



Coping With Corruption Phenomena From The Perspective Of Al Ghazali (An Analysis Of Zuhud Therapy In Islam)

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Abstract

The phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia has become entrenched in various aspects of life, while countermeasures have not been effective due to weak moral and spiritual awareness, even among the educated. This paper offers the concept of zuhud in Islam as an alternative therapy, particularly through the thought of Imam Al-Ghazali. Zuhud is seen as a method of purifying the soul that can prevent greed and corrupt behavior. Using a library research approach, the analysis examines Al-Ghazali's works such as *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and compares them with the views of other scholars such as Shaykh Abdus Shamad al-Falimbani, Hamka, and Nawawi al-Bantani. The findings indicate that faith-based zuhud can serve as a preventive solution in shaping an anti-corruption personality.

Keywords: Zuhud; Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali; Corruption

1. Introduction

The global corruption index released by Transparency International reveals that 36% of respondents in Indonesia reported having paid bribes to obtain services, indicating that corruption is deeply entrenched in Indonesian society. Among the many existing problems, corruption has become one of the most serious issues today. It occurs at almost every level, from ordinary citizens to the government. In addition to harming the state's finances, corruption also has a negative impact on the economic and social rights of the people.

According to Braithwaite, the breakdown of Indonesia's regulatory order and societal norms has led to a higher incidence of crime, which is assumed to be one of the causes of the rampant level of corruption. Corruption in Indonesia is a serious problem that has penetrated the criminal justice system. It has been a part of Indonesian society since at least the Dutch colonial period, and possibly even earlier in the pre-colonial era.[1]

Purba argues that corrupt practices by public officials—such as bribery, gratuities, and other forms of corruption—are considered common in Indonesia's public sphere. Bribery occurs not only among those in power or in official positions, but has also infiltrated the judicial system. Bribery has become ingrained in every aspect of Indonesian life. The infiltration of corruption into law enforcement has made eradicating this crime extremely difficult. The increasing prevalence of corruption through bribery within law enforcement agencies has led to growing public distrust in the performance of these institutions, which are seen as being riddled with interference, vested interests, lack of good faith, and a lack of independence and seriousness in addressing corruption cases.[2]

Efforts to prevent corruption have not always yielded maximum results in curbing corrupt behavior, because most perpetrators are officials who hold power, wealth, and education, and who may have been cultivated since their school years. Because they occupy positions of authority and are well-educated, eradicating corruption is extremely difficult, as each perpetrator harbors greed and a sense of never being satisfied with what they already have. To fulfill their desires, corrupt actors exploit their abilities even when it conflicts with moral values. One reason corruption persists is that

the sanctions imposed on corruptors are relatively light, so those intending to commit corruption feel no fear. Corruption is an extraordinary crime because it causes state losses that, in turn, exacerbate poverty and unemployment in Indonesia. Ideally, corruptors should face the death penalty, but so far, no such punishment has been handed down, partly because the substance of the legislation is more favorable to corruptors.

The most effective way to combat corruption in Indonesia is through religious awareness, moral values, and strong character, so that potential offenders are reluctant to commit crimes. High moral values and character traits include patience, humility, absence of envy, sincerity, and contentment. These traits must be present in order to achieve the goal of asceticism, which is salvation from the torment of hellfire as punishment in the grave, the attitude of expecting rewards and blessings from Allah SWT, and the highest form of asceticism is love for Allah SWT. In Islam, there is the concept of *zuhud*, which can arise from personal religious consciousness. The concept of *zuhud* is considered highly effective in addressing the problem of corruption. *Zuhud* stems from the awareness and faith within a person, fostering a fear of taking what is not rightfully theirs and gratitude for the wealth and sustenance granted by Allah. This paper discusses the concept of *zuhud* according to one of the great scholars, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.

The approach used in this study is the *tasawuf* (Sufi) approach. While philosophy focuses more on proving a truth, *tasawuf* focuses on discovering the truth itself. One aspect of *tasawuf* is *zuhud*. *Zuhud* is a practice of the Sufis aimed at discovering the essence of the self and ultimate truth.

Etymologically, the term *tasawuf* derives from *tashawwafa*, *yatashawwafu*, *tashawwufan*, meaning “purification.” Essentially, *tasawuf* is the effort of its practitioners to develop a kind of spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and physical discipline (*riyadhah*) that is believed to support the process of purifying the soul or heart. Various definitions of *tasawuf* encompass meanings such as *shafa’* (purity), *wara’* (extreme caution to avoid violating religious boundaries), and *ma’rifah* (knowledge of God or the essence of all things). Regardless of the interpretation, all agree that the term is related to the root *shafa’*, meaning pure. Ultimately, it culminates in the Qur’anic teaching of purifying the heart—one of the ways being through *zuhud*. [4]

Imam al-Ghazali is one of the most prominent scholars of *tasawuf*, living in the 11th century CE. He produced many monumental works, including *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, *Al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, *Al-Mustasfa min ‘Ilm al-Usul*, and *Bidayat al-Hidayah*. His works have had a significant influence on the Islamic world, both in the Middle East and in other regions such as South Asia and the Malay Archipelago. His thoughts on *zuhud* and *tasawuf* have served as a guide for Muslims in leading a balanced life between the worldly and the hereafter. [5]

Several studies have examined Imam al-Ghazali’s Sufi thought, such as Choiriyah’s work *Konsep Tasawuf Al-Ghazali dalam Kitab Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, Tita Amalia et al. *Relevansi Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghazali terhadap Problematika Spiritual Masyarakat Modern*, and Arafah Pramasto’s *Kontribusi Imam Al-Ghazali terhadap Perkembangan Intelektual Islam pada Abad Pertengahan*.

Papers related to *zuhud* include “Hamka’s Doctrine of Zuhd” by Nur Hadi Ihsan, “Implementation of Zuhd in The Islah Movement of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani (D. 521–561)”, Moh. Fuadholi’s *The Concept of Zuhd According to Al-Qushayri in Risalah al-Qushayriyyah* [6], Ahmad Wafi Nur Safaat’s *Konsep Zuhud Menurut Syekh Abdul Qodir Al Jailani: Studi Kitab Tafsir Al-Jailani* [7], Ratna Dewi’s *Konsep Zuhud pada Ajaran Tasawuf dalam Kehidupan Santri Pada*

Pondok Pesantren[8], Salma Rusyda's *Konsep Zuhud Perspektif Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*[9], Satria et al.'s *Konsep Zuhud Syekh Nawawi Al-Batani dan Relevansinya dengan Pembentukan Moral*[10], and Ihwan Amalih and Anisatul Badriyah's *Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Zuhud dalam Kehidupan Sosial Kiai Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Prenduan*[11].

As for research on corruption, examples include Miftakhuddin's *Historiografi Korupsi di Indonesia: Resensi Buku Korupsi dalam Silang Sejarah Indonesia*[12] and Fadli M Iskandar's *Praktik Tindak Pidana Korupsi dalam Peradilan Indonesia dan Upaya Pencegahan Korupsi Oleh Penegak Hukum di Indonesia*[1].

Unlike these previous studies, the present research aims to discuss Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's concept of *zuhud* as a potential solution to the ongoing discourse on corruption. Studies on *zuhud* are usually spiritual and individual in nature, but have not been widely associated with social ethics and anti-corruption. The study analyzes collected data and presents it descriptively.

2. Method

The research method used in this paper is library research with a Sufi approach. Library research was conducted by examining various classical and modern literary sources related to the concept of *zuhud* in Islam, particularly the thoughts of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in his monumental work *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. The data used was sourced from the works of great scholars such as Sheikh Abdus Samad al-Falimbani, Buya Hamka, and Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani, which were then compared and analyzed to find their relevance to corruption prevention efforts. The Sufi approach was chosen because the focus of this study is on the spiritual and moral dimensions of human beings, particularly in the effort to purify the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) through the practice of *zuhud*. With this approach, the study seeks to reveal how the values of *zuhud* can function as spiritual therapy that can foster moral awareness, control greed, and shape an anti-corruption personality. The analysis is conducted descriptively and interpretively by interpreting Sufi texts and relating them to the social phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia.

3. Result & Discussion

3.1 Biography of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Imam al-Ghazali's full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Ghazali al-Thusi. He was born in 450 AH/1058 AD in Tus, a city in the region of Khurasan (now Iran). He passed away in Tus on the 14th of Jumadil Akhir 505 AH or December 19, 1111 CE. Imam al-Ghazali was given the title "Hujjatul Islam," meaning "Defender of Islam," due to his expertise in various fields of religious knowledge. Al-Ghazali came from a humble family. His father was a wool spinner, from which the name al-Ghazali is derived, from "*ghazzal*," meaning spinner. His father deeply loved knowledge and entrusted al-Ghazali and his brother Ahmad to a Sufi before his death.[1]

Al-Ghazālī is renowned by the honorific title *Hujjat al-Islām* (the Proof of Islam). He was a distinguished scholar, educator, and thinker whose intellectual contributions spanned various disciplines, as well as a highly prolific author. Among his notable works are *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah*, *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, *Mi'yār al-'Ilm*, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, *al-Ma'ārif al-*

‘Aqliyyah, Mishkāt al-Anwār, Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn, al-Iqtisād fī al-I’tiqād, Ayyuhā al-Walad, al-Mustasfā, Iljām al-‘Awām ‘an ‘Ilm al-Kalām, and Mīzān al-‘Amal.

Among these diverse contributions, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* stands out as his most monumental and enduring work. This magnum opus is widely regarded as his greatest achievement, celebrated both in the Islamic world and beyond. Its profound influence has been acknowledged by numerous scholars, including Imām al-Nawawī, who famously remarked that the *Iḥyā’* occupies a place in the Muslim scholarly tradition akin to that of the Qur’an itself, being recited and studied continuously across generations.[13]

3.2 The Concept of Zuhud by Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Happiness is a fundamental pursuit of human beings. It constitutes a vital aspect of life as it is closely related to one’s emotions and inner states. Many people tend to define the sources of happiness merely in terms of the physical and material, while neglecting the metaphysical dimensions. Numerous studies have been conducted on the means of attaining happiness; however, such forms of happiness are often temporary, as they are confined to the fulfillment of mere desires—corruption being one such example. In response, Imām al-Ghazālī offers an Islamic perspective through the concept of *zuhd* (asceticism).[14] Imam Al-Ghazali said that asceticism does not mean abandoning all worldly possessions. Rather, asceticism is related to rank, authority, and inner attitude. The essence of asceticism itself is an inner state that is not tainted by worldly ambitions.[3]

Zuhd in Islam is one of the central concepts developed within the Sufi tradition. The term *zuhd* derives from the verb *zahada*, which means “to be uninterested.” Etymologically, *zuhd* is defined as *raghiba ‘an shay’in wa tarakahu*, meaning “to lose interest in something and to abandon it.” It is also interpreted as *zahada fī al-dunyā*, that is, to disengage oneself from worldly pleasures in order to devote oneself to worship.[15]

Terminologically, *zuhd* refers to the redirection of one’s spiritual orientation away from worldly concerns. A person who practices *zuhd* does not set the material world as his ultimate goal. The concept of *zuhd* encompasses two dimensions. First, it is an integral aspect of Sufism, often described as a *maqām* (spiritual station). A *maqām* represents a stage in the spiritual journey that a Sufi must traverse in order to draw closer to God. Second, *zuhd* may also be understood as a manifestation of Islamic morality, embodying an ethical attitude that shapes one’s character and conduct.[16]

In general terms, *zuhd* refers to the attitude of distancing oneself from all matters related to the material world. The heart of a *zāhid* (ascetic) must not be bound to worldly attachments, nor regard them as its ultimate goal. Rather, the world serves merely as a means to attain a higher level of piety destined for the hereafter. This study focuses on Imām al-Ghazālī’s perspective on *zuhd*. It should be noted that Sufi scholars differ in their interpretations of *zuhd*. Within this context, the Sufi path is regarded as the spiritual journey undertaken to attain the station (*maqām*) of *zuhd*. [17]

The concept of *zuhd* has also been emphasized by various scholars, including Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and a number of scholars from the Nusantara. One of the most significant treatments of *zuhd* is found in al-Ghazālī’s monumental work, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. The essence of *zuhd* is the act of turning away from lesser things in pursuit of that which is greater—detaching from the world, loving the hereafter, and withdrawing from everything other than God, Exalted be He. Three fundamental elements must be realized in the practice of *zuhd*: the state of the soul, knowledge, and action. This occurs when an individual’s inner disposition distances itself from the world, recognizing it as inferior in value

compared to the hereafter, and thus directing its love toward the latter. Knowledge is actualized when one truly understands that the world is of lesser worth than the hereafter. Finally, both of these dispositions—inner state and knowledge—must be embodied in outward action (*‘amal*).[17]

According to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, *zuhd* is an attitude practiced wholeheartedly; it is not merely expressed outwardly through physical acts or words, but rather resides in the heart, akin to *taqwā* and love for God. Generally, a *zāhid* strives to eliminate worldly inclinations from within himself.

Zuhud has three levels. First, Zuhud kha 'ifin, which is the desire to be saved from the torment of hellfire and all kinds of suffering in the hereafter. Second, zuhud al-rajin, which is the desire to obtain pleasure in the hereafter. Third, zuhud al-arifin, which is the desire to meet Allah out of love for Him. For Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani, a zahid feels imprisoned, even though he is surrounded by wealth and a spacious house. His family is rich and influential, they are happy and laugh around him, but he is in an inner prison. His face is cheerful, but his heart is full of anxiety. He has indeed divorced himself from the world, his heart is solely focused on His presence.

For ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, a true *zāhid* feels imprisoned even while surrounded by abundant provision, a spacious house, and a family adorned with wealth and status. Though those around him may rejoice and laugh, he experiences an inner captivity. His face may appear radiant and cheerful, yet his heart is filled with deep restlessness. He has, in essence, divorced himself from the world, and his heart aspires solely toward the Divine Presence.[17]

One of the contemporary Sufi thinkers, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, also offers his own interpretation of *zuhd*. In his book *Living Sufism*, he discusses *zuhd* in relation to the concepts of *ḥāl* and *maqām*, placing *zuhd* among the higher spiritual stations. Nasr defines *zuhd* as *renunciation*, that is, the rejection of material and worldly attachments.

From the Indonesian context, the thought of Buya Hamka (Haji Abdul Malik ibn Karim Amrullah) provides another perspective on *zuhd*. For Hamka, the essence of *zuhd* is embodied in the meaning of “not desiring” worldly grandeur, wealth, or social status. A *zāhid* is one whose heart is not bound by material possessions; whether such possessions exist or not makes no difference, for his life remains in balance. Nevertheless, physically he may still live amidst material abundance, for as a human being he embodies a dual dimension—spiritual and physical.[18]

According to Hamka, the essence of *zuhd* is reflected in the attitude of being content whether in poverty or wealth—whether one possesses nothing at all or even becomes a millionaire. What matters is that material possessions should never become a cause for forgetting God or neglecting religious obligations. *Zuhd* does not signify withdrawal or exclusivity from worldly life. On the contrary, Islam encourages the spirit of striving, sacrifice, and hard work, rather than indolence. This view resonates with al-Qushayrī, who emphasized that a *maqām* is the spiritual station attained by a servant of God as a result of refined manners, courtesy, and discipline cultivated through persistent effort.[19]

For Hamka, true wealth lies in finding sufficiency in what one possesses and being ready to accept it with contentment. Wealth, in his view, serves only as a means to nurture love, facilitate worship, and strengthen faith in devotion to God. By contrast, wealth pursued as an end in itself is but a delusion; attachment to material possessions blinds the heart and ultimately extinguishes love for others.[19]

According to Shaykh Nawawī al-Bantānī, *zuhd* is the disposition in which a person realizes that everything possessed by human beings is insignificant compared to what is with God, Exalted is He. *Zuhd* thus signifies being content with the sustenance granted by God and refraining from desiring the provision bestowed upon others. Shaykh Nawawī is regarded as one of the early Sufi scholars who interpreted *zuhd* as an expression of *riḍā* (contentment) and *tawakkul* (trustful reliance) upon what God has decreed.[20]

Shaykh Nawawī formulated the concept of *maqāmāt* in the form of nine counsels known as “The Path of the Saints” (*Ṭarīq al-Awliyā*), designed to guide a person toward closeness to God. These counsels begin with repentance (*tawbah*) and conclude with the proper use of time. Among them are six key elements: *qanā‘ah* (contentment), *zuhd* (asceticism), the pursuit of knowledge of the Sharī‘ah, adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet, *tawakkul* (trustful reliance on God), *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *‘uzlah* (spiritual seclusion). Of these nine counsels, *zuhd* is placed among the first three stages that must be traversed.[21]

Shaykh Nawawī categorized *zuhd* based on the object that is renounced. The first is the *zuhd* of the *‘ārifīn* (gnostics), which represents the core of Shaykh Nawawī’s teaching: restraining oneself only to what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and necessary for subsistence. The second is the *zuhd* of the common people, which entails abandoning all that is prohibited (*ḥarām*), a duty incumbent upon every believer.

The concept of *zuhd* according to Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbānī, as elaborated in his *Hidāyah al-Sālikīn*, does not imply a total renunciation of worldly needs, but rather taking from the world only to the extent of necessity—such as food, clothing, and shelter—without excess. He outlines three levels (*martabat*) of *zuhd*. First, an individual detaches himself from the world while his heart still inclines toward it, yet he exerts effort to remove this attachment from within. This constitutes the initial stage of *zuhd*. Second, his heart grows to detest the world entirely, harboring no inclination toward it, for he realizes that the pleasures of the world and those of the hereafter cannot coexist. Third, his heart is neither inclined to nor averse from the world; its presence or absence is regarded as equal. At this stage, the treasures of God are likened to an ocean, and the heart no longer turns to wealth—neither out of love nor out of hatred. This third level is known as *akmal* (perfect). Beyond this lies the highest stage, referred to as *Zuhd al-‘Ārifīn*, in which the heart turns away from everything other than God, whether pertaining to this world or the hereafter, and remains wholly directed toward Him alone.[22]

Zuhd represents a lofty spiritual station characterized by servitude to God, detachment from the world, devotion to the hereafter, and the attainment of divine love, which in turn earns the affection of humankind. As the Prophet ﷺ said: “Practice *zuhd* in the world, and God will love you; and practice *zuhd* toward what people possess, and people will love you.” In another ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ declared: “When God intends good for His servant, He causes him to become detached from the world, makes him long for the hereafter, and shows him his own faults.” Furthermore, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: “Whoever renounces the world, God will place wisdom—that is, the knowledge of ultimate reality (*‘ilm al-ḥaqīqah*)—within his heart, enabling him to speak it, and He will inspire him with insight into the truth.”[23]

The concept of *zuhd* in al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* is found in the fourth quarter (*Rub‘ al-Munjiyāt*), specifically in the fifth chapter entitled *Kitāb al-Zuhd wa al-Taqwā*. This section elaborates on the essence of *zuhd*, its virtues, its various degrees, and related matters. *Zuhd* is regarded as a highly noble spiritual station (*maqām*), one that is constituted by knowledge, inner states, and

actions. It is described as the renunciation of worldly attachments and the turning of one's heart toward the hereafter—an attainment considered to be among the highest degrees of spiritual realization.[17]

Imām al-Ghazālī defines *zuhd* not merely as the outward abandonment of the world, but more profoundly as the detachment of the heart from worldly attachments. It does not signify the rejection of wealth or occupation per se, but rather of those worldly concerns that distract a person from the hereafter. For al-Ghazālī, *zuhd* means not rejoicing over what one gains from the world, nor grieving over what one loses from it.

He classifies *zuhd* into three levels. The first is the *zuhd* of the common people (*al-‘awām*), which entails avoiding what is prohibited and refraining from excess in what is lawful, motivated by the hope of reward and Paradise. The second is the *zuhd* of the elect (*al-khawāṣṣ*), characterized by detachment from the world and living solely in pursuit of God's pleasure. The third is the *zuhd* of the elect of the elect (*khawāṣṣ al-khawāṣṣ*), in which one abandons everything other than God out of pure love and servitude to Him.

According to Imām al-Ghazālī, *zuhd* does not signify hatred of the world; rather, it means regarding the world as a *wasīlah* (a means) for drawing nearer to God. Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that *zuhd* is not equivalent to poverty, but instead to freeing the heart from attachment to worldly concerns. Among the characteristics of a *zāhid* are the absence of ambition for wealth or status, the lack of regret over worldly loss, refraining from praising or disparaging others on the basis of their possessions, and viewing the world with caution and vigilance.[17]

Imām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī discusses the concepts of *zuhd* and *faqr* within the section *Rub‘ al-Muhlikāt* of his *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, a part devoted to the maladies of the heart and the discipline of the soul. For al-Ghazālī, *faqr* does not merely denote the absence of wealth, but rather an inner awareness of the human being's absolute dependence on God. The praiseworthy form of poverty (*faqr*) is characterized by refraining from begging, accepting with contentment (*riḍā*) the divine decree (*qaḍā’ wa qadar*), and preserving one's dignity. True poverty (*al-faqr al-ḥaqīqī*) is encapsulated in the principle *lā mālakā laka illā Allāh*—the recognition that one possesses nothing except God. In contrast, *zuhd* (*al-i‘rāḍ ‘an al-dunyā*) refers to turning away from excessive attachment to worldly matters without abandoning worldly life altogether. According to al-Ghazālī, *zuhd* entails releasing the heart from dependence upon the world, even while the hands remain engaged in managing material possessions.[17] In sum, al-Ghazālī's conception of *zuhd* redefines the relationship between human beings and the material world. It is not a call to poverty or withdrawal, but a discipline of the heart that restrains greed and cultivates moral independence. Such inner detachment—when integrated into the ethical fabric of society—becomes an antidote to corruption, transforming *zuhd* from a purely mystical ideal into a practical moral therapy.

3.3 The Concept of Zuhud in Overcoming Corruption Cases

Corruption in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon; its roots can be traced back to the period before the country's independence. The cycle of human life is often analogized with various types of animals. For instance, some individuals behave like ants, continuously collecting and hoarding wealth without considering their actual needs. Such conduct reflects what may be termed a “hoarding culture.” In reality, this culture of accumulation has manifested in the strengthening of corrupt practices within society, the nation, and the state—ranging from lower-level officials to those in the highest offices. Despite numerous anti-corruption initiatives promoted by the Indonesian government,

the results have remained largely insignificant. This is evident in the persistent recurrence of corruption cases and the enormous amount of state funds embezzled by corrupt actors, which continues unabated and causes systemic harm to national development.[24]

The emergence of individuals with corrupt and oppressive mentalities who exploit their fellow human beings is, in essence, a manifestation of *ḥubb al-dunyā*—a deep attachment to worldly life, particularly love of wealth. Ironically, many of those involved in corruption identify as Muslims, and some have even performed the fifth pillar of Islam, the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*). This shows a fundamental spiritual decline. Formal acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage often fail to touch the deeper spiritual dimension, which is the purification of the heart from greed and worldly desires. In fact, the root of corrupt behavior is not merely a weak legal system or supervision, but a disease of the heart in the form of *ḥubb al-dunyā*—an excessive love of wealth and status. In this context, Sufi teachings, particularly the concept of *zuhd* taught by Imam Al-Ghazali, offer an alternative spiritual therapy. *Zuhd* is not interpreted as an absolute rejection of the world, but rather as an effort to reorient the heart so that it is not enslaved by the world. Thus, the internalization of the values of *zuhd* can be a moral and spiritual approach to overcoming a corrupt mentality, fostering transcendental awareness, and restoring human behavior to a balance between the world and the hereafter. Within this framework, the concept of *zuhd*—which emphasizes the purification of the soul from excessive attachment to worldly possessions and wealth in the pursuit of divine pleasure (*riḍā*) and spiritual knowledge (*maʿrifah*) of God—can be utilized as a transformative paradigm to address the problem of corrupt mentality among Muslim public officials.[25]

Zuhd views the pursuit of livelihood, even through lawful means and with lawful possessions, as potentially corrupting the soul if such endeavors and wealth become chains that bind the heart and distract one from the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah. This danger is all the more severe when the pursuit itself involves what is unlawful (*ḥarām*). *Zuhd*, therefore, serves as a moral discipline that restrains individuals from engaging in prohibited acts. A person who adopts a *zuhd*-oriented way of life will refrain from committing corruption, even when the opportunity arises, because his heart is filled with awareness of Allah's love and constant surveillance. Abstaining from the unlawful compels individuals to seek wealth with sincerity through hard work and professionalism, which in turn prevents them from falling into bribery, manipulation, corruption, oppression of the weak, and other unethical practices.[17]

Zuhd guides an individual to avoid greed, thereby abstaining even from doubtful (*shubuhāt*) matters, let alone from what is explicitly unlawful (*ḥarām*). In this respect, the concept of *zuhd* is highly relevant in efforts to combat corruption, as corrupt mentality is directly proportional to greed. *Zuhd* emerges as a moral safeguard against the abuse of authority for personal or group enrichment. It functions as a fortress that protects individuals from developing a corrupt disposition. In other words, *zuhd* represents a preventive solution to corruption.

Corruption is the fruit of *ḥubb al-māl*—the excessive love of wealth—that turns wealth into an end in itself rather than a means. Corruption is often associated with *ḥubb al-māl*, which signifies a profound attachment to material possessions. In Islam, the love of wealth is not entirely condemned, but it must remain within reasonable limits. Wealth can serve as a means of worship, supporting one's family, assisting others, and fulfilling various social and religious obligations. However, when taken to excess, *ḥubb al-māl* can lead a person into greed, avarice, and perpetual dissatisfaction.

Corruption may be defined as the abuse of power, position, or trust for personal or group enrichment. The root of such corrupt behavior emerges from excessive *ḥubb al-māl* (love of wealth),

namely the desire to accumulate wealth without regard to what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) or unlawful (*ḥarām*). Imam al-Ghazālī, in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, explains that excessive *ḥubb al-māl* cultivates miserliness, greed, and ultimately leads to unlawful actions. Excessive attachment to wealth gives rise to several spiritual maladies, including negligence of the Hereafter, the growth of avarice and covetousness, entrapment in sin, and ultimately, remorse in the Hereafter.[17]

The treatment of psychological problems as undertaken by modern psychologists differs significantly from that of the Sufis in their efforts toward *healing* or the restoration of mental health. In addressing the purification and recovery of the soul, the early Sufi masters employed methods that were both distinctive and profound. They were “appealing” in the sense that their practice required little to no financial cost—indeed, often being entirely free of charge. At the same time, they were “unique,” for the Sufis took pride when patients willingly and consciously followed, practiced, and elevated their spiritual disciplines. *Muḥāsabah al-nafs* (self-reckoning) and *al-wa'yyah* (heightened awareness) were among the initial diagnostic tools commonly employed by the Sufis as a means of healing psychological disturbances.[26]

According to the Sufi scholars, the *nafs* or soul is understood as the faculty that encompasses the blameworthy traits of human beings which must be resisted and not followed. This dimension of the soul primarily consists of the *nafs al-ammārah* (the commanding self inclined to evil) and the *nafs al-lawwāmah* (the reproachful self). Collectively, these are often referred to as *hawā al-nafs* (carnal desires). At the same time, every human soul possesses an innate disposition (*fiṭrah*) to acknowledge its Creator. This natural inclination serves as a response to what has been implanted within, namely the tendency to seek and recognize the truth.[27]

Islamic psychology does not merely address psychological aspects in isolation but is multidimensional in nature, as elaborated in the Qur'an and Hadith through concepts such as *al-karb* (distress), *al-'aql* (intellect), and *al-rūḥ* (spirit). From the Islamic perspective, the understanding of the soul acknowledges that modern schools of thought—such as psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanism—remain incomplete. These approaches fail to encompass the dimensions of *al-rūḥ* and *al-fiṭrah*, both of which are fundamental in the Islamic view for shaping religious consciousness within human life.[28]

Thus, corruption is not merely a matter of weaknesses in the legal system or oversight, but rather a spiritual crisis rooted in the dominance of *ḥubb al-dunyā* in the human soul. Through the concept of *zuhud* in Sufism, especially as taught by Imam al-Ghazālī, humans are invited to reorient their lives so that they are not enslaved by wealth and power, but rather use them as a means of serving Allah SWT. The internalization of *zuhud* values is a strategic step in building ethical awareness, fostering integrity, and strengthening the spirituality of Muslim public officials. Therefore, *zuhud* functions not only as an individual moral teaching, but also as a spiritual paradigm that is relevant for shaping a social and governmental order that is clean, just, and oriented towards divine pleasure.

4. Conclusion

Corruption in Indonesia is not merely a legal issue but also a psychological and spiritual problem. This practice stems from greed and weak moral values, which cannot be addressed solely through legal-formal approaches. According to Imam al-Ghazali, *zuhd* is the detachment of the heart from worldly attachments, not a total rejection of the world itself. The purpose of *zuhd* is to make the world a means to attain the Hereafter, rather than an ultimate goal in life. The concept of *zuhd*, as explained by al-Ghazali and other scholars such as Shaykh Abdus Samad al-Falimbani and Buya Hamka, offers a profound spiritual and moral framework for addressing inner diseases such as corruption.

Zuhd therapy can serve as a preventive solution to counteract a corrupt mentality. By practicing simplicity, *qanā'ah* (contentment), and independence from material possessions, individuals can avoid manipulative behavior and the erosion of social values. Within the framework of Islamic psychology, *zuhd* functions as a form of spiritual therapy that fosters inner awareness and shapes individuals who are morally and spiritually sound, which in turn has a positive impact on society and the nation as a whole.

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