

Construction of Equality-Based Social Ethics in the Thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali

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The degradation of contemporary social ethics has given rise to an urgent need for a normative foundation capable of addressing the phenomena of dehumanization, individualism, and social fragmentation. This article aims to reconstruct an equality-based social ethics through a synthesis of the concepts of justice (al-‘adl) and interpersonal relations in the thought of Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazali. Regarding the provisional stance, this study assumes that the classical Islamic tradition of thought contains normative principles relevant to the renewal of social ethics, but the conceptual formulation of equality has not been systematically explored in previous studies, creating a research gap that needs to be filled. The study uses a qualitative philosophical-comparative approach based on library research. The analysis focuses on the construction of justice as an integral virtue and on the discourse of interpersonal relations (friendship, brotherhood, compassion, mutual assistance) as an arena for moral actualization. The findings indicate that justice in both thinkers functions as an ethical framework that unites various dimensions of social life; interpersonal relations become a concrete medium for moral expectations, and equality is understood as a recognition of the inherent moral dignity of each individual, rather than as equality of social status. The synthesis of these thoughts produces a conceptual model of equality-based social ethics that is relevant to addressing the ethical challenges of modern society and is expected to become a normative reference in the development of social policies and moral education practices.

Keywords: Social Ethics, Equality, Justice, Ibn Miskawaih, Al-Ghazali..

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Introduction

The declining respect for others in social relationships is a concrete manifestation of an ethical crisis. The treatment of humans as mere tools to achieve goals, rather than as dignified objectives, is increasingly widespread in the economic, political, and digital spheres.¹ In the context of Muslim society, this phenomenon is increasingly felt through the weakening of brotherhood practices and the breakdown of norms of etiquette in social interactions. This situation indicates that the issue of social ethics is not merely a theological issue, but rather an urgent civilizational challenge that needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, increasing individualism and weakening social solidarity are further reinforced by interaction patterns in the digital age. Social media, instead of strengthening human connections, often becomes an arena for dehumanization, polarization, and the construction of exclusive identities.² Norms of social courtesy, interpersonal trust, and a sense of shared responsibility have significantly eroded. In such situations, questions about the ethical foundations that can support dignified social relations become increasingly pressing.

Human moral equality is one of the most fundamental foundations for the construction of just and humane social ethics.³ Equality in this sense does not refer to equal capacity, status, or social standing, but rather to the recognition of the equal moral worth of every human individual as a dignified being. This recognition serves as a normative principle that determines how humans treat each other in various social relationships. The tradition of Islamic moral philosophy, particularly in the thought of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali, provides rich intellectual resources for exploring this dimension of moral equality. A critical review of previous research shows that studies on the ethics of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali are generally conducted separately or limited to specific aspects. Some studies compare the two from a general perspective of virtue ethics, but few specifically explore the dimension of moral equality as a foundation of social ethics.⁴

Ibn Miskawayh is recognized as one of the earliest Muslim philosophers to develop ethics systematically within the Islamic tradition. His monumental work, *Tabdhib al-Akhlak wa Tathir al-A'raq*, not only articulates a system of virtue ethics influenced by a synthesis of Greek thought, particularly Aristotle and Plato, but also adapts this structure of virtue to the normative horizon of Islam. Within his framework, eternal virtues such as justice, wisdom, courage, and self-control are positioned as character qualities that form the basis for

¹ Siti Vania Nuraida, Suci Nurulfadilah, and Opik Taupik Kurahman, "Krisis Adab Sosial Di Kalangan Gen Z: Relevansi Dan Aplikasi Pendidikan Islam Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *ALMUSTOFA: Journal of Islamic Studies and Research* 2, no. 1 (2025): 43–56, <https://ejournal.bamala.org/index.php/almustofa/article/view/537>.

² Ahmad Yain et al., "Modal Sosial Masyarakat Lokal Dalam Memperkuat Ketahanan Sosial Pasca Transformasi Digital," *RIGGS* 5, no. 1 (2026): 2985–2994, <https://doi.org/10.31004/riggs.v5i1.6111>.

³ Sigit Triyono et al., "Filsafat Moral Immanuel Kant Dan Implementasinya Dalam Keharmonisan Masyarakat Multikultural," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pendidikan IPS* 19, no. 1 (2025): 72–80, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21067/jppi.v19i1.11250>.

⁴ Annisa Rizki Ananda, "Dimensi Nilai Etika Islam Al-Ghazali Dan Pencegahan Cyberbullying Di Kalangan Remaja," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, Dan Fenomena Agama* 22, no. 1 (2021): 114–28, <https://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/JIA/article/view/9025>.

individual well-being and social harmony.⁵ Justice (*al-'adl*) is central; it is understood not simply as a distributive or legalistic rule, but as an integrative virtue that binds and guides all moral dimensions, both personal and relational. Thus, Ibn Miskawaih's position marks a significant shift from a purely theological ethical emphasis to a systematic, rational, philosophical ethical elaboration oriented toward the formation of moral character.⁶

Al-Ghazali, though living within the same intellectual tradition, offered a distinct yet complementary ethical perspective. Al-Ghazali attempted to synthesize Islamic law, practical philosophy, and Sufism to construct a holistic theory of morality. For Al-Ghazali, the formation of morality was not merely a matter of external regulations or social codes of conduct, but rather a process of inner transformation that leads humans to spiritual perfection.⁷ His ethical conception places theological awareness as an ontological and normative foundation, with respect for fellow human beings understood as a concrete manifestation of obedience and reverence for God. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali pays particular attention to the relational dimensions of friendship, brotherhood, compassion, and mutual assistance as arenas where moral virtues are tested and realized. Al-Ghazali's position within the Islamic tradition serves as a meeting point between philosophical rationality, the norms of Islamic jurisprudence, and the spiritual depth of Sufism, resulting in a comprehensive and transformative ethical approach.⁸

Although these two figures have long been the subject of historical and philosophical study, there is a gap in research that is both theoretically and practically relevant. First, studies that explicitly extract and reconstruct the moral equality dimension from the ethical discourse of these two thinkers are still very limited. In many studies, attention is more focused on aspects of general virtue, moral epistemology, or syncretism between Greek and Islamic philosophy. Readings that explore how the concept of equality can be elaborated from the framework of justice and human relations between these two thinkers have not been systematically compiled. Second, there is no conceptual model of equality-based social ethics that synthesizes the theoretical contributions of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali. This means that a conceptual breakthrough that combines elements of virtue, justice as an integrative principle, and the relational dimension to form a normative foundation for social equality has not been adequately formulated.⁹ Third, the relationship between this classical thought and contemporary social ethical challenges such as dehumanization, human

⁵ Fadhilah Sukmawati Tanjung, Buchori, and Muhamad Parhan, "Filosofi Etika Ibn Miskawaih Dan Implementasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Intelektualita* 14, no. 1 (2025): 82–91, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19109/intelektualita.v14i1.26824>.

⁶ Fauzi Maulana Adisyah Harahap, Syarifuddin, and Zulfi Imran, "Dekadensi Moral Di Era Digital Analisis Konsep Akhlak Ibnu Miskawayh Sebagai Solusi Etika Media Sosial," *Future Academia: The Journal of Multidisciplinary Research on Scientific and Advanced* 4, no. 2 (2026): 595–603, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61579/future.v4i2.862>.

⁷ Leny Sumarni and Ita Tryas Nur Rochbani, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Al-Ghazali: Antara Etika, Akhlak, Dan Pengembangan Karakter," *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum* 3, no. 5 (2025): 6154–63, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61104/alz.v3i5.2394>.

⁸ Sumarni and Rochbani.

⁹ Suci Rachmawati, "Analisis Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Dan Ibnu Miskawaih Tentang Pendidikan Anak," *Oasis: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Islam* 10, no. 1 (2026): 73–88, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24235/oasis.v10i1.20746>.

commodification, extreme individualism, and social fragmentation triggered by political-economic dynamics and digital technology has not been critically and applicably analyzed. Consequently, the potential of classical thought as a source of normative renewal to address modern ethical dilemmas has not been adequately explored.¹⁰

This gap forms the focus of this research. This study seeks to question how the concepts of justice and interpersonal relations in the thought of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali can be reconstructed into the basis of a social ethics model based on equality that is relevant to contemporary ethical challenges. This research methodology is rooted in a qualitative study that combines philosophical and comparative approaches with an in-depth literature review. The aim is to understand, interpret, and reconstruct classical ethical concepts to make them relevant to contemporary ethical issues such as dehumanization, human commodification, extreme individualism, and the fragmentation of social relations in both the physical and digital realms. Data collection was conducted through intensive textual document study and a thematic literature review. Primary texts were read thematically, focusing on specific chapters and themes relevant to the topic. In Ibn Miskawaih's reading, the emphasis is on the structure of virtue and the rationality of justice as integrative virtues. Furthermore, interpersonal relationships, also discussed in the book "*Tahdzibul Akhlak*," will be examined thematically, as mentioned previously. Meanwhile, in Al-Ghazali's reading, the focus is on the integration of ethics with spiritual practices and the relational dimension, emphasizing inner formation and theological recognition of human dignity.

The analysis was conducted in a gradual and reflective manner, with the goal of producing a coherent and applicable conceptual construction. The final presentation of this study does not refute or dismiss other ethical bases as incorrect, but rather seeks to explain that social ethics can also be built through the dimensions of inner harmony and belief, based on the principle of human equality. Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih form the basis of their thinking, due to the argumentative harmony that humans have equal social status, thus requiring fellow humans to provide equal attention, rights, and attitudes. Equality is no longer about numbers, 10/10, or anything like that, but about managing attitudes and traits in interactions. There is no dominance based on gender, age, position, or anything else.

The main objectives of this study encompass several interrelated aspects. First, this study aims to analyze in depth the conception of justice in the discourse of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali, including its meaning, function, and normative implications in the context of character formation and social relations. Second, this study comprehensively examines the conception of interpersonal relations in the thinking of these two figures, including the concepts of friendship, compassion, brotherhood, and other forms of solidarity as arenas for realizing virtue. Third, based on this analysis, this study seeks to explain the construction of a social ethics model based on equality that synthesizes key elements: virtue as a moral disposition, justice as an integrative principle, and interpersonal relations as a medium for realizing virtue. Fourth, this study examines the relevance of this Construction to

¹⁰ Ummul Latifa and Nelmaya, "Filsafat Akhlak Dalam Pemikiran Ibnu Miskawaih Dan Al-Ghazali (Studi Komparatif)," *JUTEQ: Jurnal Teologi & Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2026): 259–69, <https://languar.net/index.php/JUTEQ/article/view/739>.

contemporary social ethics issues and offers normative recommendations that can be adapted in the fields of social policy, moral education, and community practice.

The expected contributions of this study are both theoretical and applied. Theoretically, this study seeks to fill the conceptual gap by presenting the construction of normative equality implied in the framework of justice and human relations of these two classical figures. This construction is expected to enrich the literature on Islamic ethics with a conceptual model that can serve as a basis for cross-disciplinary theoretical discussions on social ethics. Applicatively, the resulting model is expected to provide a normative and practical foundation for the formulation of social policies that affirm human dignity, the development of moral education curricula that instill the values of equality and solidarity, and community practices that prioritize respect among citizens. Thus, the contribution of this study is expected to help revitalize the discourse on substantive normative ethics in an effort to renew modern social life, while also demonstrating how traditional intellectual property can contribute to ethical solutions to the challenges of the times.

Result and Discussion

The Concept of Justice in the Thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali

In *Tabdhib al-Akhlāq*, Ibn Miskawaih defines justice (*al-'adl*) as the virtue that "gives to everyone what is due to him" (*i'ta' kull dhi haqqin haqqahu*). However, this definition does not stand alone within the framework of individual ethics, for justice, according to Ibn Miskawaih, is a virtue that is inherently relational and social. Justice is the result of a perfect balance between the other three virtues: sagacity (*al-hikmah*), virtue (*saja'ah*), and self-care (*al-iffah*).¹¹ In an individual whose soul has been well trained, it is even reaffirmed that the essence of justice is balance, where the balance of this attitude will not increase or decrease just because of a person's nobility or ability.¹² In this sense, justice is not just an external norm, but rather an inner disposition embedded in a person's character through the process of education and moral habituation (*ta'dib*).

The position of justice in Ibn Miskawayh's ethical system is central. Justice functions as a "social virtue" that integrates the individual and communal dimensions of morality.¹³ A just individual not only possesses a balanced soul but is also able to articulate that balance in his or her relationships with others. At the very least, Ibn Miskawaih stated that justice is present in everyday behavior, such as dealing with transactions, matters of wealth, and the enactment of social laws.¹⁴

Most significant for the construction of equality in Ibn Miskawayh's thought are the distributive implications of his concept of justice. Justice requires proportional treatment of each individual based on their worth and contribution, not on their physical status or descent.¹⁵ This principle implicitly acknowledges the equal moral dignity of every individual as the basis for fair judgment. Essentially, Ibn Miskawayh does not explicitly use the language of equality; his internal logic points to a recognition of the intrinsic worth of every human being, which should not be ignored in moral judgment. Namely, the opportunity to continue

¹¹ Ahmad bin Muhammad Ibn Miskawaih, *Tabdhib Al-Akhlāq Wa-Taṭhīr al-A'rāq* (1329 Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusayniyah, 2015), 16, <https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-105255-185/page/n3/mode/2up>.

¹² Ibn Miskawaih, 92.

¹³ Ibn Miskawaih, 19–20.

¹⁴ Ibn Miskawaih, 94.

¹⁵ Yosef Keladu, "Kesamaan Proporsional Dan Ketidaksamaan Perlakuan Dalam Teori Keadilan Aristoteles," *DISKURSUS - JURNAL FILSAFAT DAN TEOLOGI STF DRIYARKARA* 19, no. 1 (2023): 54–78, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36383/diskursus.v19i1.347>.

self-introspection in improving moral values both towards oneself and towards others.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the initial basis of the principle of equality is awareness, justice, and a sense of humanity.¹⁷ Therefore, indirectly, in his teachings, Ibn Miskawaih taught humanistic attitudes, respecting all differences while still prioritizing the principle of humanity, which always has the opportunity to improve one's character, through the concepts of al-'adl, al-syaja'ah, and al'iffah, which in general are all forms of teaching in social interaction.¹⁸

Although through different reasoning, Al-Ghazali developed a concept of justice that is structurally similar to Ibn Miskawaih's, but theologically richer. Justice is placed as one of the praiseworthy qualities (*akhlaq mahmudah*) that must be realized in every dimension of human life, both in relations with God, with fellow humans, and with oneself. Justice for Al-Ghazali has three dimensions: justice in self-assessment ('*adl al-na'fi*'), justice in social relations ('*adl fi al-mu'amalat*'), and justice in spiritual orientation ('*adl fi al-'ibadat*'). Al-Ghazali based this on the noble morals of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.¹⁹

In *Kimiya' Al-Sa'adah*, Al-Ghazali develops the concept of justice in relation to the highest goal of humankind (al-sa'adah or happiness).²⁰ Justice is a prerequisite for achieving true happiness, as injustice, whether toward oneself or others, creates a disturbance in the spiritual balance that hinders spiritual development. This perspective strengthens the argument that justice is not merely a social obligation, but rather a necessary condition for fulfilling humanity's ontological purpose as a creature created to know and draw closer to God.²¹ What distinguishes Al-Ghazali's concept of justice from Ibn Miskawaih's is its explicit theological foundation. For Al-Ghazali, justice is not merely a rational virtue attainable through philosophical practice, but rather a reflection of God's attribute of absolute justice (al-'Adl). A just person is one who reflects this divine attribute in his or her life, a concept known in Sufism as *al-takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah* (having morals according to God's morals).²² This theological dimension provides a stronger basis for the universalism of justice, because God's justice is comprehensive and non-discriminatory towards all His creatures.²³

A comparison of Ibn Miskawaih's and Al-Ghazali's concepts of justice reveals significant similarities and differences. The main similarities lie in, first, the position of justice as an

¹⁶ Fauzul Muna, "Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Ibnu Miskawaih Terhadap Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Transformasi Digital," *Ar-Rosyad: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Sosial Humaniora* 3, no. 2 (2025): 32–48, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55148/arosyad.v3i2.1707>.

¹⁷ Hafizah Indriany, Apriani Putri Fajtriansyah, and Herlini Puspika Sari, "Isu Gender Dalam Pendidikan Islam: Tantangan Dan Strategi Mewujudkan Keadilan Akses Belajar," *Al-Absor: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 2 (2026): 122–33, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71242/djvf2g95>.

¹⁸ Juwaini Juwaini et al., "Ibn Miskawaih's Ethical Philosophy and Its Relevance to Moral Education in Indonesian Secondary Schools," *Articles, Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 1 (30 2025): 695–720, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i1.1648>.

¹⁹ Imam Abu Hamid Al Ghazali, *Ringkasan Ihya Ulumuddin Karya Imam Al-Ghazali-Mukhtashar Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Indonesia, trans. Achmad Sunarto (Surabaya: Mutiara Ilmu Agency, 2019), 269.

²⁰ Atika Aulianda, "Unsur-Unsur Kebahagiaan Menurut Imam AlGhazali Dalam Kitab Kimiya' Al-Sa'adah," *Al-Hikmah Jurnal Theosofi Dan Peradaban Islam* 6, no. 2 (2024): 258–76, <https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/alhikmah/article/view/23842>.

²¹ Nurlina Sari Ihsanniaty et al., "Keadilan Sosial: Konsep Keadilan Dan Peran Manusia Dalam Mewujudkan Keadilan Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 9, no. 6 (2024): 181–92, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v9i01.6661>.

²² Nasirah Asri and Irwan Misbach, "Konsep Keadilan ('Adl) Dalam Filsafat Manajemen Bisnis Syariah: Telaah Ontologis, Epistemologis, Dan Aksiologis," *JEBESH* 4, no. 8 (2026): 71–78, <https://jurnalhamfara.ac.id/index.php/jb/article/view/909>.

²³ Diva Kurnia Dwi Salsabila et al., *Prinsip Keadilan Dalam Syariat Islam: Antara Kewajiban Berlaku Adil Dan Larangan Dzalim*, 2, no. 4 (2025): 680–85, <https://jurnal.ittc.web.id/index.php/jkis/article/view/2574>.

integrative virtue that connects the individual and social dimensions of morality; second, the emphasis on justice as an inner quality (character disposition) rather than merely an external norm; and third, the understanding of justice as a prerequisite for achieving the common good. Both also agree that justice requires proportional treatment of each individual based on their intrinsic worth, which can be started with teaching morals and social awareness from the start.²⁴

The fundamental difference lies in their epistemological and theological foundations. Ibn Miskawayh built his concept of justice on the basis of philosophical rationalism derived from the Greek tradition, with the rational soul as the primary criterion. Al-Ghazali, on the other hand, emphasized a Sufi theological foundation that places God's justice as the prototype to be emulated by humans. These differences are not contradictory, but rather complementary. Ibn Miskawayh's approach provides a universalizable rational framework, while Al-Ghazali's approach provides intrinsic motivation rooted in spiritual awareness.

The Concept of Interhuman Relations in the Thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali

Friendship and Brotherhood

Ibn Miskawaih dedicated a significant section of *Tabdhib al-Akhlāq* to discussing friendship (al-shadaqah) as the most noble form of social relations.²⁵ Following the Aristotelian tradition²⁶ He distinguishes three forms of friendship. Friendship based on benefit (*li al-manfa'ah*), on pleasure (*li al-laddah*), and on virtue (*li al-fadilah*). The truest friendship of all is that built on shared virtue, where each party loves the other for their moral worth, not for the instrumental benefits they can obtain.²⁷ This concept has important implications for equality; friendship based on virtue requires recognition of the same moral values on the part of the parties in the relationship.

Al-Ghazali developed the concept of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which is broader than just individual friendship. He explains that *ukhuwah Islamiyyah* has a theological dimension that philosophical friendship does not have. It is rooted in the awareness that all believers are brothers before Allah, equal in their human values and faith.²⁸ Al-Ghazali identified rights arising from brotherhood: the right to material goods (material assistance when needed), the right to the soul (emotional support and presence), the right to the tongue (sincere praise and honest advice), the right to the heart (prayer and sincere love), and the right to forgiveness. The explicit mention of these rights indicates a highly egalitarian understanding of the relationship.²⁹

²⁴ Muhammad Naufal Arrizky and Zaki Afifi, "Implementasi Pembentukan Akhlak Perspektif Al-Ghazali Di MA Assalam Grobogan," Articles, *Idarah Tarbiyah: Journal of Management in Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (April 2026): 502–16, <https://doi.org/10.32832/itjmie.v7i2.23028>.

²⁵ Ibn Miskawaih, *Tabdhib Al-Akhlāq Wa-Taṭhīr al-A'rāq*, 131–34.

²⁶ Kiliarnta S, "Using Aristotle's Theory of Friendship to Classify Online Friendships: A Critical Counterview," *Ethics Inf Technol* 18 (2016): 65–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-016-9384-2>.

²⁷ Melani, "Konstruksi Etika Ibnu Miskawaih Dalam Kitab Tahdzib Al-Akhlāq," *JOURNAL OF KNOWLEDGE AND COLLABORATION* 2, no. 5 (2025): 615–32, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59613/pbhx6623>.

²⁸ Moh. Faesal, "Konsep Ukhuwah Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Relevansinya Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat (Kajian Surat Al-Hujurat Ayat 10)," *Journal Al-Irfani: Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51700/irfani.v3i1.336>.

²⁹ M. Junaidi and Asep Rahmatullah, "Konsep Pendidikan Sosial Berbasis Spiritual Etik: Telaah Pemikiran Al-Ghazali Dalam Adab al-Ṣūḥbah Wa al-Mu'āsyarah Dan Signifikansinya Bagi Masyarakat Modern," Articles,

Al-Mahabbah Wa Al-Rahmah

Compassion (*al-mahabbah wa al-rahmah*) is a crucial dimension in the relational ethics of both thinkers. Ibn Miskawaih views compassion as a natural expression of a balanced and just soul; a person with perfect morals will naturally love others because he recognizes their inherent moral worth.³⁰ Al-Ghazali further developed the theology of compassion (*mahabbah*) for God, which must be manifested in compassion for all His creatures.³¹ *Rahmah* (compassion) is an expression of recognition of the suffering of others as morally meaningful, a recognition that is only possible if we acknowledge that others have equal worth to ourselves.³²

Social Manners and Respect for Others

Adab, as a system of social norms of politeness reflecting recognition of the worth of others, received significant attention from Al-Ghazali. He elaborates on adab in various contexts, including the etiquette of eating together, the etiquette of visiting, the etiquette of speaking, the etiquette of neighbors, and the etiquette of traveling, all of which are taught and emphasized to underlie a gentle attitude.³³ Each of these contexts is analyzed as a space where a person's moral worth is tested by their ability to recognize and respect the worth of others. Adab is not merely a social formality; attitudes of easy forgiveness, high solidarity, and willingness to admit mistakes are expressions of a basic moral disposition of recognition of the dignity of other human beings.³⁴ Ibn Miskawaih, although more philosophical and less explicit in his discussion of adab, emphasized that politeness (*al-haya'*) and honor (*al-sharaf*) are virtues directly related to social justice.³⁵ A person with noble character will automatically respect others because he is able to recognize their moral values, an ability born of wisdom that is the foundation of his entire ethical system. For Ibn Miskawaih,³⁶ the social dimension of moral perfection is inseparable from the capacity to recognize and appreciate the moral worth of others.

Construction of Equality-Based Social Ethics Through Comparative Analysis

Conceptual Foundation: Moral Dignity as the Foundation of Equality

The Construction of equality-based social ethics offered in this article starts from a fundamental premise: equality in the thought of Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali is not understood as equality of social status, economic status, or intellectual capacity, but rather as a recognition of the inherent moral dignity (*karamah insaniyyah*) of every human

Tarbawi: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Islami 14, no. 1 (April 2026): 15–28, <https://doi.org/10.55757/tarbawi.v14i1.1168>.

³⁰ Ibn Miskawaih, *Tabdhib Al-Akhlāq Wa-Taṭhīr al-A'rāq*, 19.

³¹ Nur Syazana Adam et al., “Analisis Terhadap Konsep Maḥabbah Menurut Al-Ghazālī Dan al-Qushayrī Dalam Menyebarkan Kasih Sayang,” *Articles, Al-Takamul al-Ma'rifi* 7, no. 1 (July 2024): 60–72, <https://jurnal.usas.edu.my/altakamul/index.php/altakmulfiles/article/view/209>.

³² Wahyu Budiantoro, “KONSEP CINTA (MAHABBAH) DALAM LOGIKA KOMUNIKASI TRANSCENDENTAL,” *Amerta Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (2021), <https://ejournal.amertamedia.co.id/index.php/amerta/article/view/3>.

³³ Abu Hamid Al Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din: إحياء علوم الدين*, ١٢th ed., Jilid III (Beirut-Libanon: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2021), 226.

³⁴ Ghazali, 224.

³⁵ Ibn Miskawaih, *Tabdhib Al-Akhlāq Wa-Taṭhīr al-A'rāq*, 51–53.

³⁶ Nazua Fatia Harahap, Zahra Alfina Putri, and Resti Yulastri, “Konsep Akhlak Sebagai Karakter Dalam Pemikiran Ibnu Miskawaih Dan Relevansinya Bagi Pendidikan Modern,” *QAZI: Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2025): 647–55, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61104/qz.v2i2.475>.

individual.³⁷ This understanding distinguishes moral equality from the socio-economic equality that is the focus of modern political discourse, while providing a deeper and more universal foundation. It has even been widely studied in international research, which is starting to try to find a way to overcome the rampant discrimination in social interactions.³⁸

In Ibn Miskawayh's thought, human moral dignity is rooted in the rational capacity that distinguishes humans from other creatures. However, what is crucial is that this capacity is universally possessed by every human being, so that every human being possesses a priori equal moral worth. The capacity to be just, wise, and virtuous is not a privilege of a select few, but a potential inherent in every individual.³⁹ In Al-Ghazali's thought, human moral dignity is more deeply rooted in humanity's creation as God's vicegerent on earth and the gift of the divine soul that distinguishes humans from all other creatures.⁴⁰ This theological human virtue endows every human being with intrinsic value that cannot be diminished by sociological differences.

Justice as a Normative Principle of Equality

From an analysis of the concepts of justice of these two thinkers, a normative principle can be reconstructed that lies at the heart of equality-based social ethics: that justice requires that every individual be treated according to their inherent moral worth, not according to their social status or group identity. This principle has two implications: first, any form of discrimination that denies a person's intrinsic worth based on non-moral factors (ethnicity, social status, gender) violates the principle of justice. Second, the fulfillment of justice requires conditions that enable each individual to actualize their moral potential. This second principle attempts to be neutral before judgment. While it's true that human adversity will place us in a completely neutral situation and attitude, as a concept, it's important to discuss.⁴¹

The synthesis of Ibn Miskawayh's justice (rooted in philosophical rationalism) and Al-Ghazali's justice (rooted in theology and spirituality) yields a more comprehensive concept of justice that is both rational and spiritual, universal and contextual, individual and social. Such justice is not merely an external norm imposed from without,⁴² Rather, it is an inner disposition that grows from a deep understanding of human values, both philosophically and theologically.

Interhuman Relations as a Space for Actualizing Virtue

The equality-based social ethics model reconstructed in this article places interpersonal relations as the primary space where moral values are actualized. Friendship, brotherhood,

³⁷ Hammadul Barri and Ahmad Muhammad Naseh, "Etika Islam Sebagai Perspektif Hukum Kontemporer," *Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 6, no. 2 (2025): 219–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62097/mabahits.v6i02.2556>.

³⁸ Dech-siri Nope, "Fostering Equity and Inclusion: Integrating Social Justice in Thailand's Teacher Education Programs," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* 18, no. 4 (2026): 1186–205, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-10-2024-0572>.

³⁹ Ibn Miskawaih, *Tabdhib Al-Akhlāq Wa-Taḥbīr al-A'raq*, 15.

⁴⁰ Ahlul Fakiḥ, Muhajir Muhajir, and Umi Kultsum, "Hakikat Manusia Menurut Imam Al-Ghozali Dan Implikasinya Dalam Kehidupan Manusia," *Journal of Research and Thought on Islamic Education (JRTIE)* 6, no. 1 (2023): 34–46, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24260/jrtie.v6i1.2705>.

⁴¹ Nadja Tadic, "Conversation Analysis for Social Justice," *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* 5, no. 100309 (2026), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2026.100309>.

⁴² Christopher Elia Julio et al., "The Normative Relationship Between Moral Values and Justice in Modern Legal Philosophy and Its Consequences for Indonesian Legal Practice," *Media Hukum Indonesia (MHI) Published by Yayasan Daarul Huda Krueng Mane* 3, no. 4 (2025): 505–13, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17621563>.

compassion, mutual assistance, and social etiquette are not merely moral social practices; they are expressions of the recognition of the equal moral value of every individual.⁴³ When a person establishes a friendship based on virtue (in Ibn Miskawaih's sense), he implicitly acknowledges that his friend possesses moral worth equal to his own. When a person practices brotherhood (in Al-Ghazali's sense), he acknowledges that his brother has rights that must be fulfilled based on his human worth. In the *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali expounds at length on the importance of good morals (*busnu al kbuluq*) towards others, regardless of differences or anything else. This is echoed in many of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, which emphasize this.⁴⁴

Thus, every authentic social relationship, in the sense of both thinkers, contains an egalitarian dimension that implicitly recognizes the equal moral worth of all parties involved. This does not mean that all relationships must be symmetrical in every respect; hierarchy and role differentiation are acceptable as long as they are based on legitimate moral principles (such as expertise, responsibility, or contribution), rather than arbitrary discrimination. What is rejected by this principle of moral equality is any form of relationship that diminishes a person's intrinsic worth based on their non-moral identity.

Conceptual Model of Equality-Based Social Ethics

Based on the analysis and synthesis above, a conceptual model of equality-based social ethics can be formulated with three main interrelated components, including the ontological foundation of inherent human moral dignity, rooted in rational capacity (Ibn Miskawaih) and divine grace (Al-Ghazali), which guarantees the intrinsic value of each individual the normative principle of justice as an integrative virtue that requires recognition of the moral value of each individual and proportional treatment based on that value and relational expressions of true friendship, brotherhood, compassion and social etiquette as forms of relationships that actualize recognition of shared moral values.⁴⁵

This model differs from the social contract-based model of social ethics,⁴⁶ or utility-based,⁴⁷ in that its foundation is neither contractual nor calculative, but ontological and moral. Equality in this model is not the result of negotiation or calculation of interests, but rather a recognition of the reality of human value that pre-exists and transcends any social construction.

The Relevance of the Construction of Social Ethics to Contemporary Life

Strengthening Respect for Humanity

The reconstructed model of equality-based social ethics has direct relevance to strengthening respect for humankind in contemporary life. In a situation where dehumanization is

⁴³ M. Khalid and Fajar Utama Ritonga, "Penerapan Prinsip Ukhuwah Islamiyah: Serikat Tolong Menolong Al-Amin Dusun X Desa Bandar Setia," *Jurnal Penelitian Inovatif (JUPIN)* 2, no. 3 (2022): 433–40, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54082/jupin.97>.

⁴⁴ Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*: إحياء علوم الدين, ٦٤.

⁴⁵ Miftakhur Rohman, "Reconstruction Of Global Moral Values Through Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory in Responding to Ethical Diversity in the Modern Era," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam* 16, no. 2 (2025): 315–31, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v16i2.87>.

⁴⁶ Zikraini Alrah, "Kontrak Sosial Dalam Pandangan Rousseau," *Paradigma: Jurnal Kalam Dan Filsafat* 1, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15408/paradigma.v1i01.27289>.

⁴⁷ Ayi Rahman and Muhammad Falikh Rifqi Maulana, "Analisis Kritis Terhadap Pemikiran Utilitarianisme Jeremy Bentham Dalam Perspektif Etika Dan Filsafat Manusia," *Journal of Society and Development* 3, no. 2 (2023): 53–64, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.57032/jsd.v3i2.207>.

increasingly prevalent, whether in the form of racism, identity-based discrimination, economic exploitation, or verbal violence in digital spaces, the principle of inherent moral dignity provides a strong foundation for rejecting any form of diminishment of human worth. If every human being possesses equal moral dignity simply because they are human, not because they belong to a particular social class, race, or political affiliation, then any action that denies that dignity constitutes a fundamental ethical violation.⁴⁸

In a contemporary context, Al-Ghazali's concept of *adab* can be interpreted as an ethical framework for interaction that places respect for the worth of other human beings as the fundamental norm in all forms of communication. This respect is not superficial formal politeness, but rather an attitude that grows from a deep recognition of the intrinsic worth of others. In an increasingly complex multicultural and multireligious context, this principle holds immense value because it transcends boundaries; respect for human dignity is not dependent on any particular communal affiliation.⁴⁹

Strengthening Social Solidarity

The concepts of *ta'awun* and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) in Al-Ghazali's thought, combined with Ibn Miskawaih's concept of virtue-based friendship, provide a strong ethical foundation for rebuilding social solidarity that is being eroded by modern individualism. The solidarity inspired by this model is not based on narrow interests or exclusive group identities, but rather on a recognition of shared moral values as fellow human beings. When solidarity is properly built, recognition of each other's existence, efforts, and successes in helping each other will be realized, social interaction will increase, and everyone will have a positive position. This serves as a preventative measure against the identity crisis of the current era.⁵⁰

The dimensions of *ta'awun* developed by Al-Ghazali, which include spiritual and material mutual assistance, have particular relevance in the context of the widening social gap in many Muslim societies.⁵¹ Distributive justice, which is an implication of the principle of moral equality, requires not only formal recognition of the worth of each person but also concrete actions to ensure that the conditions that enable each individual to actualize their moral potential are equally available, external and internal.⁵² In this respect, the equality-based model of social ethics has significant points of contact with contemporary theories of distributive justice, but with deeper and more sustained motivations.

Preventing Dehumanization in Social Relations

⁴⁸ Rohman, "Reconstruction Of Global Moral Values Through Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory in Responding to Ethical Diversity in the Modern Era."

⁴⁹ Miftakhur Rohman and Abdulloh Hanif, "The Manifestation of Wahdatul Adyan in Ibn Arabi's Perspective as a Basis of Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset Dan Kajian Keislaman* 15, no. 1 (2026): 39–58, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35878/islamicreview.v15i1.1973>.

⁵⁰ Abdulloh Hanif and Miftakhur Rohman, "Human Ambition and Identity Crisis in Ibn 'Athaillah al-Sakandari's Sufism," *Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 6, no. 1 (2026): 71–83, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.28918/jousip.v6i1.13365>.

⁵¹ Muh. Haris Zubaidillah and Rifan Syafruddin, "Konsep Ta'awun Ekonomi Dalam Al-Qur'an: Solusi Islam Terhadap Kesenjangan Sosial Di Era Kapitalisme," *Al-Ma'bad* 3, no. 2 (2025): 91–110, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/>.

⁵² Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*: إحياء علوم الدين, ٦٧.

One of the greatest threats to contemporary social ethics is dehumanization, the process by which humans are treated or perceived as less than fully human.⁵³ Dehumanization can occur in various forms, including racism and xenophobia, which deny the humanity of others; economic exploitation, which reduces humans to factors of production; cyberbullying, which treats others as objects of entertainment; and various forms of systemic discrimination that deny basic human rights. The equality-based social ethics model reconstructed in this article provides a strong normative framework for rejecting all forms of dehumanization.

The principle of *karamah insaniyyah*, which underpins this model, holds that every human being possesses inalienable moral dignity and serves as an ethical "brake" that prevents the instrumentalization of human beings. When this principle is internalized through character education based on Islamic ethical traditions, it becomes not merely an external norm adhered to out of fear of sanctions, but an inner disposition that moves one to spontaneously reject actions that devalue other human beings.⁵⁴ Al-Ghazali himself emphasized the importance of *ta'dib* (character education) as a process of internalizing moral values that ultimately gives rise to independent ethical awareness, especially in understanding the importance of respecting and honoring others.⁵⁵

At the most fundamental level, the equality-based model of social ethics reconstructed in this article is relevant to programs strengthening the social character of society. Both Ibn Miskawayh and Al-Ghazali agree that social ethical change cannot be achieved solely through legal or policy changes, but must be rooted in the transformation of individual character, which then radiates into social relations. In the context of character education in Indonesia, which continues to be strengthened through various formal and informal programs, the thoughts of these two figures provide rich and relevant intellectual resources.

Critically, it should be noted that the relevance of this classical thinking is not automatic. The Construction undertaken in this article does not simply recreate old texts but rather extracts core values that resonate with contemporary challenges, while remaining critical of the historical limitations of that thinking, including limitations in terms of gender, pluralism, and civil rights, which require consideration in contextual adaptation. Productive Construction must be dialectical, respecting the intellectual heritage while remaining critical and responsive to the demands of the context. This research, from the beginning to the end of the discussion, encompasses an in-depth analysis conducted with sincerity, not to challenge, but rather to expand and enrich knowledge about the importance of upholding the principle of equality in ethics. While this is limited by the broad scope of ethics, in practice, the ethics referred to in this research are generally social ethics.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Construction of equality-based social ethics, through a synthesis of the concepts of justice (*al-'adl*) and interpersonal relations in the thought of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazali, offers a relevant normative foundation for addressing the problems of dehumanization, individualism, and contemporary social fragmentation. Justice in both thinkers functions not merely as a distributive or legalistic rule, but as an integral virtue that orients all dimensions of moral, relational, and institutional social life toward the

⁵³ Nihayatus Sholihah and Ari Abi Aufa, "Humanisasi Teknologi Dalam Pendidikan: Analisis Filsafat Terhadap Ancaman Dehumanisasi Di Era Pembelajaran Digital Berbasis AI," *Hikmah : Jurnal Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam* 2, no. 4 (2025): 107–18, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61132/hikmah.v2i4.1453>.

⁵⁴ Barri and Naseh, "Etika Islam Sebagai Perspektif Hukum Kontemporer."

⁵⁵ Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din*: ٨٧–٨٦, *إحياء علوم الدين*.

recognition and respect of the moral dignity of individuals. Interhuman relations (friendship, brotherhood, compassion, mutual assistance) are identified as the arena of ethical actualization, where norms of justice are realized in daily practices that strengthen social cohesion. Equality in this synthesis is understood as a recognition of the inherent moral dignity of each individual, not a reduction to mere equality of status or outcome. This understanding allows for the formulation of moral education policies and practices that emphasize respect, solidarity, and shared responsibility. Thus, the resulting conceptual model has the potential to be applied to the renewal of social policy and ethics curricula and provides a normative basis for efforts to strengthen cohesion and humanity in modern society.

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