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# AN ANALYSIS OF FISHER'S THEORY OF SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING FROM AL-GHAZALI'S PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract**

Spiritual well－being is an essential dimension of human life that reflects the harmony of one's relationship with the self, others, the environment, and God. John W. Fisher developed a model of spiritual well－being comprising four relational domains, which has been widely applied in contemporary psychology and education. On the other hand, Imam al－Ghazali, through his classical work Kimiya as－Sa'adah (The Alchemy of Happiness), emphasized that spiritual well－being can only be achieved through the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs) and drawing closer to Allah as the ultimate purpose of life. This study aims to analyze and compare Fisher's theory of spiritual well－being from al－Ghazali's perspective, in order to gain a deeper and more transformative understanding of human spirituality. Using a qualitative approach through library research, the study finds that although the two figures originate from different traditions and paradigms, both place the transcendent relationship at the core of spiritual happiness. Integrating these two approaches can enrich the development of spiritual well－being that is not only rational and measurable but also infused with spiritual values, making it highly relevant for education, counseling, and spiritual life in the modern.

## Introduction

Spiritual well－being is a crucial aspect of human life, as it relates directly to the quality of an individual's relationships with the self, others, the environment, and God (Fisher, 2011). This form of well－being is not limited to religious aspects alone, but also encompasses the search for life's meaning, purpose, inner peace, and harmony. Individuals with a high level of spiritual well－being tend to be more resilient in facing life's challenges, possess a positive outlook, and are able to build healthy and meaningful relationships (Xu, 2016). In today's modern world, filled with physical, emotional, and social challenges, attention to spiritual well－being is growing, as it is increasingly recognized as a fundamental foundation for happiness and life balance. This concept has even become a central focus in contemporary psychology to understand holistic well－being, as seen in the Spiritual Well－Being model developed by John W. Fisher (1998), which systematically and practically outlines the dimensions of spiritual well－being across various fields, including psychology, education, and mental health (Tumanggor, 2019).

Fisher (1998) developed a more comprehensive and structured model of spiritual well－being compared to previous frameworks, identifying four interrelated dimensions: personal (relationship with the self), communal (relationship with others), environmental (relationship with the environment), and transcendental (relationship with God or a higher power). These four dimensions form a holistic and dynamic conceptual framework for understanding human spiritual well－being in its entirety (Fisher, 2011). The personal dimension emphasizes the individual's relationship with themselves, including inner reflection, personal integrity, and self－acceptance. The communal dimension refers to the quality of social relationships, characterized by compassion, empathy, and mutual respect. The environmental dimension involves ecological awareness and a harmonious

relationship with nature as part of human existence. Meanwhile, the transcendental dimension serves as the core of spirituality, representing the individual's connection to God or a higher power that gives life meaning and direction (Tumanggor, 2019).

On the other hand, the classical Islamic intellectual tradition has long contributed profound insights into the concept of happiness. One of the most influential figures in this tradition is Imam al－Ghazali (1058－1111), who, through his renowned work *Kimiya as-Sa' dah* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*), offers a deep and holistic view of the essence of true happiness (Al－Ghazali, n.d.). According to al－Ghazali, genuine happiness cannot be attained merely through worldly pleasures, wealth, or status, but rather through the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and spiritual closeness to Allah SWT. He underscores the importance of inner transformation, which involves cleansing the heart from blameworthy traits such as arrogance, envy, and love of the material world, and replacing them with noble character traits such as sincerity, humility, patience, and gratitude (Al－Ghazali, 2021). For al－Ghazali, this process is the path to awakening the heart and realizing the divine purpose of human creation. More than just theoretical discourse, his concept of happiness is practical and applicable, as it touches on the esoteric (inner) dimension that lies at the core of Islamic spirituality. The vertical relationship between human beings and God becomes the central axis in forming a tranquil and contented soul, referred to in the Qur'an as *nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the soul at peace) (Najib, 2023).

The spiritual well－being model developed by Fisher (1998) has, in fact, been widely adopted in various studies in the fields of psychology and education to empirically measure spiritual well－being, with a particular emphasis on interpersonal, environmental, and transcendental relationships (Gomez & Fisher, 2003; Narmiyati et al., 2021). This model has made a significant contribution to mapping the aspects of human spirituality in contemporary contexts. However, its general nature limits its ability to explore deeper and more essential dimensions of spirituality, such as the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and inner transformation—both of which are central to al－Ghazali's teachings in Sufism (Al－Ghazali, 1988). Unfortunately, academic studies attempting to integrate Fisher's model with al－Ghazali's perspective remain limited, leaving the understanding of spiritual well－being within the framework of classical Islamic tradition and its relevance to modern spiritual challenges underdeveloped. Such integrative efforts are essential for formulating a model of spiritual well－being that is not only rational and measurable but also transformative and grounded in Islamic spiritual values.

Although they stem from different paradigms—Fisher (1998) from modern Western psychology and al－Ghazali (1058－1111) from the Islamic Sufi tradition—both share a common view of spirituality as the core of human well－being. Fisher (1998) emphasizes measurable relational balance, while al－Ghazali offers a transformative approach centered on heart purification. A comparative analysis between these two perspectives is important for several reasons. First, the advancement of positive psychology and contemporary spirituality reflects a growing interest in integrating scientific approaches with traditional wisdom. Second, there remains a gap in the literature that bridges Western psychological theories with classical Islamic concepts, particularly in the context of spiritual happiness. Third, a deeper understanding of spiritual well－being from both perspectives can offer a more holistic framework for attaining balanced happiness in both worldly and spiritual dimensions.

This study aims to analyze and examine Fisher's spiritual well－being model from the perspective of al－Ghazali, particularly in the context of achieving true happiness. By comparing and synthesizing both concepts, this research seeks to enrich the

understanding of spiritual well－being that is not only psychological and empirical but also spiritually and theologically profound. The study offers a novel contribution by integrating Fisher's contemporary and empirical conceptual model with Imam al－Ghazali's spiritual and transformational teachings. This approach opens space for meaningful dialogue between modern psychology and Islamic Sufism, resulting in a more holistic, contextual, and relevant understanding of spiritual well－being for the development of spirituality in the modern era.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method, as it is both exploratory and interpretative in nature, allowing the researcher to critically and comprehensively examine the conceptual ideas of spiritual well－being as proposed by Fisher (1998), as well as the Islamic view of spirituality from the perspective of al－Ghazali (1058－1111) through his work *Kimiya as-Sa'adah* (Hamzah, 2019). This approach facilitates a deep understanding of both the explicit and implicit meanings within the texts and allows for philosophical interpretation of the spiritual constructs presented by both figures. The data sources consist of primary and secondary materials. The primary data include Fisher's (1998) work on the conceptual model of spiritual well－being, which outlines four key dimensions—relationship with the self, others, the natural environment, and God (transcendence)—and al－Ghazali's *Kimiya as-Sa'adah*, which explores concepts such as *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), *ma'rifatullah* (knowledge of God), and *sa'adah* (true happiness). The secondary data comprise supporting literature such as scholarly journal articles, reference books, previous research, and contemporary studies related to spiritual psychology and Islamic philosophy. Data collection was carried out through intensive, critical, and selective literature review of relevant sources. The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive－comparative, which involves describing the spiritual concepts articulated by Fisher (1998) and al－Ghazali (1058－1111), and then comparing them to identify similarities, differences, and potential points of integration between the two perspectives.

## Results and Discussions

## Results

### Fisher's Theory of Spiritual Well-Being

John W. Fisher is a prominent figure in the development of the concept of spiritual well－being within contemporary psychological and educational studies. He defines spiritual well－being as a dynamic state that reflects an individual's harmony in forming meaningful relationships across four key dimensions: the self (personal), others (communal), nature (environmental), and God or a transcendent power (transcendental). This concept builds on an earlier definition formulated by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (1975), which emphasized the importance of human relationships with life aspects that carry spiritual value. Fisher (1998) expanded this approach into a structured conceptual framework that can be empirically measured across various life contexts (Tumanggor, 2019).

The first dimension in Fisher's (1998) model of spiritual well－being is the **personal dimension**, which focuses on an individual's relationship with themselves and includes fundamental aspects such as self－identity, existential meaning, and life purpose (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). In this context, spiritual well－being is expressed through a heightened sense of self－awareness, the ability to deeply reflect on life, and the capacity to

understand and accept oneself wholly. Fisher emphasizes that individuals who have a positive relationship with themselves are more likely to possess clear life orientation, emotional stability, and resilience in the face of existential challenges. Understanding personal values, life experiences, and inner reflection are essential elements in shaping a strong and meaningful spirituality (Fisher, 2011). This dimension serves as the foundation for overall spiritual balance, as a healthy relationship with oneself is a prerequisite for building meaningful relationships with others, the environment, and God. In practice, the personal dimension encourages individuals to engage in inner exploration, strengthen self−identity, and construct a life purpose that is not only rational but also spiritually profound. Therefore, this dimension plays a crucial role in developing a holistic and sustainable sense of spiritual well−being, as all external relationships fundamentally stem from the quality of one's internal relationship with the self.

The **communal dimension** in Fisher's (1998) spiritual well−being model reflects the quality and depth of an individual's social relationships with others. This dimension goes beyond mere social existence within a community and highlights how a person builds relationships grounded in values such as love, trust, respect, and social responsibility (Gomez & Fisher, 2003). Fisher (1998) asserts that spiritual well−being in this domain is manifested in one's ability to show compassion, empathy, forgiveness, solidarity, and hope toward others. Healthy and meaningful interpersonal relationships are key indicators of spiritual well−being, as it is through social interaction that spiritual values find their real−world expression in daily life (Tumanggor, 2019). Within this framework, spirituality is not only understood as something individual and internal but also as social and collective. Individuals who are capable of forming positive social connections are more likely to develop moral sensitivity, concern for others, and tolerance for differences. Hence, the communal dimension becomes an essential component in achieving balanced spiritual well−being, as it reflects how one's spirituality is concretely implemented in ethical and harmonious community life.

The final two dimensions—**environmental and transcendental**—complete the structure of Fisher's (1998) model in a comprehensive manner. The environmental dimension focuses on the individual's relationship with the natural world and other living beings, marked by a sense of awe, connectedness, and ecological responsibility. Meanwhile, the transcendental dimension represents the core of spirituality, which links the individual to God, a higher power, or a reality that transcends the physical world (Fisher, 2016). Fisher (1998) stresses that this transcendental connection provides the deepest source of meaning in human life, cultivating peace, gratitude, and a full sense of spiritual orientation. These four dimensions collectively form a holistic framework, positioning Fisher's (1998) model as a strong theoretical foundation for examining spiritual well−being in both scientific and practical terms. Together, they offer a comprehensive structure for assessing and understanding an individual's spiritual well−being (Fisher & Ng, 2017).

**The Concept of Spiritual Well-Being from al-Ghazali's Perspective**

Imam al−Ghazali (1058−1111), in *Kimiya as-Sa'adah* (The Alchemy of Happiness), positions *sa'adah* (true happiness) as the ultimate goal of human life, which can only be attained through the purification of the soul and closeness to Allah SWT. There are four key concepts of spiritual well−being in al−Ghazali's perspective that lead to the realization of true happiness in a person: self−knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*), knowledge

of Allah (*ma'rifatullah*), knowledge of the worldly life (*ma'rifat al-dunya*), and knowledge of the hereafter (*ma'rifat al-akhirah*).

According to Imam al－Ghazali in his monumental work *Kimiya as-Sa'adah*, knowing oneself (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) is the most fundamental step and the main gateway toward recognizing Allah (*ma'rifatullah*) and achieving true happiness (*sa'adah*) (Al－Ghazali, 2002a). Al－Ghazali does not view self－knowledge as a superficial understanding of physical or behavioral attributes, but as a deep, contemplative, and spiritual process that leads to awareness of the essence of human existence. For him, to know oneself is to confront essential and thought－provoking questions such as: "Who am I?", "Where do I come from?", "Why was I created?", and "What causes my happiness or suffering?" (Anshori & Daud, 2024). The answers to these questions are not solely found through reason or empirical experience but require an inner journey involving *muhasabah* (self－reflection), *tazkiyat al-nafs* (soul purification), and the strengthening of one's relationship with the Creator. True self－knowledge leads one to realize their nature as a weak servant created to worship and draw nearer to Allah. This awareness fosters humility, submission, and a life orientation centered on spiritual values rather than worldly interests. Therefore, al－Ghazali places self－knowledge not only as a psychological aspect but also as a theological and spiritual foundation for attaining true and eternal happiness in this life and the hereafter.

Furthermore, al－Ghazali, in his Sufi thought, describes the human self as a complex kingdom made up of various inner elements and tendencies. He classifies human traits into several moral and spiritual levels: the animalistic trait related to biological needs such as eating, sleeping, and sexual desire; the beastly trait, which manifests as anger, aggression, and dominance; and the evil trait, which drives deceit, lies, and envy (Sukandar, 2010). On the other hand, humans are also endowed with angelic qualities— spiritual potential that allows one to recognize truth, witness divine majesty, and draw closer to Allah SWT. For al－Ghazali, true self－knowledge involves identifying these internal inclinations and engaging in spiritual struggle (*mujahadah*) to subdue the base traits while nurturing the noble ones rooted in the divine light (*fitrah*) within. Through the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, a person is guided toward a tranquil soul (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*) that fully surrenders to Allah. In this context, al－Ghazali frequently quotes the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW): "Man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu" ("Whoever knows himself knows his Lord") (Saputra & Wahid, 2023), emphasizing that the path to divine knowledge begins with self－mastery. Thus, self－knowledge is not only introspective but also a spiritual journey toward enlightenment, purification, and ultimately, true happiness in Islam.

According to al－Ghazali, the first step to knowing oneself is understanding that the human self is composed of a physical form (*jasmani*) and a spiritual essence (*ruhani*) (Al－Ghazali, 1982). For him, *ma'rifat al-nafs* is a process of conscious transformation, self－discovery, and deconditioning. Al－Ghazali explains that people often become trapped in surface－level living without striving to explore their true essence. The process of self－discovery unveils the reality of humans as spiritual beings, endowed with a divine soul (Q.S. As－Sajdah: 9), as caliphs on Earth (Q.S. Al－Baqarah: 3), and as servants who will ultimately return to their Lord (Q.S. Al－Baqarah: 156) (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). This realization impacts spiritual well－being by reducing existential anxiety, offering a deeper sense of meaning, and harmonizing one's physical and spiritual identities.
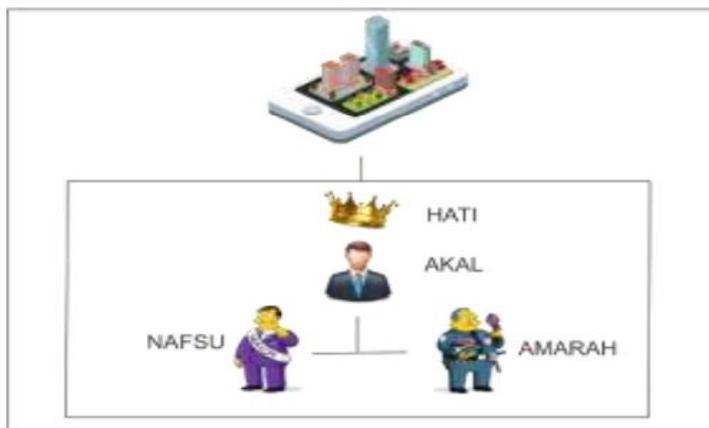
**Figure 2.** Illustration of the Kingdom of the Qalb

Self−knowledge, according to al−Ghazali, is also a process of discovering one's true identity. He argues that humans tend to focus on knowing their physical form, when in fact, the essence of a human lies not in the body but in the soul. Al−Ghazali identifies four components that constitute the human personality: *ruh* (spirit), *qalb* (heart), *aql* (intellect), and *nafs* (desire) (Duriana & Lihi, 2015). The *ruh* is a subtle and refined entity within the body that perceives and understands all things. The *qalb* is a spiritual, intangible entity granted by Allah, connected to the physical heart, and it is this spiritual heart that is the true essence of a human being. The *aql* refers to knowledge of the essence of all things and resides in the heart, while *nafs* represents the combined forces of anger and desire within the self. According to al−Ghazali, *nafs* exists in three stages: *nafs al-ammarah* (the commanding soul that urges evil), *nafs al-lawwamah* (the blaming soul that feels remorse), and *nafs al-muṭma'innah* (the tranquil soul) (Hamjah, 2016; Sarmani & Ninggal, 2008).

Al−Ghazali likens the human self to a kingdom: the body is the territory, the *qalb* is the king, and the *aql* serves as the prime minister. The *qalb* commands two types of soldiers: the visible (external) forces and the invisible (internal) forces (Al−Ghazaly, n.d.). The *qalb* acts as the ruler, while its soldiers are servants. The visible soldiers include the hands, feet, ears, tongue, and all bodily organs—both internal and external—which serve as tools and instruments for the *qalb*. These parts were created naturally obedient to the heart and are meant to be vehicles and provisions for the journey toward Allah. The body is the vehicle, knowledge is the provision, and righteous deeds are what enable one to attain those provisions (Husen, 2018). Meanwhile, the internal soldiers are unseen forces, including *nafs* (will and desire) and *ghadab* (anger), which serve as inner energies that influence the soul's direction and response to harm.

In running the affairs of the kingdom, all elements of the realm must submit to the *qalb* as the king (Najib, 2024). The *aql* (intellect) must always stand by the *qalb* as its prime minister, while desire (*nafs*) and anger (*ghadab*) must also remain obedient to the *qalb* as the ruler. When this order is upheld, the kingdom of the *qalb* will remain secure, peaceful, and prosperous. This harmony within the kingdom reflects the state of well−being in the human self. However, if the *qalb*'s assistants—*nafs* and *ghadab*—become traitors and conspire against the *qalb*, they may overthrow it and seize control, rendering the *qalb* powerless. In such a case, the throne is no longer occupied by the *qalb*, but by desire and anger, which then dominate the kingdom. The first step in this rebellion is to deceive the *aql*, the prime minister, persuading it to abandon the *qalb* and join their scheme. As a result, the person will experience inner turmoil and spiritual suffering, leading to what is known today as mental illness (Jalili & Ulfa, 2023). This corresponds

with a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which reads as follows: "Indeed, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart!" (Hadith narrated by al－Bukhari No. 52 & Muslim No. 1599) (Al－Bukhari, 2010).

All elements of the human soul—*qalb* (heart), *aql* (intellect), and *nafs* (desire)—are created by Allah SWT for a purpose and benefit (Al－Ghazali, 1991). Although *nafs* tends to be inclined toward evil and betrayal, it still holds significant value for human life. Without *nafs*, humans would lack desire and motivation—there would be no will to eat or drink, no interest in marriage, and no drive to seek knowledge. This would ultimately lead to human extinction, as people would neither reproduce nor build civilizations. Likewise, anger (*ghadab*) also plays an important role. Without anger, *nafs* would go uncontrolled, leading to excess in food and drink, uncontrolled sexual desire, and unbridled technological advancement. Human happiness can only be achieved when these elements of the soul operate in balance and harmony. Below is an explanation of how the human soul functions (Mujib & Mudzakir, 2002), (Al－Ghazali, 2002b).

### *Ma'rifatullah* (Knowing Allah)

For al－Ghazali, true happiness is not merely a fleeting sense of pleasure, but rather an eternal tranquility that arises from the awareness of Allah's presence. *Ma'rifatullah*—the knowledge of God—is the key to detaching oneself from worldly dependencies, attaining inner peace through *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *tawakkul* (trust in God), receiving the highest form of love (*mahabbah ila Allah*), and discovering the true meaning of life (Al－Ghazali, 1988).  In *Kimiya as-Sa'adah*, al－Ghazali explains that true happiness (*sa'adah*) can only be achieved through a genuine knowledge of Allah. *Ma'rifatullah* is the very foundation of such happiness. According to him, human beings are naturally inclined to seek eternal happiness, yet worldly happiness is temporary and ultimately unsatisfying for the soul. Only by knowing Allah—the Most Perfect Being—can one attain true inner contentment (Fitridah et al., 2023).

According to al－Ghazali (1058－1111), *ma'rifatullah* also has the power to remove spiritual anxiety. He explains that many people suffer from attachment to the world (*hubb al-dunya*), fear of losing wealth, status, or worldly pleasures, and spiritual emptiness due to being distant from Allah SWT. Through knowing Allah, one realizes that Allah is the true Owner of all things, thus eliminating anxiety over sustenance and fate. The world is temporary, while eternal happiness lies in the hereafter. As the Qur'an states, "Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an, Ar－Ra'd: 28). According to al－Ghazali, *ma'rifatullah* also leads to genuine divine love (*mahabbah ila Allah*). He asserts that the pinnacle of happiness is when the heart is filled with love for Allah  (Al－Ghazali, 2023). This love is unlike worldly affection, for love of Allah never disappoints—it is unconditional, transcendent, and provides profound inner peace and satisfaction. Those who love Allah find happiness in worship, trust, and complete surrender to Him.

*Ma'rifatullah*, in al－Ghazali's view, also frees human beings from the enslavement of their base desires. One of the sources of human suffering, according to him, is enslavement to *nafs* (desires) such as lust (*shahwat*) and anger (*ghadab*). Through the knowledge of Allah, people can discipline their *nafs* via spiritual training (*riyadhat al-nafs*), embrace simplicity (*zuhud*), detach from materialism, and focus on righteous deeds as provisions for the hereafter. This leads to *hurriyyah qalbiyyah*—spiritual liberation—which is the essence of happiness. Al－Ghazali also states that *ma'rifatullah* gives human life a clear purpose (Soleh, 2022). Those who do not know their Lord often live aimlessly.

In contrast, *ma'rifatullah* provides a clear life mission (Qur'an, Adh−Dhariyat: 56), peace when facing trials (Qur'an, Al−Baqarah: 155−157), and optimism rooted in Allah's mercy and compassion.

### Ma'rifat ad−Dunya (Understanding the World)

According to al−Ghazali (1058−111), happiness can also be achieved through a correct understanding of the world. He famously stated: "The world is like a shadow—if you chase it, it runs away; if you turn from it, it follows you." True happiness in understanding the world can be attained when one develops proper insight about its nature, interacts with it wisely according to the principles of the Shari'ah, and maintains a balanced view between worldly and spiritual life. For al−Ghazali, the world is a means, not an end. In *Kimiya as-Sa'adah*, he likens the world to a bridge to the afterlife (Qur'an, Al−Hadid: 20). It functions as a school for learning (*madrasah*), a field for planting righteous deeds (*mazra'ah*), and a trial ground (*mihnah*) for developing patience (Al−Ghazali, 2002). Therefore, he advocates for balance—between work and worship, possessing and giving, striving and relying on God. Excessive love of wealth (*hubb al-mal*), status (*hubb al-jah*), and lust (*hubb ash-shahawat*) are delusions that bind the human soul. In understanding the world, one must place it in the perspective of the hereafter: the world is a planting ground for the afterlife, a marketplace for spiritual transactions, and a battlefield for testing one's faith.

### Ma'rifat al−Akhirah (Knowing the Hereafter)

The fourth element of spiritual well−being according to al−Ghazali (1058−1111) is knowing the hereafter. For al−Ghazali, death is not the end, but a doorway to the reality of true life (*haqiqat al-hayah*), the final return (*ma'ad*), and the day of reckoning (*yawm al-hisab*). Understanding this reduces the fear of death (*death anxiety*) and provides eschatological peace. Through knowledge of the hereafter, one becomes aware of Paradise (bliss) and Hellfire (torment). Al−Ghazali  (1988) recommends that people contemplate Paradise (*tasawwur al-jannah*) and remember Hell (*tadhakkur an-nar*), as this motivates righteous actions and maintains a balance between fear (*khawf*) and hope (*raja'*).

Knowing the hereafter also encourages individuals to prepare for it by performing righteous deeds that bring ongoing reward, committing to lifelong learning and teaching, and earnestly raising righteous children. This cultivates spiritual security about the eternal future, inner satisfaction in doing good, and eschatological optimism. For al−Ghazali, death is the unveiling of divine reality (*tajalli ilahi*), the festival of Allah's lovers (*'id al-ashiqin*), and the soul's return to its Creator (*nafkhat al-ruh*). Through this awareness, a person realizes that true happiness is only fully attained in the afterlife. In the hereafter, the righteous will behold the divine essence (*lidzat al-ru'yah*), enjoy the companionship of prophets (*suhbah al-anbiya'*), and experience the deepest spiritual joy (*na'im al-qulub*) (Al−Ghazali, 2002b). Knowledge of the hereafter reveals its true reality. This awareness reduces fear of death, inspires motivation for righteous living, and fosters virtuous behavior—because those who know the hereafter are confident that, through such efforts, they will ultimately attain true and lasting happiness.

### Comparative Analysis of the Theory of Spiritual Well-Being and al-Ghazali

Fisher (1998) and al−Ghazali (1058−1111) both propose four dimensions of spiritual well−being. However, there are differences in the emphasis and interpretation of each

dimension. The following is a comparative overview of the spiritual well－being theories of Fisher (1998) and al－Ghazali (1058－1111):

**Table 1.** Comparison of the Dimensions of Spiritual Well－Being: Fisher and al－Ghazali

| Dimension of  Fisher | Perspective ofal-Ghazali |
|---|---|
| Personal | *Ma'rifat al-Nafs*: Self－awareness, purification of the soul, and the search for life's meaning |
| Commnunal | Relationship with others: Spreading kindness and embodying noble character |
| Environmental | Awareness of the reality of the world: Not being attached to material possessions |
| Transcedental | Deep connection with Allah: The ultimate goal of true happiness |

Based on the table above, the comparison between the theory of spiritual well－being by Fisher (1998) and the perspective of al－Ghazali (1058－1111) reveals both similarities and differences. In the **personal dimension**, Fisher (1998) emphasizes harmony with the self, while al－Ghazali (1058－1111) stresses the importance of *ma'rifat al-nafs* (self－knowledge) and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) as essential prerequisites for attaining true happiness. In the **communal dimension**, Fisher (1998) views social relationships as sources of well－being, whereas al－Ghazali emphasizes moral character, compassion, and social contribution as integral parts of the spiritual journey. Regarding the **environmental dimension**, Fisher includes the relationship with nature as a spiritual component, which in al－Ghazali's view is reflected in the attitude of *zuhud* (detachment) and non－attachment to worldly pleasures. As for the **transcendental dimension**, both place the relationship with God at the peak of spiritual experience. However, al－Ghazali gives greater emphasis to deep inner transformation through worship, remembrance (*dhikr*), and love for Allah as the core of ultimate happiness. The analysis shows that Fisher's theory and al－Ghazali's teachings in *Kimiya as-Sa'adah* share a strong common ground, especially in highlighting the importance of harmony across the four dimensions of life. Nevertheless, al－Ghazali places greater focus on the purification of the soul and an intense spiritual journey—not merely external balance, but profound internal transformation. In the context of education and personal development, integrating these two perspectives can enrich our understanding of holistic spiritual well－being, both psychologically and theologically.

## Discussions

The spiritual well－being model developed by Fisher (1998) and the concept of spirituality formulated by Imam al－Ghazali (1058－1111) in *Kimiya as-Sa'adah* share fundamental similarities, particularly in positioning spirituality as a core aspect of human well－being. Fisher (1998) outlines four relational dimensions of spiritual well－being: relationship with oneself, with others, with the environment, and with God. Meanwhile, al－Ghazali (1058－1111) presents four key aspects: self－knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*), knowledge of God (*ma'rifatullah*), knowledge of the world (*ma'rifat ad-dunya*), and knowledge of the hereafter (*ma'rifat al-akhirah*) (Al－Ghazali, 1982). Both agree that true happiness can only be achieved through meaningful and balanced relationships, especially

with the transcendent entity—God. While Fisher adopts a psychological and empirical approach and al－Ghazali builds upon a Sufi spiritual foundation, both emphasize the importance of life's meaning, inner peace, and relational harmony as the foundation of spiritual well－being.

Despite these shared principles, there are fundamental differences in the emphasis of their concepts. Fisher (1998) develops a conceptual framework that is empirically measurable and practically applicable in the fields of education, psychology, and mental health. His model focuses on external balance and social relationships as manifestations of integrated spiritual well－being. In contrast, al－Ghazali (1058－1111) emphasizes inner transformation through *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), *muhasabah* (self－reflection), and *ma'rifatullah* (knowledge of God) as the essence of true happiness. In al－Ghazali's view, spiritual well－being is not merely relational harmony, but a profound and ongoing spiritual struggle toward soul enlightenment. Thus, while Fisher emphasizes measurability and practical balance, al－Ghazali emphasizes mystical journeying and servitude to God as the essence of authentic spiritual happiness.

In today's increasingly complex and fast－paced world, integrating Fisher's model with al－Ghazali's perspective is highly relevant for enriching a holistic understanding of spiritual well－being. Fisher's model provides a systematic and practical structure, suitable for assessing spiritual well－being in educational settings, organizations, and mental health services. Meanwhile, al－Ghazali's approach offers philosophical and spiritual depth capable of addressing existential anxiety and inner emptiness that secular models may not reach. Therefore, synthesizing both perspectives can result in a paradigm of spiritual well－being that not only focuses on external balance but also emphasizes internal transformation rooted in Islamic values. This integrative approach opens new avenues for the development of Islamic counseling, character education, and value－based spiritual therapy.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the theory of spiritual well－being developed by John W. Fisher and the concept of spirituality presented by Imam al－Ghazali in Kimiya as－Sa'adah share a significant point of convergence, particularly in emphasizing the transcendental dimension as the core of spiritual well－being. Fisher outlines four relational dimensions—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental—that provide an empirical framework for understanding and assessing spiritual well－being broadly. In contrast, al－Ghazali highlights internal aspects such as the purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs), self－knowledge (ma'rifat al－nafs), and closeness to Allah as the path to true happiness (sa'dah). Although Fisher's approach is rooted in modern psychological thought and al－Ghazali's in a Sufi－transformative framework, the two can be integrated to form a comprehensive, applicable, and value－rich understanding of spiritual well－being. Therefore, it is recommended that future development of spiritual well－being theory and practice consider integrating contemporary scientific approaches with the profound spiritual values of Islam—especially within the contexts of education, counseling, and faith－based mental health enhancement

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