



Reconstructing al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-Zawāj*: A Cyclical Model of Sufi Ethics and Human Flourishing

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Abstract: Contemporary marriage faces changing family values, declining marriage intentions, and increasing marital problems, requiring an understanding of marriage as an ethical, spiritual, and human-development process. This study reconstructs Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's conception of *maqāṣid al-zawāj* in Kitāb *Adab al-Nikāḥ of Ḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. Using qualitative library research, content analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and a *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* approach, it identifies five interconnected purposes of marriage: *taḥṣīl al-walad*, *kasr al-shahwah*, *tarwīḥ al-nafs*, *tafriḥ al-qalb*, and *mujāhadat al-nafs*. These encompass generational continuity, sexual and moral regulation, psychological tranquility, relief from domestic burdens, and spiritual discipline. Their realization depends on marital ethics, mutual rights and obligations, cooperation, patience, and dignified conflict management. Spouse selection prioritizes religious commitment and moral character, while *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs* support spiritual development. The study proposes a cyclical model integrating marital purposes, ethical practices, spouse selection, and spiritual cultivation to strengthen family *maṣlaḥa*, human flourishing, and sustainable family development.

Contribution: This article extends the analytical horizon of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* by linking the preservation of essential interests to inner moral formation and the cultivation of a flourishing family life.

Keywords: *Maqāṣid al-Zawāj*; *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a*, al-Ghazālī; *Ḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*; Sufi Ethics.

Introduction

Marriage is one of the fundamental social and religious institutions that sustain human life. From an Islamic perspective, marriage is not merely a legal contract that legitimizes the relationship between a man and a woman but also an expression of the human *fiṭra* (innate nature) to live in partnership and cultivate a peaceful family.¹ Through the family, humans can meet biological needs with dignity, cultivate affection, have children, transmit moral values, and build social solidarity, the foundation of civilization.² Therefore, Islamic law regards marriage as a *sunnah* of the prophets and a strategic instrument for safeguarding human welfare.³ It is therefore unsurprising that the principal objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (the objectives of Islamic law), including the protection of religion, life, intellect, progeny, and honor, find their fullest realization within the family institution.⁴ Consequently, marriage possesses not only an individual function in attaining personal well-being but also a broader civilizational role by shaping future generations, strengthening social stability, and sustaining long-term human development.⁵

In addition to being part of human nature, marriage is also the healthiest and most responsible mechanism for channeling sexual instincts.⁶ Islam does not view biological impulses as something that must be suppressed or eliminated, but

¹ Zulkarnain Yani et al., "Togetherness and Union between Husband and Wife in Equal Relationship in the Thought of Azhary Imam Palembang in Hadiyah An-Nisa Manuscripts," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 12, no. 1 (May 2025): 2508606, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2508606>.

² Rosdalina Bukido and A. Zainal Azhar Ishak, "Exploring the Verdict of Interfaith Marriage under Maqāṣid Sharia Insights," *Mazahibuna: Journal of Comparative Madhhab*, June 30, 2024, 65–79, <https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.43025>.

³ Agus Firdaus Chandra et al., "The Legal Interpretation of Hadiths on Marriage in Fath Al-Mun'im: Musa Shahin Lashin's Insights and Role in Islamic Family Law Reform," *AL QUDS: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 9, no. 2 (August 2025): 326–43, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v9i2.13894>.

⁴ Muhamad Zaenal Muttaqin et al., "Family Harmony in Contemporary Islamic Law: Ibn 'Ashur's Maqāṣid Perspective on Marital Rights and Duties," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 5, no. 1 (January 2026): 61–79, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v5i1.10480>.

⁵ Walaa Elsayed, "Building a Better Society: The Vital Role of Family's Social Values in Creating a Culture of Giving in Young Children's Minds," *Hell* 10, no. 7 (April 2024): e29208, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29208>.

⁶ Asmuni et al., "The Erosion of Al-Mawaddah and Ar-Rahmah Values in Muslim Marriages: A Socio-Religious Analysis of Marital Dynamics in Lombok," *Academics: Journal of Islamic Thought* 30, no. 2 (December 2025): 201–18, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v30i2.11580>.

rather directed to be part of worship and the development of a dignified life.⁷ Through marriage, biological needs are not only legally met but also framed by moral responsibility, emotional commitment, legal protection, and a focus on family sustainability. Therefore, the relationship between husband and wife does not stop at the fulfillment of sexual desires, but develops into a space of mutual support in spiritual, economic, psychological, and social aspects.⁸ Such a relationship creates a balance between individual interests and community interests while reducing the potential for damage born from non-committed sexual relationships. In this context, marriage is a preventive and constructive instrument that upholds human dignity, strengthens family institutions, and fosters a healthier social environment for the well-being of the next generation.⁹

Ironically, contemporary society shows the opposite trend. In the midst of the great contribution of marriage to human welfare, the narrative develops that marriage is a scary life choice because it limits freedom,¹⁰ drains financial resources, and even becomes an entrance to regret.¹¹ Worse, a lot of domestic violence is reported.¹² Various negative experiences circulating in the public sphere slowly form the perception that avoiding marriage is a more rational

⁷ Wahidin Wahidin, "Sexuality Relationship in Rokan Hulu Riau with the Al-Quran Approach," *AL QUDS: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 6, no. 3 (December 2022), <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v6i3.4396>.

⁸ "The Impact of Spiritual and Cultural Beliefs on Family Relationships and Marital Satisfaction in Religious Communities: A Systematic Review," *The Open Public Health Journal* 18 (January 2025), <https://doi.org/10.2174/0118749445401885250704054224>.

⁹ Uswatun Hasanah and Mujiburrohman Mujiburrohman, "Negotiating *Sakīna* in the Digital Era: Marriage Practices of Generation Z in Lepelle Village Robatal District," *Hakam: Journal of Islamic Law Studies and Islamic Economic Law* 10, no. 1 (April 2026), <https://doi.org/10.33650/jhi.v10i1.14963>.

¹⁰ Devita Anggraini and Widiya Yul, "Marriage Is Scary' to the Readiness Gap: Gen Z's Marriage Anxiety and the Normative Responsiveness of Islamic Family Law in Pekanbaru," *Familia: Journal of Family Law* 7, no. 1 (June 2026): 46–72, <https://doi.org/10.24239/familia.v7i1.547>.

¹¹ Mohammad Zecky Najmudin, Ishaq Ishaq, and Moh Lutfi Nurcahyono, "The Phenomenon of 'Marriage Is Scary' and the Role of Premarital Guidance in Preparing the Mental and Emotional Health of Prospective Brides and Grooms," *Open Academy* 10, no. 2 (December 2025): 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921-10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921, <https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.10.2025.12921>.

¹² Iffaty Nasyi'ah et al., "Domestic Violence Law and Maqāṣid Al-Syari'ah in Protecting Families from Psychological Violence," *The Law Journal* 12, no. 1 (May 2026): 119–64, <https://doi.org/10.15294/ulj.v12i1.48249>.

decision than building a household.¹³ This shift in perspective is also reflected in the downward trend in Indonesia's marriage rate. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of recorded marriages fell from around 1.71 million couples in 2022 to 1,577,255 couples in 2023, then dropped again to around 1.48 million couples in 2024. This continued decline shows that public interest in marriage, especially among younger generations, is weakening and poses a serious challenge to family development in Indonesia.¹⁴

The increasing fear of marriage cannot be separated from the high rate of domestic failure that leads to divorce.¹⁵ This phenomenon is further strengthened by the development of social media, which makes family conflicts public. Various stories about infidelity, domestic violence, economic pressure, in-laws' conflicts, and regret after marriage are spread massively through various digital platforms to build a collective perception that married life is synonymous with suffering.¹⁶ The narrative gained empirical legitimacy through Indonesia's high divorce rate. BPS data show that the number of divorces reached 516,344 cases in 2022, fell to 463,654 cases in 2023, and then dropped to around 394,608 cases in 2024. Despite the downward trend, the figure still shows that hundreds of thousands of families disintegrate every year, so it is not surprising that some young generations view marriage as an institution full of uncertainty and high risk.

The declining interest in marriage has broader social consequences than merely delaying family formation, particularly through the rise of non-marital relationships associated with risky sexual behavior, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and legal and protection challenges for

¹³ Hamda Sulfinadia et al., "The Phenomenon Marriage Is Scary: Causal Factors and Efforts Faced by Muslim Communities in Indonesia," *Al-Istinbath: Journal of Islamic Law* 10, no. 1 (April 2025): 355–77, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v10i1.12414>.

¹⁴ Siti Mas'udah, "Familial Relationships and Efforts in Retention of Marriage among Atomistic Families in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 2022): 2046313, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2046313>.

¹⁵ Bakari Khatib Faki and Isbandi Rukminto Adi, "Marriage in Crisis: Causes and Consequences of Divorce among Young Couples in Mtoni Ward, Zanzibar," *JSW (Journal of Sociology Walisongo)* 10, no. 1 (April 2026): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.21580/jsw.2026.10.1.31428>.

¹⁶ Darmawati Hanafi, Sabara Sabara, and Patimah Patimah, "Social Media Usage Deviation and Impact on Muslim Family Dynamics in Makassar City, South Sulawesi," *Samarah: Journal of Family Law and Islamic Law* 8, no. 3 (August 2024): 1597–622, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v8i3.24113>.

children.¹⁷ Such relationships may also increase vulnerability to dating violence, sexual exploitation, emotional manipulation, and relationship instability.¹⁸ However, these phenomena do not necessarily indicate a failure of marriage as an institution. Rather, they highlight inadequate individual readiness for family life¹⁹ and a shift in marital orientation from long-term *maṣlaḥa* (welfare) toward short-term interests.²⁰ Marriage can promote family well-being when supported by adequate spiritual, psychological, social, and economic readiness.²¹ Conversely, insufficient understanding of marital rights, obligations, and responsibilities may generate prolonged conflict and divorce.²²

Previous studies on Islamic marriage have broadly moved in two directions. First, studies on *maqāṣid al-usra* (the objectives of family) have examined the purposes of marriage and the preservation of family integrity,²³ particularly by relating family life to *maṣlaḥa*, rights and responsibilities,²⁴ and

¹⁷ Heather M. Foran et al., "Cohabitation, Relationship Stability, Relationship Adjustment, and Children's Mental Health Over 10 Years," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (February 2022): 746306, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.746306>.

¹⁸ María Naranjo-Márquez et al., "Risk Determinants of Sexual Behaviors: Dating Apps, History of Sexually Transmitted Infections, Substance Use, and Pornography Consumption in Health Science Students," *Nursing Reports* 15, no. 3 (February 2025): 83, <https://doi.org/10.3390/nursrep15030083>.

¹⁹ Ainal Mardhiah et al., "Exploring Family Resilience through the Lens of Islamic Education and Law: Analysis of Divorce Trends in Banda Aceh City," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (March 2025): 522–37, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v9i1.15984>.

²⁰ Luluk Latifah and Iskandar Ritonga, "Difference of Divorce Determination in Indonesia: A Study Systematic Literature Review," *Jurnal Biometrika Dan Kependudukan* 11, no. 02 (November 2022): 223–35, <https://doi.org/10.20473/jbk.v11i02.2022.223-235>.

²¹ Ihda Shofiyatun Nisa', Mir'atul Firdausi, and Arif Sugitanata, "Integration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah for Optimizing Childcare in Long-Distance Situations," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 1 (May 2025): 111–32, <https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v25i1.9795>.

²² Mohamad Sar'an et al., "Implementation of Harmonious Family in the Concept of Proportionality of Obligations and Rights of Husband and Wife Relations: A Perspective on the Compilation of Islamic Law," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 2 (December 2024): 695, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i2.24662>.

²³ Mufidah Cholil et al., "Domestic Violence and Women's Legal Awareness: The Family Corner Programmes Interventions through the Perspective of Maqāṣid al-Usrah," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 17, no. 2 (December 2025): 649–74, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v17i2.30101>.

²⁴ Farida Ulvi Naimah et al., "Internalization of Local Traditions in Child Marriage from the Perspective of Maqasid Al-Usrah," *El-Mashlahah* 14, no. 2 (October 2024): 237–58, <https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v14i2.7942>.

the protection of essential family interests.²⁵ Second, contemporary studies have focused on family resilience and the challenges of sustaining marriage amid changing social values,²⁶ declining marriage intentions, and increasing marital problems.²⁷ These two strands demonstrate the importance of both purpose-oriented marriage and strategies for maintaining family integrity. However, scholars have largely discussed them separately, and the connection between marital purposes and practical ethical guidance from the premarital to post-marital stages remains insufficiently developed. This study brings these two strands together through a fresh reading of al-Ghazālī's thought on marriage.

This study aims to reconstruct al-Ghazālī's *maqāṣid al-zawāj* (the objectives of marriage) as an integrated guide for navigating contemporary family life, from spouse selection and premarital preparation to managing and sustaining marriage after the wedding. By examining *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ* (Chapter of Marriage Ethics) in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, the study shows how marital purposes, *ādab al-zawāj*, and spiritual cultivation form an interconnected process for realizing and sustaining family *maṣlaḥa*. It positions al-Ghazālī's thought as a practical compass that connects the purposes of marriage with the ethical mechanisms required to achieve them. The resulting Cyclical Model of *maqāṣid al-zawāj* offers a fresh framework for premarital education, marital guidance, and Islamic family law oriented toward human flourishing in contemporary family life.

Literature Review

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (450–505 AH/1058–1111 CE) developed an integrated intellectual framework connecting Islamic jurisprudence, theology, ethics, and Sufism.²⁸ Although he did not formulate *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* as an

²⁵ Galuh Widitya Qomaro, "Integrating Maqasid Al-Usrah by Jamal Al-Din' Atiyah Muhammad into Family Resilience Measurement in Indonesia," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 14, no. 1 (April 2026): 246–59, -, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol14no1.1097>.

²⁶ Siti Mas'udah, "Familial Relationships and Efforts in Retention of Marriage among Atomistic Families in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 2022): 2046313, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2046313>.

²⁷ Omar Aghbalou, "Family Law, Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah, and State Resilience: A Comparative Study of Legislative Reform in Muslim Jurisdictions," *Mazahibuna: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab*, April 1, 2026, 39–57, <https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.64188>.

²⁸ Akmal Bashori, Mutho'am, and Muhammad Landung Hidayat, "Al-Ghazālī on Reason, Legal, and Sufism: Toward an Integrative Epistemology of Islamic Law in Modernity,"

independent discipline, his treatment of *maṣlaḥa* and the purposes underlying divine law contributed substantially to the development of *maqāṣid* reasoning. In *al-Mustaṣfā*, *maṣlaḥa* relates to preserving essential human interests, conventionally represented through religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property.²⁹ This purposive orientation moves legal analysis beyond formal rules toward the human welfare that those rules seek to secure. In the context of marriage, therefore, al-Ghazālī's thought provides a basis for examining not only the legality of marriage but also its ethical purposes, human consequences, and contribution to forming a morally ordered family.

Al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ* provides a more specific articulation of the purposes of marriage. He identifies five principal benefits: procreation, satisfaction and regulation of sexual desire, household management, companionship, and disciplining the self through the responsibilities of family life. These objectives constitute *maqāṣid al-zawāj* at the level of marital life and should be distinguished from the broader *ḍarūriyāt* (the essentials) of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*. Significantly, al-Ghazālī connects these purposes to concrete ethical conduct, including spouse selection, the fulfillment of rights, responsibility for offspring, patience, affection, and mutual companionship. Marriage thus becomes an ethical practice through which legal purposes are translated into everyday conduct.³⁰ Its success depends not simply on entering into a valid contract but on continuously cultivating the qualities and responsibilities through which its purposes can be realized.

The ethical dimension of marriage is further connected to al-Ghazālī's conception of *sa'āda* (happiness), in which genuine happiness is associated with the perfection of the human self, knowledge, virtuous action, and orientation toward God rather than with transient pleasure alone.³¹ Within this framework, marriage can function as a field of *mujāhadāt al-naḥs* (striving against the lower self): sexual desire is regulated, responsibility is assumed, interpersonal difficulties require patience, and caring for spouse and children becomes a form

Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman 37, no. 2 (July 2026): 321–40, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v37i2.8771>.

²⁹ Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustaṣfā Min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Turāth al-'Arabī, 2008).

³⁰ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifāh, 2002).

³¹ Zainul Rhofik et al., "Reconstruction Al-Ghazālī's Concept of Sa'Ādah as a Normative Framework for Contemporary Islamic Education," *MUMTAZ : Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 1 (July 2026): 196–222, <https://doi.org/10.69552/mumtaz.v6i1.3703>.

of ethical discipline. The marital household consequently becomes a setting for *tazkiyat al-nafs* (the purification of the self) and *taṣfiyat al-qalb* (the purification of the heart). The significance of *ādab al-zawāj* therefore extends beyond etiquette.³² It represents the practical mechanism through which the purposes of marriage are repeatedly enacted, while spiritual discipline transforms ordinary marital responsibilities into practices of moral and religious cultivation.

This conception can be placed in dialogue with contemporary human flourishing scholarship, which increasingly understands flourishing as multidimensional rather than as equivalent to momentary happiness.³³ Existing frameworks include positive affect and life satisfaction alongside meaning and purpose, character and virtue, personal functioning, and close social relationships. The conceptual convergence with al-Ghazali lies in viewing a good life as an ongoing process involving relationships, moral development, meaning, and purposeful action; however, al-Ghazali grounds these dimensions explicitly in spiritual purification and orientation toward God. On this basis, the present study reconstructs a Cyclical Model of *Maqāṣid al-zawāj*: spouse selection establishes the foundation, marital purposes provide direction, *ādab al-zawāj* sustains their realization, and *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* renew moral capacity. These processes continuously reproduce family *maṣlaḥa* and support human flourishing.

Method

This study employs qualitative library research using a textual-conceptual approach to reconstruct Abu Hamid al-Ghazālī's conception of *maqāṣid al-zawāj*. The primary source is *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ* in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, particularly passages addressing the purposes of marriage, spouse selection, marital conduct, spousal rights and obligations, family management, and divorce. Secondary sources include al-Ghazālī's related works, classical commentaries, and contemporary scholarship on *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*, Sufi ethics, Islamic family law, and human flourishing. The analysis focuses on the meanings, conceptual

³² Heru Susanto et al., "The Purposes of Marriage and Its Hierarchy According to Al-Ghazālī on the Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn Based on Mubādalah Perspective," *Fikri : Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 9, no. 2 (2024): 394–409, <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v9i2.5132>.

³³ Tina Afiatin, M. A. Subandi, and Annisa Reginasari, "The Dynamics of Flourishing Indonesian Muslim Families: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis," *Psikohumaniora: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 8, no. 1 (April 2023): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.21580/pjpp.v8i1.14382>.

relationships, and normative reasoning contained in these texts rather than on empirical family practices.

The textual analysis used qualitative content analysis and conceptual reconstruction. Relevant passages were first identified and thematically classified into four analytical components: spouse selection, the five *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, *ādab al-zawāj*, and spiritual cultivation through *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs*. These components were then interpreted within al-Ghazālī's ethical and Sufi framework, with *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* serving as an analytical lens for examining their relationship to *maṣlaḥa* and human development. Finally, the relationships among the identified concepts were synthesized to reconstruct the Cyclical Model of *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, which explains how spouse selection provides the foundation, marital purposes establish direction, *ādab al-zawāj* sustains their realization, and spiritual cultivation continuously renews family *maṣlaḥa* and human flourishing.

Results and Discussion

Al-Ghazālī's Marriage Paradigm: Structure, Philosophy, and Objectivity

The discussion of marriage in *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ*, part of *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, is systematically organized by al-Ghazālī into three main themes: the recommendation of marriage and the circumstances determining whether one should marry; the manners of choosing a spouse and concluding the marriage contract; and the ethics of marital life (*mu'āshara*), including spousal rights and obligations, family management, child upbringing, marital disputes, and divorce. This structure indicates that al-Ghazālī views marriage not merely as a legal contract but as an institution with defined purposes, mechanisms, and forms of governance aimed at realizing family welfare.³⁴

The philosophical foundation of this framework begins with the view that God created human beings with sexual desire and established marriage as a means of preserving offspring and the continuity of human existence. Marriage, therefore, has a religious function that extends beyond biological fulfillment, including supporting religious practice, protecting individuals from temptation and sin, and producing future generations. Al-Ghazālī nevertheless does not regard marriage as invariably superior to individual worship; its value depends on one's capacity to realize the objectives of the *Sharī'a* through marital life.

³⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

Marriage must therefore be accompanied by proper conduct, responsibility, and effective management so that its intended benefits can be fully realized.

Within this framework, al-Ghazālī identifies five principal objectives of marriage (*maqāṣid al-zawāj*): obtaining offspring (*tahṣīl al-walad*), protecting oneself from sexual desire and Satanic temptation (*kasr al-shahwa wa al-taḥassun min al-shayṭān*), providing psychological tranquility and companionship (*tarwīḥ al-nafs*), freeing the mind from domestic concerns so that it can be devoted to worship and productive activities (*tafrīgh al-qalb*), and disciplining the soul through the responsibilities of family life (*mujāhadāt al-nafs*). These objectives form an interconnected system, with procreation as the primary objective and the others supporting its realization and preservation.³⁵ Al-Ghazālī's marriage paradigm thus integrates religious purposes, personal welfare, procreation, and family governance within a coherent *maqāṣid*-based framework.

The Values of *Maqāṣid* in Marriage According to al-Ghazālī

1. *Ḥifẓ al-Nasl* through *Tahṣīl al-Walad* as the Primary Objectives of Marriage

Among the purposes of marriage identified by al-Ghazālī, *tahṣīl al-walad* (having offspring) occupies the most fundamental position because it constitutes the primary rationale for the institution of marriage. He states that "*wa huwa al-aṣl wa lahū wuḍī' a al-nikāḥ wa al-maqṣūd ibqā' al-nasl*," indicating that marriage is intended to preserve human continuity.³⁶ This conception reflects the substance of *ḥifẓ al-nasl* as a primary *maṣlaḥa*, although al-Ghazālī does not explicitly employ this terminology.³⁷ Reproduction is therefore not merely the fulfillment of biological needs but part of *sunnatullāh* through the operation of *asbāb wa musabbabāt*. Al-Ghazālī further associates having offspring with worship by identifying its spiritual values: realizing God's will for human continuity, increasing the community of the Prophet Muhammad, receiving blessings through the prayers of righteous children, and hoping for their intercession.³⁸ Thus, *tahṣīl al-walad* connects the reproductive function of marriage with spiritual purposes and human continuity.

³⁵ Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2009).

³⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

³⁷ Mustamam et al., "Reinterpreting Ḥifẓ Al-Nasl in Contemporary Marriage Contracts: Navigating Islamic Normativity and State Law," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 2 (October 2025): 1258–80, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i2.11158>.

³⁸ al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

In the contemporary context, *taḥṣīl al-walad* should not be reduced to the biological birth of children but should encompass the responsibility to produce a capable and beneficial generation. The meaning of *ḥifẓ al-nasl*, therefore, extends to children's health, education, moral development, and capacity to contribute to social welfare.³⁹ This orientation is increasingly relevant amid declining fertility and the growing phenomenon of voluntary childlessness.⁴⁰ Accordingly, marital success should be assessed not merely by the presence of offspring but by the family's capacity to nurture and develop their quality. This reconstruction expands *ḥifẓ al-nasl* from a quantitative paradigm of reproduction toward a paradigm of generational sustainability: marriage produces offspring while simultaneously assuming responsibility for ensuring that they grow into healthy, educated, morally grounded individuals capable of generating sustained social welfare.

2. *Kasr al-Shahwa wa al-Taḥassun min al-Shayṭān*: The Control of Orgasm as an Instrument for the Maintenance of Human Dignity

After placing *taḥṣīl al-walad* as the primary purpose of marriage, al-Ghazālī identifies controlling sexual desire (*kasr al-shahwa*) and protection from Satan's temptation (*al-taḥassun min al-shayṭān*) as another essential purpose. Sexual desire is therefore not rejected but regulated through marriage as a moral, legal, and spiritual institution. Drawing on the Prophetic recommendation to marry for those who are able and to fast for those who are not, al-Ghazālī understands sexual desire as part of human *fiṭra* that requires disciplined management.⁴¹ Sexual pleasure consequently becomes a means rather than an end: it supports reproduction, protects chastity, and transforms biological desire into a lawful act of worship.⁴² This framework places sexual relations within a broader orientation toward human dignity and the preservation of family and society.

Al-Ghazālī further explains that sexual pleasure has been embedded in human nature as part of the causal order (*asbāb wa musabbabāt*) through which Allah sustains human existence. The recommendation to prioritize a fertile spouse (*al-walūd*) illustrates that sexual relations should remain connected to the

³⁹ Elsayed, "Building a Better Society."

⁴⁰ Fathonah K. Daud et al., "Phenomenon and Several Reasons for Childfree in Indonesia from the Perspective of Islamic Law," *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum dan Syariah* 10, no. 2 (November 2025): 907–25, <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v10i2.903>.

⁴¹ al-Ghazālī, *Ḥiyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

⁴² al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ḥiyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

continuity of offspring and the broader objectives of marriage.⁴³ At the same time, conjugal pleasure may symbolize the anticipation of eternal enjoyment in the hereafter, integrating biological fulfillment with spiritual consciousness. In contemporary contexts marked by premarital sexual behavior,⁴⁴ pornography,⁴⁵ and sexual exploitation,⁴⁶ this perspective remains conceptually relevant: sexual desire is neither suppressed nor absolutized, but ethically regulated through marriage. Thus, *kasr al-shahwa* can be understood as an integrative mechanism for protecting religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), progeny (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-ʿird*).

3. *Tarwīḥ al-Nafs*: Marriage as a Space of Psychological Calm and Strengthening of Spirituality

The third *Maqṣad* al-Ghazālī identifies is *tarwīḥ al-nafs*: the attainment of psychological calm, emotional comfort, and spiritual renewal through married life. He argues that human beings cannot sustain continuous work or worship without periods of rest; therefore, marriage provides a lawful space for recreation through companionship, conversation, affection, and mutual intimacy.⁴⁷ Such activities are not merely forms of entertainment but mechanisms for restoring psychological balance and renewing motivation for religious and social responsibilities.⁴⁸ Marriage thus functions as a space in which human needs are accommodated without being detached from spiritual purpose. Within the *maqāṣid* framework, *tarwīḥ al-nafs* can therefore be linked to the preservation of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and intellect (*ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*), because emotional stability

⁴³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*.

⁴⁴ Jerwilsem Andrulin Latuheru, Iyus Yosep, and Aat Sriati, "A Scoping Review of Factors Associated with Premarital Sex-Related Risky Sexual Health Behavior among Adolescents in Conservative Societies Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior," *BMC Public Health* 26 (December 2025): 127, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-25665-x>.

⁴⁵ Roberto Paolo Malaspina, "The Head-Set as a Lover: Pornography and the Eroticism of Immersive Devices," *New Techno-Humanities* 4, no. 1 (September 2024): 5–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techum.2024.09.001>.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Dicka Maʿarief Alyatalathaf and Heppy New Year Haloho, "Sexploitation and Non-Marital Sex Normalization Discourse in USS Feed," *Jurnal ILMU KOMUNIKASI* 21, no. 2 (December 2024), <https://doi.org/10.24002/jik.v21i2.8169>.

⁴⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*.

⁴⁸ Jasara N. Hogan et al., "Time Spent Together in Intimate Relationships: Implications for Relationship Functioning," *Contemporary Family Therapy* 43, no. 3 (September 2021): 226–33, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-020-09562-6>.

supports clear thinking, sound decision-making, and sustained religious commitment.⁴⁹

The contemporary relevance of this *maqṣad* becomes increasingly evident amid social, economic, and psychological pressures affecting modern families.⁵⁰ Al-Ghazālī's conception suggests that the family should provide security, emotional support, affection, and inner tranquility rather than function merely as an institution for fulfilling material or reproductive obligations.⁵¹ In this sense, *tarwīḥ al-nafs* expands marital success from preserving the marital bond to creating a supportive environment in which spouses and children can develop psychologically, spiritually, and socially. Marriage, therefore, becomes a form of *sakīna*-oriented (tranquility) human development: a space to recover emotional strength, sustain spiritual resilience, and enable family members to fulfill their wider responsibilities to God and society.

4. *Tafriḡh al-Qalb*: The Division of Family Roles as a Means of Realizing Productivity and Benefits

The fourth *maqṣad* identified by al-Ghazālī is *tafriḡh al-qalb*, namely freeing the heart and mind from excessive domestic burdens so that individuals can devote greater energy to worship, knowledge, work, and other beneficial activities. In this sense, marriage provides a framework for cooperation in which spouses share household responsibilities and support one another in fulfilling their respective commitments.⁵² Although al-Ghazālī discusses differentiated functions within the household, the underlying principle is not rigid role assignment but *ta'āwun* (mutual assistance). Household management is understood as an '*awn 'alā al-dīn*', or assistance in religious devotion, because cooperation enables each spouse to preserve time, energy, and capacity for wider responsibilities.⁵³ Accordingly, the substance of *tafriḡh al-qalb* lies in a fair and proportionate distribution of responsibilities rather than in determining which spouse must perform particular tasks.

From a contemporary *maqāṣid* perspective, *tafriḡh al-qalb* can therefore be reconstructed as a principle of flexible family collaboration based on ability,

⁴⁹ al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ḥiyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

⁵⁰ Rita Feghali et al., "The Impact of Economic Crisis on the Mental Health of Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review," *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 110 (August 2025): 104613, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2025.104613>.

⁵¹ Elsayed, "Building a Better Society."

⁵² al-Ghazālī, *Ḥiyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁵³ al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ḥiyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

circumstances, and mutual agreement. Equitable responsibility-sharing can support marital stability, productivity, quality caregiving, and broader social contribution. In contrast, disproportionate domestic burdens may generate conflict, emotional exhaustion, and relational injustice, particularly when concentrated on women.⁵⁴ The relevance of al-Ghazālī's thought consequently lies not in preserving a fixed gendered division of labor, but in ensuring that marriage becomes an institution through which spouses reduce one another's burdens and optimize their collective capacities. In this formulation, *tafrīgh al-qalb* connects marital cooperation with the broader realization of *maṣlaḥa*: a family becomes productive when its internal organization enables each member to develop personal, religious, and social potential.

5. *Mujāhadāt al-nafs*: Marriage as an Arena of Moral Education and Personality Perfection

The final *maqṣad* al-Ghazālī identifies is *mujāhadāt al-nafs*, which positions marriage as a medium of moral education and spiritual refinement. Marriage is not merely a source of comfort but an arena in which patience, responsibility, sacrifice, and self-control are cultivated. The obligations of caring for a spouse and children, earning a lawful livelihood, educating the family, and maintaining harmony constitute a form of *riyāḍāt al-nafs* through which individual piety becomes relational and social responsibility.⁵⁵ Family life, therefore, becomes a practical school of *faḍāil al-akhlāq*, requiring the regulation of anger, restraint of ego, justice, forgiveness, and prioritization of common interests.⁵⁶ In this sense, marriage does not obstruct spiritual development; rather, it provides a concrete context in which moral virtues are practiced, and character is progressively refined.

Within the broader construction of al-Ghazālī's *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, *mujāhadāt al-nafs* functions as the culminating dimension that integrates *taḥṣīl al-walad*, *kasr al-shahwa*, *tarwīḥ al-nafs*, and *tafrīgh al-qalb*. Together, these purposes connect generational continuity, sexual and moral regulation, psychological tranquillity, family cooperation, and character formation within a single conception of marital *maṣlaḥa*. This framework remains relevant to

⁵⁴ Qonita Qothrunnada, Asy Syifak Qolbi Maghfur, and Lina Kushidayati, "Examining Justice! The Double Burden of Women in Indonesia from the Perspective of The Compilation of Islamic Law," *Al-Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Hukum* 9, no. 1 (November 2024): 61–74, <https://doi.org/10.22515/alakhkam.v9i1.9680>.

⁵⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

⁵⁶ al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*.

contemporary family life, where individualism, changing family structures, and pressures on marital relationships challenge families' capacity to sustain mutual responsibility.⁵⁷ Marriage, therefore, should not be assessed solely by the survival of the legal bond or the fulfillment of material needs, but also by its capacity to cultivate ethical persons, strengthen family solidarity, and generate wider social benefit in accordance with the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*.

Strengthening the Household to Preserve *Maqāṣid al-zawāj*: Al-Ghazālī's Perspective

While the five *maqāṣid al-zawāj* explain why marriage should be pursued, al-Ghazālī further explains how to sustain these objectives throughout family life in *Kitāb Adab al-Nikāḥ*. For al-Ghazālī, marriage succeeds not with the contract but through the couple's ongoing commitment to preserving its objectives. Accordingly, he develops *ādab al-zawāj* as a practical mechanism for sustaining the realization of these *maqāṣid*. From this perspective, the rights and obligations of husband and wife are not ends in themselves but *wasāʾil* (means) for safeguarding offspring, honor, psychological well-being, family productivity, and moral character. Consequently, the continuity and resilience of marriage (*dawām al-zawjiyya*) become essential prerequisites for realizing marriage's comprehensive benefits and objectives.⁵⁸

Within this framework, al-Ghazālī emphasizes that family sustainability can only be maintained through the reciprocal fulfillment of rights and obligations. He elaborates on the husband's obligations in greater detail because, within the classical *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) framework, the husband bears greater responsibility for sustaining the marriage. These obligations include treating his wife with respect, maintaining good communication, providing lawful and proportionate financial support, guiding the family's religious life, and handling divorce with dignity when it can no longer be avoided.⁵⁹ Thus, family leadership should be understood not as domination but as a responsibility to maintain family stability and sustain the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*. In contemporary circumstances, when a wife has a career and contributes substantially to the

⁵⁷ Frank F. Furstenberg, "Family Change in Global Perspective: How and Why Family Systems Change," *Family Relations* 68, no. 3 (July 2019): 326–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12361>.

⁵⁸ al-Zabidi, *Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi-Sharh Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.

⁵⁹ al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*.

family's economic well-being, the husband should likewise contribute to domestic responsibilities and support her professional development.⁶⁰

Among these obligations, *ḥusn al-mu'āshara* (good companionship) constitutes a fundamental principle of marital life. Al-Ghazālī interprets the Qur'anic command *wa 'āshirūhunna bi al-ma'rūf* (and live with them honorably) as requiring marital relations characterized by patience, gentleness, and emotional restraint, particularly in situations of conflict. He presents the Prophet's treatment of his wives as an exemplary model of compassionate communication, expressed through affection, attentiveness, humor, and appreciation. Such compassion, however, must remain guided by commitment to religious principles. Accordingly, a balance between *rifq* (gentleness) and *ḥazm* (principled firmness) becomes essential for preserving marital harmony while ensuring the continued realization of the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, even in the face of prolonged conflict.⁶¹

The principle of moderation is likewise evident in al-Ghazālī's conception of family protection. He distinguishes between *ghīra maḥmūda* (praiseworthy jealousy), namely protective jealousy that safeguards family honor, and *ghīra madhmūma* (blameworthy jealousy), namely jealousy arising from suspicion and excessive control. The same principle applies to household financial management: husbands are expected to avoid both miserliness and extravagance, and to derive family maintenance from lawful (*halal*) sources. Accordingly, moderation in both emotional conduct and financial management constitutes a fundamental pillar of family stability and the sustained realization of the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*.⁶²

At the same time, al-Ghazālī positions the wife as a strategic partner in safeguarding family welfare. Wives are expected to preserve their own honor and that of the family, maintain trust, help their husbands avoid unlawful income by practicing moderation in household consumption, and play an active role in educating children. Religious education is likewise presented as a shared responsibility, with the husband providing guidance while the wife helps

⁶⁰ Khoiruddin Nasution, Oektoberrinsyah Oektoberrinsyah, and Syah Muhammad Mousa Alzaki, "Complete Family Construction for Working Wives in Indonesia and Australia," *Samarah: Journal of Family Law and Islamic Law* 9, no. 1 (January 2025): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v9i1.25840>.

⁶¹ al-Zabidi, *Ithaf al-Sadah al-Muttaqin bi-Sharh Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*.

⁶² al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*.

internalize religious values in everyday family life.⁶³ This distribution of responsibilities indicates that the family is founded on moral partnership rather than subordination, with both spouses contributing to the preservation of the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*. This conception aligns with contemporary approaches that emphasize mutual contribution, cooperation, and support in household affairs.⁶⁴

The culmination of al-Ghazālī's thought appears in his discussion of divorce. Although divorce is permitted as a last resort, it should not be used as an outlet for emotional frustration or undertaken without a legitimate reason. Even when divorce becomes unavoidable, it should be carried out with dignity, without humiliation, exposure of private matters, or disrespect toward the former spouse.⁶⁵ This perspective shows that the *maqāṣid al-zawāj* concerns not only preserving the continuity of the household but also protecting human dignity (*ḥifẓ al-karāma*). Thus, the entire framework of *ādab al-zawāj* formulated by al-Ghazālī functions as a practical instrument for keeping the *maqāṣid al-zawāj* alive throughout family life, including when the marriage ultimately has to come to an end.

Table 1. Classification of *Maqāṣid al-zawāj* in al-Ghazālī's Perspective

<i>Maqṣad al-zawāj</i>	Concept and Main Objective	Implementation through <i>Ādab al-zawāj</i>
<i>Tahṣīl al-Walad</i>	The attainment of offspring and the continuity of humankind. For al-Ghazālī, having children is one of the fundamental purposes of marriage and part of continuing the <i>sunnat Allah</i> .	Maintaining marital continuity, fulfilling spouses' rights and obligations, and providing proper care and education for children.
<i>Kasr al-Shahwa wa al-Tahassun min al-Shayṭān</i>	Regulating sexual desire through lawful marital relations and protecting individuals from sexual misconduct and temptations that may undermine religious commitment and personal dignity.	Preserving the honor of both spouses, maintaining healthy and lawful marital intimacy, regulating sexual desire, and avoiding conduct that exceeds religious and moral boundaries.
<i>Tarwīḥ al-Nafs</i>	Providing tranquility, emotional comfort, affection,	Realizing ḥusn <i>al-mu'āshara</i> through affection, communication, patience,

⁶³ al-Ghazālī.

⁶⁴ Nevenka Zegarac et al., "Family Support Workforce Skills: Pathways towards (New) Conceptualizations," *Children and Youth Services Review* 163 (August 2024): 107777, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107777>.

⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din*.

	companionship, and psychological renewal through marital life.	attentiveness, humor, and a balance between <i>rifq</i> (gentleness) and <i>hazm</i> (principled firmness).
<i>Tafriḡh al-Qalb</i>	Relieving the heart and mind from domestic burdens through cooperation, enabling each spouse to engage in worship, work, the pursuit of knowledge, and other beneficial activities.	Developing <i>ta'āwun</i> in household affairs, distributing responsibilities proportionately, and supporting each spouse's activities and professional commitments.
<i>Mujāhadāt al-Nafs</i>	Making marriage a means of spiritual discipline and moral formation through patience, self-restraint, responsibility, sacrifice, justice, and the capacity to forgive.	Fulfilling rights and obligations responsibly, exercising emotional self-control, maintaining trust, developing moral cooperation, and resolving conflicts with dignity.

Source: Conclusion of the researcher's paper

Achieving the *Maqāṣid al-zawāj*: Choosing the Right Partner as the Foundation of Family Life in al-Ghazālī's Thought

After explaining the *maqāṣid al-zawāj* and their maintenance through *Ādab al-Nikāh*, al-Ghazālī completes his framework by arguing that selecting a spouse is a prerequisite for realizing these objectives. For him, the success of marriage is not determined solely by how the household is managed after the marriage contract is signed; it begins with choosing a spouse. The personal qualities of a prospective husband or wife, therefore, constitute a fundamental factor in determining whether the *maqāṣid al-zawāj* can be realized optimally.⁶⁶ From this perspective, spouse selection is not merely a matter of personal preference but also a preventive strategy for establishing a family capable of sustaining its moral, spiritual, psychological, and social functions.

For al-Ghazālī, the primary criterion in selecting a spouse is religious commitment (*al-dīn*), which he identifies as the fundamental foundation (*al-aṣl*) of marriage. Religious integrity underpins household tranquillity, strengthens moral responsibility, and facilitates the observance of religious obligations in family life. Alongside this foundation, he identifies good character, the ability to establish harmonious relationships, reproductive capacity, and physical attractiveness as supporting criteria. Although he acknowledges the value of physical beauty, he treats it as complementary rather than determinative.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī.

⁶⁷ al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi-Sharḥ Ihya' Ulūm al-Dīn*.

Accordingly, al-Ghazālī develops a hierarchical framework in which religious commitment serves as the foundation, moral character sustains interpersonal relations, and physical attributes function as complementary factors in realizing the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*.

Al-Ghazālī also emphasizes the protection of women in the process of spouse selection. He assigns the guardian a moral responsibility to avoid marrying a woman to a man who is morally corrupt, weak in religious commitment, or incapable of fulfilling family responsibilities. Such caution reflects a preventive approach to protecting women and preserving family welfare before the marriage contract is concluded.⁶⁸ In this respect, selecting a prospective husband is not simply an administrative or familial consideration but part of the broader ethical responsibility to prevent foreseeable harm within marital life. The quality of the prospective spouse thus becomes an important preliminary condition for sustaining the objectives that marriage is intended to achieve.⁶⁹

From the perspective of contemporary family law, al-Ghazālī's framework remains relevant insofar as it emphasizes enduring principles such as religious commitment, moral character, emotional maturity, readiness to assume family responsibilities, and *kafā'a* (compatibility) between spouses.⁷⁰ By contrast, criteria that were more closely associated with the social context of his time, such as preferences concerning a woman's marital history or marriage to close relatives, may be understood as contextual considerations rather than absolute objectives of the *Sharī'a*. The central principle of al-Ghazālī's thought, therefore, directs spouse selection toward qualities that increase the possibility of realizing marital tranquillity, generational continuity, mutual well-being, and sustainable family welfare. In this sense, appropriate spouse selection constitutes the initial stage of realizing the *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, while *ādab al-zawāj* provides the practical means for maintaining them throughout marital life.

⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn*.

⁶⁹ Musda Asmara and Lilis Sahara, "Problems with Choosing a Mate in Islam for People Who Choose a Mate through Social Media," *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 1, no. 1 (December 2022): 40–49, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17391105>.

⁷⁰ Fathullah, Sayehu, and Nafan Tarihoran, "Kafa'ah in Contemporary Islamic Marriage: Insights from a Systematic and Meta-Analytical Review," *Nusantara: Journal of Law Studies* 4, no. 01 (July 2025): 60–73, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17355035>.

Al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-zawāj* Cycle: A Sufi-*Maqāṣid* Model for Family Flourishing

A close reading of *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ* shows that al-Ghazālī not only explains the purposes of marriage but also develops an ethical and spiritual framework that connects spouse selection, the realization of *maqāṣid al-zawāj*, and the preservation of family life in a continuous process. Rather than treating marital objectives, spouse selection, and marital ethics as separate themes, his discussion can be reconstructed as successive stages of *sulūk* (spiritual path) oriented toward human and moral maturation. Marriage, therefore, extends beyond its legal function and becomes a potential arena of spiritual transformation in which *maqāṣid*, ethics, and Islamic law converge. This reconstruction is consistent with al-Ghazālī's broader conception of the *Sharīʿa* as oriented toward the realization of human welfare (*maṣlaḥa*).⁷¹

The philosophical foundation of this reconstruction can be situated within al-Ghazālī's Sufi paradigm, particularly the concepts of *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs*. The first two *maqāṣid*, *taḥṣīl al-walad* and *kasr al-shahwa*, may be understood as involving the purification and reorientation of the heart, whereby sexual desire is not treated as an end in itself but is directed toward lawful worship, moral restraint, and the continuity of a righteous generation. The remaining three *maqāṣid*, *tarwīḥ al-nafs*, *tafrīgh al-qalb*, and *mujāhadāt al-nafs*, reflect dimensions of *tazkiyat al-nufūs* through psychological tranquillity, cooperation, and sustained moral discipline within family life. In this sense, the family becomes an arena of *riyāḍa rūḥiyya* (spiritual discipline) in which patience, compassion, responsibility, self-restraint, and other virtues are cultivated as part of the pursuit of *kamāl al-akhlāq* (moral perfection).

This reconstruction further indicates that al-Ghazālī's conception of the purposes of marriage does not remain confined to the protection of the essential interests conventionally identified within *al-ḍarūriyāt*, but extends toward the ethical and spiritual perfection of the human person (*takmīl al-insān*). Accordingly, *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs* should not be understood merely as processes of detachment from worldly distractions.⁷² Within marital life, they can instead be understood as transformative processes through which individuals learn to regulate desire, restrain ego, recognize others' dignity, and

⁷¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm Al-Dīn*.

⁷² Nur Hadi Ihsan et al., "Spiritual Equilibrium: Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's Concept of Tazkiyat al-Nafs," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 14, no. 1 (June 2025): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v14i1.26301>.

generate social benefit. This dimension reflects a distinctive feature of al-Ghazālī's synthesis of *Sharīʿa* and Sufism, in which religious norms are inseparable from the cultivation of the inner self and the formation of virtuous conduct.

In contemporary society, this framework offers a complementary perspective to approaches to family law that primarily emphasize regulation and post-conflict remedies. Contemporary family challenges, including domestic violence,⁷³ violations of spousal rights,⁷⁴ marital conflict,⁷⁵ child neglect,⁷⁶ and psychological pressures affecting family well-being, cannot necessarily be addressed through legal regulation alone. They also involve questions of character, emotional regulation, responsibility, and interpersonal ethics. From this perspective, family formation requires not only behavioral regulation but also cultivating the inner dispositions that sustain ethical conduct. *Taṣfiyat al-qulūb* may therefore be understood as directing desire, ego, and life orientation toward morally constructive ends, while *tazkiyat al-nufūs* cultivates empathy, patience, self-restraint, psychological resilience, and social responsibility as important dimensions of family resilience.

On this basis, al-Ghazālī's thought can be reconstructed into a Cycle Model of *Maqāṣid al-zawāj* comprising three interconnected stages: (1) foundation, established through spouse selection based on religious and moral qualities; (2) realization, achieved through the cultivation of the five *maqāṣid al-zawāj* and their spiritual actualization through *taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs*; and (3) preservation, sustained through *ādab al-zawāj*, reciprocal rights and obligations, *ḥusn al-mu'āshara*, cooperation, and dignified conflict resolution.

⁷³ Wahidah Zein Br Siregar, "Causes and Impacts of Domestic Violence against Women: Cases in Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Dialektika* 19, no. 1 (June 2024): 77–88, <https://doi.org/10.20473/jsd.v19i1.2024.77-88>.

⁷⁴ Rahmawati Rahmawati et al., "Dis-Implementation of the Islamic Family Law in Fulfilling the Rights of Ex-Wives After Divorce in Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (March 2025): 538–59, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v9i1.27172>.

⁷⁵ Durotun Nafisah et al., "Comparative Analysis of Islamic Family Law and Normative Law: Examining the Causes of Divorce in Purwokerto, Indonesia," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 2 (May 2024): 847, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.16825>.

⁷⁶ Julia M. Kobulsky, Howard Dubowitz, and Yanfeng Xu, "The Global Challenge of the Neglect of Children," *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Evolving Progress and Prospects for Child Protection, vol. 110 (December 2020): 104296, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104296>.

The cycle is not linear in a strictly chronological sense, because preservation practices continuously reinforce the moral and spiritual qualities established at the beginning of marriage. Thus, marriage can be understood not merely as a reproductive or legal institution but as a dynamic arena of spiritual and moral formation that contributes to individual virtue, family resilience, and social welfare. Al-Ghazālī's contribution, therefore, lies not only in identifying the purposes of marriage but also in providing the conceptual resources for an integrated Sufi-*maqāsid* framework in which purification of the heart, cultivation of the soul, marital ethics, and *maṣlaḥa* converge toward sustainable human flourishing.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that al-Ghazālī's conception of *maqāsid al-zawāj* can be reconstructed as an integrated ethical and spiritual framework. A close reading of *Kitāb Ādab al-Nikāḥ* reveals an interconnected relationship between spouse selection, five purposes of marriage, and *ādab al-zawāj*. Spouse selection provides the foundation, while *taḥṣīl al-walad*, *kasr al-shahwa wa al-tahassun min al-shayṭān*, *tarwīḥ al-nafs*, *tafrīgh al-qalb*, and *mujāhadāt al-nafs* establish marriage's substantive orientation. These purposes are sustained through ethical practices including rights and responsibilities, *ḥusn al-mu'āshara*, cooperation, patience, self-restraint, and dignified conflict management. *Taṣfiyat al-qulūb* and *tazkiyat al-nufūs* provide the spiritual dimension supporting moral formation. The study consequently reconstructs a Cyclical Model of *Maqāsid al-zawāj* comprising foundation, realization, and preservation as interconnected dimensions.

Theoretically, the model extends the application of *maqāsid al-sharī'a* in Islamic family studies by connecting the protection of essential human interests with ethical and spiritual formation. The five marriage purposes are not equated with the five *ḍarūriyāt* of *maqāsid al-sharī'a*; rather, they are understood as marriage-specific purposes within a broader framework of human and family *maṣlaḥa*. The model therefore positions marriage not merely as a legal relationship but as a continuing process of moral development. Practically, it provides a conceptual foundation for premarital education, marital counselling, and family development programmes by emphasizing spouse selection, moral and emotional readiness, desire regulation, communication, cooperation, conflict management, and spiritual self-cultivation. It thus offers a framework for

connecting Islamic family law, *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*, and Sufi ethics in strengthening contemporary family life.

This study is limited by its qualitative, text-centered design and primary reliance on *Kitāb Adab al-Nikāḥ* and related works of al-Ghazālī. The proposed model is therefore a conceptual reconstruction rather than an empirically validated framework for contemporary Muslim families. Future research should examine its applicability through empirical studies involving married couples, premarital education participants, family counsellors, and Islamic family-law practitioners. Comparative research involving other classical Muslim thinkers and contemporary *maqāṣid al-usra* frameworks would further clarify its theoretical scope. Such studies could test whether the relationships identified between spouse selection, marital purposes, ethical conduct, spiritual cultivation, and family *maṣlaḥa* remain applicable across different social and cultural contexts and further develop the relationship between spiritual formation, marital ethics, and human flourishing.

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Author Contributions:

M.N. conceptualized the study, conducted the legal data analysis, and prepared the original manuscript draft; **Z.H.** and **A.H.** designed the research and reviewed and revised the manuscript; **M.** and **R.S.** contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the findings, provided critical intellectual input, and reviewed and edited the manuscript.

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