



ETHICS OF SCIENCE IN AL-GHAZALI'S VIEW OF THE PHENOMENON OF STUDENT ASSIGNMENT JOCKS

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Abstract

This study analyzes the use of assignment jockey services among university students from the perspective of al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge, particularly concerning intention, honesty, moral responsibility, and spirituality in learning. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation, then analyzed thematically through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that students' use of assignment jockey services is driven by time constraints, academic pressure, low self-confidence, grade orientation, social pressure, and the economic motives of service providers. From al-Ghazali's perspective, this practice reflects distorted intentions, weakened honesty, loss of the spiritual meaning of learning, and misuse of knowledge. The study concludes that strengthening academic integrity cannot rely solely on sanctions; it also requires cultivating proper learning ethics, expanding lecturers' roles as moral educators, implementing process-based assessment, providing academic support, and strengthening muraqabah and students' moral responsibility within Islamic higher education.

Keywords: Assignment Jockey; Al-Ghazali; Ethics of Knowledge; Academic Integrity; Islamic Education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis fenomena penggunaan jasa assignment jockey di kalangan mahasiswa melalui perspektif etika ilmu al-Ghazali, khususnya terkait niat, kejujuran, tanggung jawab moral, dan spiritualitas dalam menuntut ilmu. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologis. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik melalui tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan jasa assignment jockey dipengaruhi oleh keterbatasan waktu, tekanan akademik, rendahnya kepercayaan diri, orientasi pada nilai, tekanan sosial, serta motif ekonomi dari penyedia jasa. Temuan juga memperlihatkan adanya normalisasi perilaku tidak jujur akibat tekanan akademik dan pemaknaan pragmatis terhadap tugas sebagai produk yang dapat dialihkan. Dalam perspektif al-Ghazali, praktik tersebut merefleksikan penyimpangan niat, lemahnya kejujuran, hilangnya makna spiritual belajar, dan penyalahgunaan ilmu. Penelitian menegaskan bahwa penguatan integritas akademik tidak cukup melalui sanksi, tetapi membutuhkan pembinaan adab belajar, peran dosen sebagai murabbi, evaluasi berbasis proses, dukungan akademik, serta penguatan muraqabah dan tanggung jawab moral mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: Assignment Jockey; Al-Ghazali; Etika Ilmu; Integritas Akademik; Pendidikan Islam



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INTRODUCTION

Seeking knowledge is both an obligation and a crucial process in shaping one's personality, morals, and intellect. In Islam, acquiring knowledge is not merely an intellectual activity, but also an act of worship with high spiritual value. Therefore, Islam emphasizes the importance of honesty, sincerity, and integrity in the process of seeking knowledge. Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* emphasizes that seeking knowledge must be based on sincere intentions and true goals, because knowledge obtained without honesty and sincerity will not bring blessings, and can even lead people to moral error.¹

However, the reality of higher education today demonstrates a shift in values within the learning process. One widespread phenomenon is the practice of assignment-taking, which involves paying others to complete academic assignments on a student's behalf. This practice arises for various reasons. One of the primary reasons students use assignment-taking services is time constraints.² Students who are busy with tight schedules or various activities outside of lectures such as organizational activities, part-time jobs, and social responsibilities often have difficulty managing time to complete academic assignments independently.

Apart from the time factor, limited understanding of lecture material can also trigger dishonest academic behavior.³ This phenomenon has grown rapidly with technological advancements and the widespread use of social media. Many accounts and individuals now openly offer assignment writing services, such as papers, essays, presentations, journals, and even theses, through digital platforms. This phenomenon indicates a crisis of academic integrity, where the values of honesty and responsibility in pursuing knowledge are starting to be neglected.⁴ This situation indicates an imbalance between students' time management skills and their learning capacity in dealing with academic pressure. The use of assignment-making services is also inextricably linked to the student's decision to use such services and the various potential consequences of assignment-taking practices.⁵

¹ Feni Karya Utami and Muhammad Idris, "Etika Peserta Didik Dalam Perspektif Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Saat Ini Skripsi" (Institut Agama Islam Negeri IAIN Curup, 2025), 121–26.

² Syarifan Nurjan, "Analisis Teoritik Prokrastinasi Akademik Mahasiswa," *Muaddib: Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 1, no. 1 (2020): 71–78.

³ Elizabeth Amelia Permata Sari and Daniel Jefri Kurniawan, "Faktor – Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Penggunaan Jasa Joki Tugas Oleh Pelajar Dan Mahasiswa," *Koloni: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu* 2, no. 2 (2023): 95–97.

⁴ H. Muchsin Al-Fikri, "Peluang Dan Tantangan Perguruan Tinggi Menghadapi Revolusi Digital Di Era Society 5.0.," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan* 3 (2021): 350–55.

⁵ Michael Draper et al., "Essay Mills and Other Contract Cheating Services: To Buy or Not to Buy and the Consequences of Students Changing Their Minds," *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 17 (2021): 13.

Students' decisions to use or avoid assignment-taking practices are influenced by personal and social factors. Some students choose to do assignments themselves due to considerations of honesty, responsibility, and the learning process. This demonstrates that assignment-taking practices are not only related to academic regulations but also to ethical values in the process of acquiring knowledge, particularly honesty, sincerity, and responsibility.⁶

Several previous studies have highlighted this phenomenon from various perspectives. From an academic perspective, the practice of using task-playing services not only reduces the quality of learning because students do not receive the learning experience they deserve, but also has the potential to result in academic consequences such as grade reductions, administrative reprimands, and even sanctions from the university. According to Arifin, the practice of task-playing services is considered an invalid contract under Islamic law because it involves elements of fraud and violates the principle of *sidq* (honesty) in transactions.⁷ Meanwhile, Rahman emphasized that the practice of task jockeys is a form of deviation from educational morals and ethics.⁸ Other research also shows that this practice is contrary to the principles of *amanah* and *maslahah* in Islamic economic law because it does not reflect the scientific responsibility of students.⁹

Similar findings were put forward by Komeni and his colleagues who identified that dishonest academic behavior, including the use of jockey services, was often triggered by pressure to graduate quickly and weak academic supervision in higher education.¹⁰ The study confirms that the decline in academic morality is a serious challenge for Islamic higher education institutions in instilling the values of honesty and scientific responsibility.

Although various studies have addressed the legal and ethical aspects of the practice of task jockeys, few have examined this phenomenon from the perspective of al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge. In fact, al-Ghazali devoted significant attention to the etiquette of teachers and students, encompassing intention, honesty, trustworthiness, and moral and spiritual responsibility in pursuing knowledge. According to him, the ethics of knowledge encompasses not only legal judgments of

⁶ Rebecca Awdry and Andrew Groves, "Why They Do and Why They Don't: A Combined Criminological Approach to Understanding Assignment Outsourcing in Higher Education," *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 19 (2023): 1–18.

⁷ Ahmad Arifin and Tajul Arifin, "Konsekuensi Penyedia Dan Pengguna Jasa Joki Tugas Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Hakam: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Ekonomi Islam* 7, no. 2 (2023): 164–68.

⁸ Aziz Rahman et al., "Praktik Perjokian Tugas : Dimensi Nilai Kejujuran Dan Integritas Perspektif Hukum Islam Dan Hukum Positif," *Jurnal Alwatzikhoebillah: Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Ekonomi, Humaniora* 11, no. 1 (2025): 13–24.

⁹ Wini Diyah Anggraini, "Tinjauan Hukum Ekonomi Syariah Terhadap Praktik Perjokian Tugas Perkuliahan" (UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, 2024), 19–20.

¹⁰ Wirdi Hisroh Komeni et al., "Fenomena Minimnya Tingkat Kejujuran Mahasiswa Dalam Penyelesaian Tugas Akhir Di Lingkungan Pendidikan," *Al-Mikraj: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora*, 4, no. 2 (2024): 1182–92.

right and wrong, but also emphasizes the spiritual dimension and purity of intention in the pursuit of knowledge.¹¹ Thus, the practice of task jockeys not only needs to be studied as an academic violation, but also as a form of moral deviation from the foundation of scientific values in Islam.

This phenomenon is interesting to study because it reveals the gap between the ideals of Islamic education and academic reality. Many students now pursue higher education with an orientation towards final grades and graduation without understanding the spiritual meaning of the learning process itself. This indicates that spiritual orientation and scientific ethics are starting to be neglected. Based on this background, this study seeks to describe the phenomenon of task jockeys as a form of deviation from academic ethics; analyze it through the perspective of scientific ethics according to al-Ghazali, specifically regarding the values of honesty, intention, and moral responsibility; and explore its relevance to re-establishing students' academic integrity in the modern era. Through this study, it is hoped that a deeper understanding will emerge regarding the importance of developing scientific ethics based on Islamic values, so that students not only excel intellectually but also have a moral and spiritual responsibility in pursuing knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, which seeks to understand students' direct experiences related to the practice of task jockeys.¹² The research location is at one of the Islamic universities in Central Java, chosen because of initial findings regarding the widespread use of jockey services in student environments, both through friendship networks and social media.¹³

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively, consisting of eight students directly involved in the practice of task jockeys, four as Student Jockeys (MJ), and four as Jockey Providers (PJ), including several active students who offer jockey services through their social networks and social media.¹⁴

The data obtained was then analyzed through three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.¹⁵ The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, linking field findings to al-Ghazali's concept of scientific ethics, particularly regarding intention,

¹¹ Lailatul Hidayah, "Konsep Akhlak Murid Terhadap Guru (Studi Komparasi Antara Kitab Adab Al- Alim Wa Al - Muta'alim Dan Kitab Taisirul Al-Khallaq)" (IAIN Ponorogo, 2020), 56–57.

¹² John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Desain Riset* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), 19–20.

¹³ Anggita Pramesti Kinasih, "Rasa Bersalah Pada Mahasiswa Pengguna Jasa Joki Tugas Di Kota Semarang" (Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Semarang, 2024), 43–45.

¹⁴ Komang Ayu Henny Achjar et al., *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Panduan Praktis Untuk Analisis Data Kualitatif Dan Studi Kasus* (PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2023).

¹⁵ Muhammad Nur Budiyanto et al., *Buku Ajar Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Aplikasi Digital Kontemporer Skripsi, Tesis Dan Disertasi* (PT Media Penerbit Indonesia, 2025), 45–46.

honesty, and moral responsibility. The final stage of the research involved compiling conclusions to provide a comprehensive overview of the practice of task-taking as a form of ethical crisis in science from an Islamic perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Decadence of Scientific Ethics in the Phenomenon of Assignment Jockeys Among Students

The phenomenon of using job-seeking services in Islamic higher education environments indicates an increasingly worrying crisis in academic ethics.¹⁶ Based on interviews and field observations, this practice has become "normalized" behavior in campus life. The ten informants interviewed consisted of five service users (Student Jockeys-MJ) and five service providers (Student Jockeys-PJ) who had helped other students complete academic assignments, including papers, lab reports, essays, and theses. The majority of students were aware of and even accessed these services through social media platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, as well as through their network of friends on campus. This phenomenon confirms that dishonest academic behavior has transformed into a practice considered normal as long as it meets students' academic and social demands.

The main motives for students using jockey services vary, but can be classified into two categories. i. First, internal factors, such as time constraints, academic pressure, and a lack of self-confidence; Second, external factors, namely social pressure and an education system that places too much emphasis on results rather than process.¹⁷ Informant MJ1 stated that his busy class schedule and organizational activities made it difficult for him to manage his time to complete assignments independently. This statement suggests that a high academic load and poor time management often lead to the choice to pursue methods that are not entirely in line with academic ethics.

Furthermore, cognitive factors are also a significant factor. Informant MJ2 revealed that his lack of understanding of the course material and fear of getting bad grades led him to choose the shortcut of using a jockey service. These findings are in line with research showing that fear of failure and lack of self-confidence are strong factors in the tendency to engage in task-driven behavior.¹⁸ This indicates a disparity between students' learning abilities and lecturers' academic expectations, which has implications for the emergence of instant strategies to maintain academic

¹⁶ Muhammad Permadi and Atin Risnawati, "Motivasi Belajar Mahasiswa Dalam Penggunaan Joki Tugas.," *Glosains: Jurnal Sains Global Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2024): 27–33.

¹⁷ Ilham Sholihin, "Praktik Joki Tugas: Antara Deviasi Sosial Dan Gejala Wajar Masyarakat Konsumer Dalam Dunia Pascamodern" (Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, 2022), 8–10.

¹⁸ Suraj Ajit et al., "Fear of Failure: A Student-Facing Investigation into the Motivations Forcontract Cheating and Academic Misconduct," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 7–10.

performance. Furthermore, MJ3 interpreted the use of jockey services as a normal form of "professional assistance" in the digital age, while MJ4 highlighted the social pressure of seeking academic recognition from peers.

These motives show that deviant academic behavior is not always interpreted as a deliberate act of deception, but rather often arises from stressful situations that make students assess this choice as the most likely way to survive amidst the academic demands they face.¹⁹

On the other hand, jockey service providers (PJs) have equally complex motives. Based on interviews, the majority of jockey service providers are Final-year students or recent graduates possessing higher academic abilities than the students using the service. The primary motivator is economic factors. Informant PJ1 explained that this activity began as a way to help a friend and then developed into a promising source of additional income. On average, jockey providers receive three to five orders per week, especially around the end-of-semester exam period.

Besides economic motives, there are also academic and social ones. Informant PJ2 stated that some jockey providers feel they possess good academic writing skills and want to utilize them productively. They view this activity as a "professional academic writing service," not a form of fraud. A similar view was expressed by PJ3, who admitted to receiving more orders through his status. *WhatsApp*, Instagram stories, and word-of-mouth recommendations. He believes that personal networks among students are the most effective promotional medium compared to open advertising on digital media.

Meanwhile, PJ4 highlighted the moral dilemma he felt. He acknowledged that this activity was not entirely ethically correct, but viewed it as a form of symbiotic reciprocity, where the provider helped another student complete what he considered a heavy academic burden, while he himself benefited financially. This finding indicates a moral relativization among students, where ethically wrong actions are considered acceptable as long as they bring mutual benefits.

The interview results also showed that the amount of jockey service fees varied according to the type of task, level of difficulty, and work limits. Completion time. For simple assignments such as papers or short essays, the rate ranges from Rp100,000 to Rp250,000 per page. Meanwhile, for assignments requiring data analysis, such as lab reports or research proposals, the fee can reach Rp200,000-Rp350,000 per page, depending on the complexity of the material and the depth of the study requested by the service user. As for theses or final assignments, the rate is relatively higher, ranging from Rp2,000,000 to Rp5,000,000 per project, with an estimated completion time of two to four weeks. Transactions are generally conducted digitally via bank transfer or e-wallet, while the final assignment is sent via online platforms such as Google Drive or email.

¹⁹ Wulan Nur Ichwana et al., "Motif Mahasiswa Dalam Menggunakan Jasa Pembuat Skripsi Di Perguruan Tinggi," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 3 (2022): 264–71.

From the service provider's perspective, the primary motivation for offering this service is not solely economic, but also due to the growing demand from students. Several informants from the tutoring provider (PJ) group revealed that the activity initially aimed to help close friends who were having difficulty understanding course material. However, over time and with increasing demand, this activity transformed into a profitable economic opportunity. is considered "reasonable" as long as it doesn't harm others. One jockey provider even stated that the income from this service is significant enough to cover daily needs, such as college tuition and personal expenses.

The Crisis of Intention and Spirituality in Pursuing Knowledge

The phenomenon of job seekers that is rampant in higher education environments essentially reflects a crisis of intention and a degradation of spirituality in the process of seeking knowledge.²⁰ In the context of Islamic education, intention is the primary foundation that determines the value of one's deeds. Al-Ghazali emphasized that every deed depends on one's intention, and knowledge sought without the goal of drawing closer to God will lose its blessings and provide no benefit to its possessor. He argued that a true intention in seeking knowledge must be based on a desire to improve oneself, uncover the truth, and benefit the community, rather than simply seeking praise, social status, or worldly gain.²¹

Students' decisions to use assignment-writing services can be influenced by various circumstances that lead them to outsource their academic work. This phenomenon then raises questions about academic integrity and student responsibility for the learning process.²² This crisis of intention is evident in students who choose the shortcut of using assignment-taking services. This practice indicates that the goal of learning has shifted from a spiritual orientation to a pragmatic and materialistic one. Students no longer view knowledge as a means of purifying the soul and developing the intellect, but merely as a means to obtain high grades or graduate quickly. Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, asserts that knowledge not accompanied by a sound intention will become "an argument against itself," meaning that such knowledge can actually lead its practitioners to moral degradation and distance themselves from Divine grace.²³

According to al-Ghazali, spirituality in the pursuit of knowledge plays a central role in maintaining a student's sincerity and earnestness. This spirituality serves as an inner strength that

²⁰ Qisthy Rabathy et al., "Joki Tugas Kuliah Daring Di Kalangan Mahasiswa," *Linimasa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 6, no. 2 (2023): 263–76.

²¹ Muhamad Ahdor Daenuri, *Keutamaan Belajar Menurut Imam AL-Ghazali Dalam Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin* (CV. Azka Pustaka, 2021), 7–8.

²² Thomas Lancaster, "Academic Discipline Integration by Contract Cheating Services and Essay Mills," *Journal of Academic Ethics* 18 (2020): 115–27.

²³ Candra Kirana, "Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Akhlak Dalam Manajemen Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Al-Ghazali," *Jieb: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis* 2, no. 1 (2025): 8–9.

fosters a sense of responsibility for the truth and sanctity of knowledge. When spirituality weakens, knowledge...lost its meaning as a means of worship.²⁴ This aligns with al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which is the purification of the soul before receiving knowledge. A seeker of knowledge whose soul is polluted by ostentation, laziness, or worldly desires will find it difficult to understand the true essence of knowledge.²⁵

The phenomenon of task jockeys also shows symptoms of "*spiritual dislocation*" in modern education. Many students excel academically but lack integrity and scientific responsibility. They rely more on instant results than on the honest learning process. In fact, from al-Ghazali's perspective, the process of seeking knowledge is an act of worship that requires patience, *mujahadah*, and etiquette.²⁶ When this process is ignored, the knowledge obtained will not grow wisdom (*al-hikmah*), but will only produce empty knowledge without moral value.

This spiritual crisis is further exacerbated by the competitive culture of modern academia, which emphasizes results over process. Students feel compelled to compete fiercely for high GPAs, scholarships, or job opportunities, thus justifying any means to achieve these goals. In this context, al-Ghazali warned of the dangers of knowledge not accompanied by sound intentions. He stated that one of the signs of a corrupted intention is when someone seeks knowledge to seek honor before people, rather than to seek God's approval. As a result, knowledge loses its sacred value and becomes a tool to strengthen ego and personal ambition.

In addition, the phenomenon of task jockeys also illustrates the weakness of the dimensions *muraqabah* (the awareness that Allah is always watching) within students. In fact, al-Ghazali places *muraqabah* at the core of spiritual awareness.²⁷ A scholar who has *muraqabah* will be careful in every action he takes, including writing, researching and completing assignments. He will feel embarrassed to deceive his lecturers, friends, or even himself because he realizes that Allah knows his every deed. When this value is lost, academic honesty will collapse and be replaced by a culture of manipulation and falsehood.²⁸

To overcome this crisis of intention and spirituality, Islamic higher education needs to re-invigorate awareness. *Adab al-'alim wa al-muta'allim* As taught by al-Ghazali, the curriculum emphasizes not only cognitive achievement but also character development, sincerity, and scientific

²⁴ Muhammad Taufiq Ridlo Maghriza and Mukh. Nursikin, "Pendekatan Pendidikan Nilai Dalam Filsafat Islam: Analisis Kontribusi Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Ibnu Sina," *Afeksi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan* 5, no. 2 (2024): 301–2.

²⁵ Muhamad Bisri Ihwan, *Akhlaq Tasawwuf: Meniti Jalan Kesucian Hati* (Yayasan Pusaka Thamrin Dahlan, 2025), 36–39.

²⁶ Mahmudi Fajar Al and Agung Pangeran Bungsu, *Al-Ghazali Dan Komunikasi Pendidikan Islam: Jalan Menuju Insan Kamil*, 23, no. 2 (2025): 177–78.

²⁷ Ashri Hidayati, "Pendidikan Akhlak Sebagai Inti Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam Pemikiran," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2025): 2610–11.

²⁸ Maya Rahmadani et al., "Maqam Muraqabah; Perspektif Imam Abu Hasan Asy Syadzili Dalam Kitab Risalah Al-Amin," *Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Sosial Keagamaan* 2, no. 2 (2024): 154–55.

responsibility. Lecturers serve not only as teachers but also as murabbi (spiritual educators) who instill the values of honesty and sincerity in students. Meanwhile, students need to reflect on their goals in pursuing education, whether simply to obtain a degree or to seek knowledge that brings blessings and benefits.

Thus, the crisis of intention and spirituality in seeking knowledge is at the root of the emergence of assignment-taking practices and other dishonest academic behavior. Al-Ghazali's views provide a relevant ethical framework for restoring the sanctity of the learning process, where knowledge must be accompanied by sincere intentions, a sincere heart, and spiritual awareness. Only in this way can education once again function as a means of developing knowledgeable, civilized, and responsible individuals before God and their fellow human beings.

Misappropriation of Intentions and Knowledge in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din: Al-Ghazali's Ethics Study of the Job Jockey Phenomenon

The phenomenon of students using task-takers reflects a dynamic of academic ethics that deserves careful attention within Islamic higher education. When viewed through the perspective of Islamic scientific ethics, particularly al-Ghazali's thought in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, this practice can be understood not merely as a technical or administrative issue, but as a sign that some students may not yet fully grasp the fundamental meaning of the process of seeking knowledge.

According to al-Ghazali's framework, the ideal activity of seeking knowledge is based on clear intentions, a focused orientation, and intellectual integrity. When these principles are not fully internalized, students may seek alternatives that deviate from the essence of learning itself.²⁹ From this perspective, the phenomenon of task jockeys can be understood as a depiction of the discrepancy between the ideal goals of science and ongoing academic practices.

In Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, al-Ghazali asserts that knowledge is a light instilled by God in the hearts of those who seek it, not merely the accumulation of information or technical skills. Knowledge should lead its seekers to closeness to God, moral maturity, and the ability to benefit others. He writes that knowledge will not provide light if sought with corrupt intentions, such as for prestige, social approval, or worldly gain.

Several studies regarding al-Ghazali's thoughts emphasize that learning is essentially closely related to tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) and taqarrub ila Allah (strengthening the relationship with God). This orientation becomes the moral basis for all intellectual activities, so

²⁹ Madhar, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Tarqiyatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 3, no. 2 (2024): 119–21.

that when the intention in learning is not directed towards this goal, the process of seeking knowledge loses its worship value and experiences a shift in meaning.³⁰

Within this framework, the phenomenon of the use of task takers can be understood as a symptom of a shift in learning orientation. This practice suggests that some students may be facing challenges in maintaining purity of intention, where academic activities tend to be perceived as demands that must be completed practically and quickly, rather than as the self-development process that al-Ghazali truly emphasized.

In al-Ghazali's view, deviant intentions (*fasad al-niyyah*) occur when someone takes the path of knowledge not to develop morals or achieve truth, but merely to fulfill worldly demands.³¹ Assignment jockeys are a strong reflection of this phenomenon. Students who use jockeys' services no longer view knowledge as a process of internalizing values and self-improvement, but rather as a commodity to be purchased.³² In other words, task jockeys moved market logic into the academic space, something al-Ghazali explicitly criticized.

In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali mentions a type of person who possesses knowledge but does not benefit from it, because he uses it as a tool to achieve worldly ambitions. At this point, students not only abandon the learning process but also violate the ethical intention that underlies scientific activity.

In *Ihya'*, al-Ghazali also touches on the dangers of misusing knowledge (*su'al-istigral bi al-'ilm*), which is when knowledge is used inappropriately for its noble purposes. Al-Ghazali is very harsh on those who use their scientific position for improper purposes, as this constitutes a moral lie that tarnishes the dignity of knowledge. When linked to the phenomenon of job seekers, two tendencies similar to al-Ghazali's warnings emerge.

First, On the part of service providers, academic skills that should be a trust are used to create works on behalf of others. This kind of activity gives the impression that knowledge is treated as a commodity, rather than as an ethical responsibility that requires its holder to maintain the purity of its purpose and use. From an Islamic ethical perspective, this situation indicates a shift in orientation from efforts to provide legitimate benefits to actions that have practical value but are questionable in terms of integrity.³³

Second, On the part of service users, there is a tendency to exploit academic credentials to claim results that do not stem from their own learning process. This practice constitutes a form of self-obscurtion that subtly undermines the notion of academic honesty. In Islamic scientific ethics,

³⁰ Daenuri, *Keutamaan Belajar Menurut Imam AL-Ghazali Dalam Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin*, 9–16.

³¹ Marhani, *Diskursus Teoritis Akhlak Al Ghazali* (IAIN Parepare Nusantara Press, 2020), 137–39.

³² Aldi Putra and Albar Perdana, "Penegakan Hukum Terhadap Eksistensi Jasa Joki Tugas Akhir Mahasiswa Perspektif Tanggun Jawab Hukum," *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Prima* 7, no. 2 (2024): 154–56.

³³ Oladije O. Agunloye, "Ethics in Academic Research and Scholarship: An Elucidation of the Principles and Applications," *Journal of Global Education and Research* 3, no. 2 (2019): 179.

this action is seen as a discrepancy between the external and the internal, between what is presented as intellectual achievement and the actual process that did not take place.

Al-Ghazali often referred to the concept of barakah al-'ilm, the blessing of knowledge that can only be obtained through honest learning, pure intentions, and sincerity. The use of task-takers eliminates this blessing because knowledge never penetrates the seeker's soul. Al-Ghazali described those who study without sincerity and integrity as being like "drawing water with a basket," engaging in activities without any real results. In the context of students, task-takers render the learning process empty; assignments are completed, grades are obtained, but understanding is not formed and competencies are not developed.

Strengthening Academic Integrity through al-Ghazali's Ethics of Science

The ethical framework of science formulated by al-Ghazali, fostering academic integrity is not only based on formal rules, but especially on efforts to strengthen the inner and moral dimensions of the process of seeking knowledge.³⁴ Therefore, practical steps formulated to address the phenomenon of job seekers must stem from the understanding that the root of the problem lies not solely in a lack of regulation, but rather in a shifting orientation, weak morals, and structural pressures that shape how students respond to academic demands. Based on the spirit of al-Ghazali's thinking in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, there are at least five concrete recommendations that are relevant and applicable in the context of higher education.

First, it is crucial for universities to include modules explicitly addressing the etiquette of seeking knowledge and reflection on intentions as part of their curriculum. Al-Ghazali emphasized that intention is the foundation of all intellectual activity; when this foundation is fragile, the learning process can easily lose its direction. By providing curricular space for reflection on intentions through character development classes, academic orientation activities, or thematic discussion sessions, students can be encouraged to understand learning as a process of self-development, not simply fulfilling administrative obligations.³⁵ This kind of activity can strengthen moral awareness so that the tendency to look for shortcuts, including using jockeys, can be minimized.

By providing this kind of space, students learn not only what to do, but also why they do it. They are encouraged to see that learning is more than just completing assignments, getting

³⁴ Noor Liyana Selvia, "Konsep Pengembangan Ilmu Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali: Perspektif Epistemologi Dan Eksplorasi Kontemporer.," *Serumpun: Journal of Education, Politic, and Social Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (2024): 11–18.

³⁵ Kurniawan Syah Putra, "Konsep Pendidikan Spiritual Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam," *Jurnal Ilmiah Guru Madrasah (JIGM)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 111–14.

grades, or completing coursework. Learning is a process of character building, expanding understanding, and fostering personal responsibility.

This moral awareness is crucial because it can serve as an internal bulwark when students face academic pressure. When an understanding of intention and etiquette is ingrained, the tendency to seek shortcuts, including using assignment-taking services, can be reduced. In other words, the etiquette module for studying serves not merely as supplementary material, but as an inner framework that helps students remain honest, mentally strong, and responsible throughout the learning process.

Second, the role of the lecturer needs to be expanded from merely a teacher to a murabbi (leader), an educator who not only imparts knowledge but also fosters students' morals and ethics. In al-Ghazali's view, the teacher-student relationship has a spiritual dimension that aims to guide students toward moral maturity.³⁶ When lecturers position themselves as mentors who are close to students, providing role models, providing space for dialogue, and engaging with the learning process, this creates a more humane academic atmosphere. The presence of these moral mentors can be an important way to instill a sense of academic responsibility.³⁷

Third, the evaluation system needs to be adjusted to not only assess the final result, but also consider the process students undergo. Al-Ghazali emphasized that knowledge is acquired through a gradual journey, not an instantaneous one. Evaluations that focus too much on the final product encourage students to pursue grades, rather than learning. By placing weight on effort, development of understanding, and participation in the academic process, students will be encouraged to experience learning as a personal experience that cannot be replaced by anything else.³⁸ This process-based evaluation approach can also reduce reliance on task jockeys.

Fourth, Institutions need to provide support facilities to help students cope with academic pressure. Time management counseling services, writing guidance rooms, and academic mentoring are examples of facilities that can reduce the anxiety and workload that often trigger students to seek unethical help. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, a supportive environment for moral and intellectual development is crucial for the quality of a student's character. Therefore, improving the academic ecosystem is an integral part of efforts to improve integrity.³⁹

³⁶ Zubaidah, "Adab Pergaulan Antara Pendidik Dan Peserta Didik (Kajian Kitab Ihya Ulum Al-Din Karya Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Bin Muhammad Bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali)," *An-Nahdhah* 16, no. 1 (2023): 8–11.

³⁷ Arjun Kristiyo Sambodo and Mohamad Ali, "The Concept of Code of Ethics for Educators According to Imam Al-Ghazali: A Study of Classical Islamic Literature," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025): 94–95.

³⁸ Ismail Khozen and Milla Sepliana Setyowati, "Pedosen Dan Komponen Penilaian Dalam Meningkatkan Partisipasi Aktif Mahasiswa Di Kelas," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi(JUPE)* 13, no. 3 (2025): 184–86.

³⁹ Fajar Al Mahmudi and Agung Pangeran Bungsu, "Al-Ghazali Dan Komunikasi Pendidikan Islam: Jalan Menuju Insan Kamil," *Kreatif: Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan Agama Islam* 23, no. 2 (2025): 177–80.

Fifth, simple but consistent spiritual development practices are needed, such as short religious studies, reflection assemblies, or moral reflection sessions at the faculty and student organization levels. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of *muraqabah*, the awareness that all human activities are under God's supervision.⁴⁰ This awareness has a significant impact on how a person maintains their integrity, especially in situations where there is no external oversight. Inclusively designed spiritual activities can help students internalize the values of honesty, trustworthiness, and scientific responsibility.

Overall, these practical recommendations demonstrate that the solution to the rise of job-taking cannot rely solely on sanctions. An approach aligned with al-Ghazali's thinking requires synergy between fostering intention, exemplary educators, reforming the evaluation system, institutional support, and strengthening students' spiritual dimension. In this way, academic integrity can be built more holistically, not only at the regulatory level but also at the level of character and the meaning of the pursuit of knowledge itself.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the phenomenon of *assignment jockey* services among university students cannot be understood merely as an administrative violation or an individual act of academic dishonesty. The practice emerges from an interaction between internal pressures, including limited time management, difficulties in understanding academic material, fear of poor grades, and low self-confidence, and external pressures arising from competitive academic environments, social expectations, and an educational orientation that tends to prioritize outcomes over learning processes. At the same time, the availability of service providers and digital communication networks contributes to the normalization and accessibility of this practice within student communities.

From the perspective of al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge, the use of *assignment jockey* services reflects a more fundamental problem concerning the orientation and meaning of seeking knowledge. Learning that should be directed toward self-improvement, the pursuit of truth, moral development, and closeness to Allah becomes reduced to the achievement of grades, academic credentials, and practical completion of assignments. Such a shift indicates *fasad al-niyyah*, or distortion of intention, because academic activity is detached from its moral and spiritual purpose. Consequently, assignments may be formally completed while the intellectual process, competence formation, and personal transformation expected from education do not genuinely occur.

⁴⁰ Adnan Faris Naufal Siregar dan Wantini, "Patalogi Sosial Manusia Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali Pada Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin," *Al-Musyrif: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024): 76–78.

The findings also reveal that the phenomenon involves a misuse of knowledge on both sides of the transaction. Service users claim academic outcomes that do not fully represent their own learning processes, while service providers utilize academic competence to produce work that will be represented as another student's achievement. Within al-Ghazali's framework, this condition contradicts the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, sincerity, and responsibility associated with knowledge. It also weakens *muraqabah*, namely the awareness that intellectual and academic actions remain subject to moral accountability before Allah even when they escape institutional supervision.

Therefore, strengthening academic integrity requires an approach that extends beyond punitive regulations. Universities need to address both the moral-spiritual roots and the structural conditions that encourage students to seek unethical shortcuts. Relevant interventions include integrating the etiquette and purpose of seeking knowledge into educational activities, strengthening lecturers' roles as *murabbi*, adopting assessment systems that recognize learning processes rather than merely final products, providing academic writing and time-management support, and creating spaces for continuous moral and spiritual reflection. These strategies can strengthen students' internal ethical awareness while simultaneously reducing the pressures that facilitate academic misconduct.

Overall, this study affirms the continuing relevance of al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge for addressing contemporary academic integrity challenges in Islamic higher education. His emphasis on intention, sincerity, *adab*, *muraqabah*, moral responsibility, and the proper use of knowledge provides an ethical framework through which academic dishonesty can be understood not only as rule-breaking but also as a disruption of the formative purpose of education. Nevertheless, the phenomenological and context-specific nature of this study limits broader generalization. Future research may employ comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-method designs to examine the prevalence of *assignment jockey* practices, institutional responses, and the effectiveness of ethics-based interventions across different higher education contexts.

Research Novelty

The novelty of this study lies in repositioning the phenomenon of *assignment jockey* services from a predominantly legal, administrative, or academic misconduct issue toward a problem of scientific ethics and spiritual orientation. Previous discussions have generally emphasized contractual validity, academic sanctions, dishonesty, or the institutional consequences of outsourcing academic assignments. This study extends that discussion by employing al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge as an analytical framework to examine how *assignment jockey* practices are

connected to intention, sincerity, moral responsibility, the purpose of knowledge, and the spiritual meaning of the learning process.

A further contribution lies in the study's interpretation of *assignment jockey* practices as a dual ethical distortion involving both users and providers. On the user side, academic credentials and outcomes are obtained without fully undergoing the intellectual process represented by those outcomes. On the provider side, academic competence that should function as a form of trust and beneficial knowledge is transformed into a commodity used to produce another person's academic performance. This perspective enables the phenomenon to be understood not merely as individual cheating but as a commodification of academic knowledge that creates a disjunction between intellectual achievement, personal competence, and moral accountability.

The study also contributes an integrative framework for strengthening academic integrity by connecting al-Ghazali's classical ethical concepts with contemporary institutional strategies. Concepts such as *niyyah*, *adab al- 'alim wa al-muta 'allim*, *muraqabah*, and moral responsibility are translated into practical directions involving process-based assessment, moral mentoring by lecturers, academic support services, reflection on learning intentions, and spiritual development. In this way, the study demonstrates how classical Islamic ethics can be operationalized as a contemporary framework for responding to emerging forms of academic dishonesty in digitally mediated higher education.

Research Implications

Theoretically, the findings imply that academic integrity in Islamic higher education should be conceptualized beyond compliance with institutional rules. Al-Ghazali's ethics of knowledge demonstrates that integrity originates from the internal orientation of the learner, particularly the purity of intention, honesty, responsibility, and consciousness of moral accountability. Academic misconduct can therefore be examined simultaneously as a behavioral, educational, and spiritual problem. This perspective expands academic integrity discourse by incorporating the relationship between intellectual development and the ethical-spiritual formation of students.

Pedagogically and institutionally, the findings imply the need for universities to develop preventive approaches alongside formal sanctions. Lecturers should be encouraged to act not only as transmitters of disciplinary knowledge but also as *murabbi* who guide students in understanding the ethical meaning of academic work. Assessment systems should provide greater attention to processes such as drafts, consultations, presentations, reflection, and demonstrated understanding, thereby reducing opportunities for academic work to be entirely transferred to third parties. Academic writing assistance, time-management guidance, mentoring, and psychological-academic

support are also important for addressing structural pressures that contribute to students' reliance on unethical services.

Practically, strengthening academic integrity requires the development of a campus culture in which honesty is sustained through both institutional mechanisms and internal moral awareness. Activities that encourage reflection on intention, *muraqabah*, responsibility, and the purpose of seeking knowledge may be integrated into student orientation, character-development programs, academic advising, and learning activities. Combined with accessible academic support and process-oriented evaluation, this approach can help universities shift integrity policies from predominantly punitive responses toward preventive and formative strategies that nurture intellectually competent, morally responsible, and spiritually aware graduates.

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