compliance; warmth without structures produces rootlessness. The integration of Al-Ghazali's depth with Shihab's responsiveness offers the fullest available model of Islamic child education for the Indonesian Muslim context of the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study has systematically identified the fundamental convergences and divergences between Al-Ghazali's pedagogical thought and Shihab's formal Qur'anic exegesis of child education. Al-Ghazali builds a child education system, developed through his homiletic-theological engagement with Qur'anic verses in the *Ihya'* and *Ayyuhal Walad*, comprising five core methods: habituation (*ta'wid*), exemplary conduct (*uswah*), narrative and counsel, proportional discipline, and environmental supervision—directed toward *tazkiyat al-nafs* and spiritual nearness to Allah across three developmentally graduated phases. Shihab develops a contextual-maudu'i exegetical approach with five primary methods: dialogue (*hiwar*), affection (*mawaddah wa rahmah*), contextualisation of values, *fitrah* cultivation, and knowledge-faith integration—oriented toward forming the Muslim child as a holistically developed *khalifah* contributing to social justice and civilisational advancement.

Both scholars converge on four substantive and enduring points: *tawhid* as the foundational pillar and highest goal of child education; parental and teacher exemplariness as the indispensable pedagogical instrument; categorical rejection of excessive violence in child-rearing; and QS. Luqman (31:13–19) as the primary Qur'anic textual reference shared across nine centuries of Islamic educational thought. These convergences constitute the stable core of a broader *tarbawi* tradition of Qur'anically grounded pedagogical reasoning that this study traces from Al-Ghazali's classical homiletic-theological usage to Shihab's contemporary formal exegesis. The fundamental divergences reside in three dimensions: homiletic-individual versus exegetical-contextual-social orientation; hierarchical-authoritative versus egalitarian-dialogical pedagogy; and differential relationships to the resources of modern scientific knowledge. On this last point, Shihab's five methods show clear and specific points of alignment with modern educational and developmental psychology—*hiwar* with Vygotsky's (1978) participatory learning, *mawaddah wa rahmah* with Bowlby's (1969) secure-base concept, and *fitrah* cultivation with Gardner's (1983) recognition of differentiated potential—while remaining explicitly grounded in Qur'anic authority rather than derived from those frameworks; Shihab's contribution therefore lies less in anticipating modern science than in selectively and critically integrating it within an exegetically disciplined Islamic pedagogy.

As a purely conceptual, library-based study, this model offers a theoretically rigorous alternative to both unreflective traditionalism and uncritical modernism in Indonesian Islamic educational discourse, rather than an already-validated intervention. Future empirical research—for example, qualitative case studies or action research in specific *madrasah*, *pesantren*, or family settings—would be needed to operationalise the model's constructs into measurable indicators and to examine its practical adoption and outcomes; such research constitutes a distinct and necessary next step beyond the conceptual synthesis offered here.

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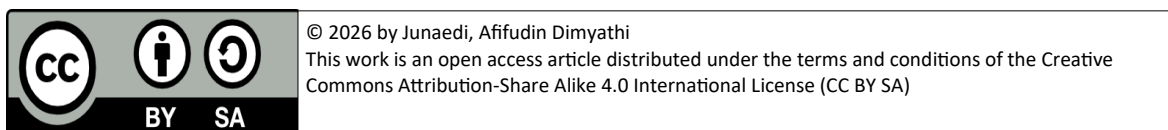
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