

## **THE CLASH OF THOUGHTS: HOW ABŪ ḤĀMID AL-GHAZĀLĪ AND BERTRAND RUSSELL DEFINE HAPPINESS**

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### **Abstract**

The interpretation of happiness and the method to attain it may vary from one individual to another. Happiness by itself is subjective, which entails the individual's perception on happiness to change according to the respective situation. Literature on happiness is vast and often updated as it is enticing to explore multiple guidance in attaining true happiness. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī was a classical scholar who initiated the thought of spiritual happiness in Islam, in which he discusses methods to attain happiness for Muslims. On the other hand, Bertrand Russell is a European scholar from the modern era who discusses the factors of happiness and unhappiness in individuals. This study aims to descriptively discuss the happiness approach according to both scholars. The data collection method used was content analyses of the scholars' works to decipher their perspectives on happiness. Comparative method was also applied to identify the similarities and differences in their thoughts on happiness. The finding reveals that the differences in thoughts between them are inevitable as both scholars hailed from different eras and their assumptions were based on contrasting epistemologies. However, similarities are also observed as it is human nature to share common characteristics of happiness. Moreover, the differences and the similarities in their eventful background have provided significant revelations in their thoughts about happiness.

**Keywords:** *Happiness, Subjective, Classical, Islam, Modern Impact, Human History, Conjugal Life.*

## 1. Introduction

Clash means a disagreement, contradiction, inconsistency or conflict (of ideas, opinions, interests).<sup>1</sup> Happiness refers to a state of well-being, being full of contentment and cheerfulness.<sup>2</sup> In Arabic, happiness is called *sa'ādah*, which also means blissfulness, blessedness, beatitude, good fortune and well-being.<sup>3</sup> *Sa'ādah* was mentioned twice in the Holy Qur'ān in two derived form from the trilateral root of *sa'ādah, sīn 'ayn dāl* (د ع س). Both of the terms refer to happiness and blessedness, which is *su'idu*, that was mentioned in the verse 11:108 and *sa'īd*, that was mentioned in the verse 11:105.<sup>4</sup> In verse 11:108, *su'idu* means blessed. In this verse, those who are blessed refer to the followers of the *Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātām un Nabīyyīn Sallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā Ālihi wa Aṣḥābīhī wa Ṣallam* and they will live in paradise forever as a reward for them. Meanwhile, the term *sa'īd* in verse 11:105 means blessed and happy, referring to those who are happy are also those who are blessed.<sup>5</sup> Happiness is also one of the components in subjective well-being (SWB), besides life satisfaction and positive affect.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Ghazālī (1058 – 1111 CE) once said, “he who knows himself, knows Allah Almighty.”<sup>7</sup> When someone knows him/herself, he/she would certainly be happy. However, al-Ghazālī had to deal with contradicting reality to that which he wisely coined. During his time, al-Ghazālī was known as a *muṣliḥ*, which means an Islamic reformer.<sup>8</sup> He tried to reform the conditions of his society because he was repulsed at their transgressions in moral and social values and deviation from the right path.<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazālī had also confronted his own spiritual crisis that made him take leave from his profession as a professor in order to find the answer as to what had really happened to him.<sup>10</sup> Eventually, al-Ghazālī strove to guide his society and reform them through his teaching, writing, and sharing of his own spiritual journey. Through his endeavours and manoeuvres, al-Ghazālī had successfully contributed to detailing the inner aspects of Islam, prepared and completed for the whole Muslim community.<sup>11</sup>

According to Russell (1872 – 1970 CE), people can experience unhappiness anytime anywhere. Each dissimilar crowd has its own difficulties. People can see unhappiness in the forms of stress, uncontrolled focus, indigestion, and loss of interest in things. Adjustment is sometimes needed to develop happiness.<sup>12</sup> Russell has also stated that he hated life and tried to commit suicide continuously but was prevented by his desire to learn more about mathematics. Contrary to his previous life, he began to enjoy life and with every

passing year, he enjoyed it more. He continued to discover the things that he most yearned for, and successively achieved many of these things. It was also due to having successfully ignored specific focus of determination such as the mastery of unquestionable knowledge about something or other, as it is basically unachievable.<sup>13</sup> He also said, "life is too quick to be fascinated in everything, but it is a benefit to be enjoyed in as many things as are necessary to fill the days. For women as for men, zest is the key to happiness and comfort."<sup>14</sup>

From this discussion, unhappiness is common and normally experienced by people. Both scholars had experienced unhappiness and depressive symptoms during their lifetime. Evidently, unhappiness did not prevent them from writing about happiness. In fact, their life became more blissful and blessed after that experience, and they had attained and mastered various fields of knowledge. They managed their distress successfully and educated their society through writing in order to guide them to the right path in attaining happiness.<sup>15</sup> According to their understanding of happiness, both scholars knew how to regain happiness in their vicissitude of life. Their experiences helped to develop their thought processes and form a deeper understanding about happiness in this world and the afterlife. This article also intends to deliver a clear understanding about happiness to the Muslim and non-Muslim societies as this article's discussion based on the thoughts of Muslim scholar (al-Ghazālī) and non-Muslim scholar (Russell). Therefore, in this article, the problem statement will be discussed first, followed by discussion of literature review, and methodology of the research. Next, the results will be presented and discussed in the discussion section. Finally, the conclusion section will include the key findings and other concluding remarks to summarise the study. Last but not least, limitations and future directions are also suggested at the end of article.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The interpretation of happiness is different among individuals.<sup>16</sup> Al-Sheha has divided happiness into three phases. The first phase refers to short-term happiness. It is called false happiness. In this category, some believe that happiness is attained by forgetting all the problems without any efforts to overcome them. The second phase is happiness that is experienced when achieving goals. Similar to the previous phase, this happiness lasts only briefly as one will think of the next thing to achieve to gain another happiness. The third and final phase is true happiness. This phase of happiness remains within an individual under all circumstances regardless of his/her feelings, faith and life circumstances. One is always happy in delight and anguish, poverty and prosperity, sickness and health, and whether or not one would attain from this world what they wish for. This happiness is the result of one's firm belief.<sup>17</sup> On another note, there is

research that distinguishes the perception and interpretation of happiness, whether happiness is about feeling good or feeling right. According to Tamir et al., happiness includes the encounter of sentiments that feel right, regardless of whether they feel good or not.<sup>18</sup>

Happiness is reflected in individuals who endures adversity in their life by staying positive and dismissing negative thoughts from affecting them. Despite sorrows, trials, and tribulations that they might encounter, they are still be able to experience the joy of being alive.<sup>19</sup> Happiness is also associated with having a good relationship with Allah Almighty in worship, prayer, and any good deeds. Good relationship with Allah Almighty is the key approach to happiness on earth and deliverance in the next world.<sup>20</sup> Another perception of happiness relates to the attainment of worldly happiness such as becoming wealthy, holding the position of power, and being well-liked. Wealth might be the interpretation of happiness for the poor; much as good health for sick people; and sinners' when they truly repent.<sup>21</sup> Happiness in Arabic terms, *farah* and *surūr*, mean enjoyment and cheerful, which occur 25 times in the Holy Qur'ān.<sup>22</sup> This shows that happiness has a remarkable significance in the Holy Qur'ān. Based on the interpretation from the Holy Qur'ān, the factors of happiness are influenced by compliance to and remembrance of Allah Almighty, optimistic outlook on the world, and a positive understanding regarding death and the afterlife. Happiness must be guided and must not contradict the intelligent progress. Meanwhile, true victory is when humankind obey Allah Almighty and prevent themselves from any wrongdoings, hence leading them to genuine happiness.<sup>23</sup>

From the previous discourse, the word 'happiness' is open to many definitions and this can cause confusion. Happiness is an abstract feeling that cannot be seen by the naked eye and cannot be bought with money. Happiness is an inner feeling experienced by humans such as peace of mind, tranquility of the soul, good health, and well-being of the conscience. Real happiness is connected to the human soul.<sup>24</sup>

Based on the above discussion, there are many different perceptions of happiness which is vague and has room for further research. Therefore, the scope of this study is to discuss the idea of happiness, and the differences and similarities in the perception of happiness according to both scholars. The discussion will also lead to a better understanding about happiness, though both scholars come from different eras.

Al-Ghazālī and Russell were prominent figures in their time. Al-Ghazālī lived during the reign of the Seljuk Empire (also known as Türkmen or Ghuzz).<sup>25</sup> Political upheavals during that time gave a great impact on al-Ghazālī's life. One such conflict was between the Shiites and the Sunnis which took place during the Buwayhid era (945 - 1059 CE).<sup>26</sup> Al-Ghazālī's life was also greatly influenced by Nizām al-Mulk (1018 – 1092 CE). Nizām al-Mulk, was an influential *wazīr* from the Turkish sultanate that ruled the 'Abbāsiyya caliphate in Baghdad during that time.<sup>27</sup> As a person who loves knowledge, al-Ghazālī depended a lot on the jurists and Islamic leaders in matters related to his daily life and established a good relationship with the *ṣūfīs*. In addition, al-Ghazālī experienced the turmoil between the Ash'arites and the Hanbalites at the beginning of the Seljuk era, followed by the Isma'ilis. Due to the lack of influence and power of the Sunni scholars, as Baghdad was then under the rule of the Buwayhid Shiite sultanate, the dependence of the Sunni scholars on the ruler and government continued until after the Turkish Seljuk domination in 1055 CE. Consequently, the group was unable to avoid political diseases such as the love for the world and material things. At that point, al-Ghazālī became a well-known critic of the western influence.<sup>28</sup> He strived to restore the people's faith to the original teachings of Islam, the Holy Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the *Ḥaḍrat Muhammad Rasūlullah Khātam un Nabīyyīn Sallallahu 'alaihi wa 'alā 'Ālihi wa Aṣḥābīhi wa Ṣallam*. Al-Ghazālī was well liked by Nizām al-Mulk and due to his profound knowledge in Islamic theology and philosophy, Nizām al-Mulk had then appointed al-Ghazālī as the Chair of Theology at the Nizāmiyya College, which he founded in the capital in 1091 CE. At the age of 33/34, al-Ghazālī held the most distinguished position in the academic field.<sup>29</sup>

Russell lived during six reigns of English rulers: Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901 CE); King Edward VII (1901 – 1910 CE); King George V (1910 – 1936 CE); King Edward VIII (1936 CE); King George VI (1936 – 1952 CE); and Queen Elizabeth II (1952 - 2022 CE). Russell ran for a parliamentary seat but lost and was imprisoned twice in 1918 and 1961 for anti-war critics in his writings and his involvement in anti-nuclear protests.<sup>30</sup> Al-Ghazālī also faced a similar experience, even though he was not imprisoned, where he was once summoned by the Seljuq governor to defend himself because of the contradiction in his teachings, specifically through excerpts from his influential work, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*. However, al-Ghazālī was exculpated from all charges and received support from the governor to continue his teachings.<sup>31</sup>

Russell preferred to express his views in his writings. This can be seen in his famous work entitled *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945).<sup>32</sup> In Russell's

writing, he stated that “by understanding power in all its human instantiations that we understand the social world around us”. Russell also emphasized the importance of knowledge and education because it is the key to a new world.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī expressed his views in his work entitled *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error) (al-Ghazālī, 2000). In his writings, al-Ghazālī admits that he likes to investigate and make comparisons in order to obtain the truth and reality (*haqīqah*).<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the fields of knowledge mastered by al-Ghazālī and Russell are really dissimilar. The field of knowledge mastered by al-Ghazālī were jurisprudence, dogmatic theology, physics, metaphysics, logic and ethics.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, the field of knowledge mastered by Russell were mathematical logic and analytic philosophy.<sup>36</sup> Despite these differences, both scholars faced similar experiences. Al-Ghazālī lost his father when he was young,<sup>37</sup> while Russell lost his family members; his mother and sister when he was two years old, his father when he was four years old, and his grandfather when he was six years old. Later, Russell was taken under the care of his grandmother until his adulthood.<sup>38</sup> Other than that, both scholars also held high academic positions which recognised them as influential scholars during their time. Al-Ghazālī was appointed as Chair of Theology at Nizāmiyya College, Baghdad (1091 CE) and became a teacher at his *zāwiya* in Tūs.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Russell was appointed as a lecturer at the London School of Economics (1896 CE), Trinity College, Cambridge (1899, 1901, 1910, 1915, 1944 CE), Barnes Foundations (1941 CE), in addition to being appointed as a visiting professor of philosophy at Chicago (1938 CE), and professor of philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles (1939 CE).<sup>40</sup> Both scholars were prolific writers’ who produced many influential works during their prime time which are still referred until today, i.e., *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) (1095 – 1111 CE) by al-Ghazālī<sup>41</sup> and *The Problems of Philosophy* by Russell (1912 CE).<sup>42</sup>

*Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* was written in Arabic and a summary was later penned by al-Ghazālī himself in Persian for the widespread benefit to the local community in Persia during that time.<sup>43</sup> The summary was titled *Kīmīyā’ al-Sa’ādah*. This booklet contains eight summary sections.<sup>44</sup> The translation of *Kīmīyā’ al-Sa’ādah* by Claud Field, with the title *The Alchemy of Happiness*, has been used in this study to obtain al-Ghazālī’s views on happiness, and Russell’s *The Conquest of Happiness* has been used to obtain his perspectives.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that both scholars have some similarities and differences in certain aspects. First, both figures had lived in different eras and times. The background of their

times was influenced by the ruling monarchy, namely the reign of the Seljuk Empire, which was accompanied by political turmoil, as well as the reign of the English queen and kings, which was overshadowed by the situation of the first and second world wars. Second, the mastery of the field of knowledge of both scholars is also different. The fields of knowledge mastered by al-Ghazālī were jurisprudence, dogmatic theology, physics, metaphysics, logic and ethics, whereby the field of knowledge mastered by Russell were mathematical logic and analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, some similarities can be observed. First, both scholars can be said to be somewhat rebellious during their time. For example, the open criticisms by al-Ghazālī concerning the dependence of Sunni scholars on the government, and the open dissidence through writings against war by Russell, which resulted in him being imprisoned. Second, both scholars tended to write in other mediums to express their views during their time. Third, both scholars experienced almost similar experiences of losing a close family member when they were young. Fourth, both scholars were involved in the academic field and held the highest positions in academia, which showed that both of them were prominent scholars in their time. Fifth, both scholars were prolific writers, and their works and writings are still referred until today. Based on these statements, certainly the similarities and differences in their thoughts about happiness could provide significant findings, considering the eventful background of both scholars.

### **3. Objectives**

The main purpose of this study is to descriptively discuss the happiness approach according to both scholars. Thus, this article reveals how they define happiness in their own perspectives. Their discrepancies need to be addressed to find their differences and similarities regarding happiness using a comparative method,<sup>45</sup> by examining their respective works, *The Alchemy of Happiness* by al-Ghazālī and *The Conquest of Happiness* by Russell.

### **4. Literature Review**

Recent scholars have discussed happiness in the aspect of the purification of soul,<sup>46</sup> and happiness in the hereafter which referred as real happiness with the excitement of humans being able to meet Allah Almighty in the afterlife.<sup>47</sup> Other scholars have also regarded happiness as more focused on the subjective well-being (SWB),<sup>48</sup> and authentic happiness as focusing on the positive psychological aspects.<sup>49</sup>

Another statement envisages happiness as revealing more about the individuals and the precious values that they hold. The

understanding of happiness in the contemporary age involves the feeling of contentment; coupled with stable emotions. Both are the result of perpetuating the change in life principles for the better. Such commitment for continuing the change is what determines how one live one's entire life to its end as well as shape one's behaviour and character. Vague understanding of happiness indicates its subjective value. Since there is no common denominator among the community of what constitutes happiness, it gives rise to a myriad of interpretations of what happiness is. Hence, happiness to a poor may not be shared by the sick, etc.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, Achour et al. have opined that observing religious responsibility can generate happiness in humans. It is discovered that religious practices do have an affirmative and important connection with good character, self-respect, and other esteem.<sup>51</sup> Sulaiman has stated that the direction from Allah Almighty can lead humans to obtain happiness in this world and the hereafter. Apart from worship, prayer, and good deeds, the safeguarding of the mind from lewd thoughts can bring happiness to humans, as it is one of the foremost objectives of Islamic Laws, *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.<sup>52</sup>

Based on the discussion, although there are studies from recent scholars regarding happiness, their findings still have room for research and need improvement. This situation requires an approach that can discuss and study in more detail about happiness, based on the views of modern and classical scholars such as al-Ghazalī and Russell, as the aim in this article. Since both scholars come from different religions and schools of thought, their perspective may be contradicted from each other. Therefore, this article will focus on their thoughts regarding happiness and bring out the point of differences and similarities in their ideas about happiness to give a clearer understanding to the readers.

## **5. Methodology**

The discussion in this study is based on the content analysis of the scholars' works to exemplify their perspectives on happiness. Comparative method was also used to identify their similarities and differences of thoughts on happiness. Meanwhile, the whole discussion of this study used descriptive method especially in discussing the specific approach in understanding happiness according to both scholars.

Content analysis is a procedure of detailed analysis. It is also classified as data gathering process, because it extracts information (as sample) out of a massive quantity of text.<sup>53</sup> Content analysis is a purpose-driven, organised, and quantitative method of external



communication research. In content analysis, the techniques used are sampling and categorisation. In this research, sampling refers to the works from both scholars that were uniquely selected with regard to happiness. In categorisation, the content analysis must manifest the objective of the study. Categorisation was also used to make comparisons on understanding happiness proposed by both scholars during data analysis to identify the similarities and differences. The categories must also be practical and easy to handle.<sup>54</sup>

In this research, the collected data from content analysis were analysed by categorising the discussion of happiness into two sections, which are the definition of happiness and the happiness approach according to the viewpoints of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Bertrand Russell. Then, data collected for each section were examined and analysed. From the analysis, the similarities and differences pertaining to happiness from the views of both scholars were also scrutinised.

Content analysis was chosen because the researcher could optimize the time and budget as they only needed to record from documents of any related works and literature. Content analysis was also chosen because the researcher could easily manage the data as all that is needed to be done was to retrieve and record data from the available documents. Therefore, the data would always be traceable and secure. As this research needed the works and literature from both scholars, content analysis seemed appropriate for such historical studies to concentrate on all manuscripts published by them. Content analysis was also chosen because it could be used as a long-term analysis. It can be used to observe how similar ideas of scholars can influence the changing era.<sup>55</sup>

Comparative method means making comparisons of collected particulars or specific data.<sup>56</sup> In this research, a comparative method was applied to analyse the thoughts of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Bertrand Russell regarding happiness using their respective works, *The Alchemy of Happiness* and *The Conquest of Happiness*, to examine the differences and similarities between them.

Descriptive method is a process of interpretation and normally used to study contemporary works. Normally, the explanation technique is used in descriptive method in writing, primarily in a research topic which has not been studied systematically before. The best explanation in this method is when it consists of all the research data. The research data could vary, including person's characters based on a research interview, historical data based on documented findings, and numerical data from archived sources.<sup>57</sup> In this research, data from the works of both scholars were

discussed descriptively after being selected using the content analysis method.

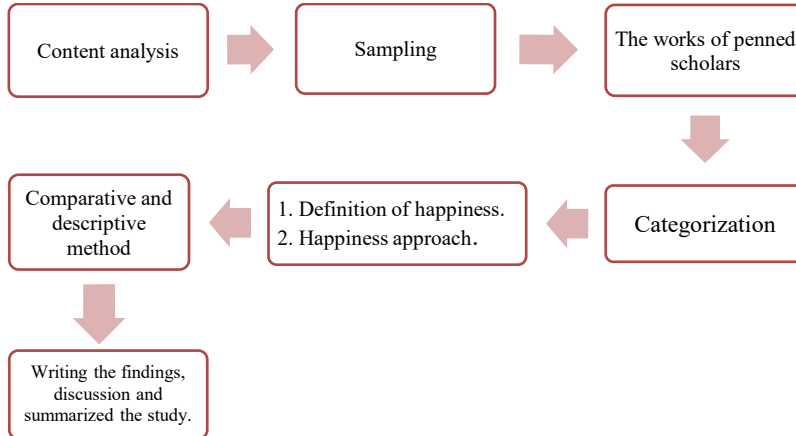


Figure 1: The Methodology of Research

## 6. Results

### 6.1 The definition of happiness according to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Bertrand Russell

According to al-Ghazālī, true happiness can be attained through knowledge and good deeds. Based on his works, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, al-Ghazālī outlines four types of knowledge and four good deeds that must be conquered by humans in order to experience happiness. They are the knowledge of self, the knowledge of Allah Almighty, the knowledge of this world, the knowledge of the next world. The good deeds are music as aids to the religious life, self-examination and remembrance of Allah Almighty, marriage as help or hindrance to the religious life, and the love of Allah Almighty.<sup>58</sup>

According to Russell, happiness can be attained when humans know the factors of their happiness. When they can identify these factors, generally, they will be happy. Based on his works, *The Conquest of Happiness*, there are eight factors that can lead humans to happiness. They are meditation, education, enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, and efforts and acceptance. Meanwhile, there are also eight factors for unhappiness to occur. The factors are Byronic unhappiness (meaninglessness), competition, boredom and excitement, fatigue, envy, the sense of sin, persecution mania, and fear of public opinions.<sup>59</sup> However, for this discussion, only the factors of happiness are examined in order to decipher the happiness approach according to Russell.

## **6.2 The Happiness approach according to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī**

According to al-Ghazālī (2004), there are four types of knowledge and four good deeds that must be mastered by the humankind in order to obtain happiness.

- The Knowledge of Self

The first type is the knowledge of self where one must know himself/herself thoroughly in all aspects. According to al-Ghazālī, the knowledge of self will lead to the knowledge of Allah Almighty. This section discusses the reality of the soul, the origin of humans, the real purpose they are sent to the world, and where they can find true happiness. Humans must also know that their elements consist of three features: animalistic, devilish, and angelic. It is their task to find out which of these elements a coincidence is and which is necessary. Without knowing these in detail, humans could not find true happiness. Humans must know about the heart or soul that operates all the other faculties as their tools and helpers. According to al-Ghazālī, the knowledge of this essence and its nature will be the key to the knowledge of Allah Almighty.<sup>60</sup>

- The Knowledge of Allah Almighty

Second, the knowledge of Allah Almighty is another step to attain true happiness. In this section, humans are reminded to always contemplate on the attributes of Allah Almighty. In order to acquire this knowledge, they must realise where they come from. In fact, they must know that they have not been in this world before. They must know how they were created by Allah Almighty to function as a perfect human. They must know that they are minuscule in relation to the world which proves the capability, sagacity, and love of the Creator.<sup>61</sup> This understanding must be accompanied by devotion and worship. Love is the seed of happiness, and the love for Allah Almighty is nurtured and flourished by worship.<sup>62</sup>

- The Knowledge of this World

The third knowledge refers to the knowledge of this world. This section discusses the roles of humans in the world and the worldly characteristics. According to al-Ghazālī, this world is likened to a stage or a business place passed by a traveller on their way to subsequent destinations.<sup>63</sup> In this world, the travellers prepare themselves with equipment for the next journey. Simply put, humans obtain knowledge of the creations of Allah Almighty, with their physical senses in this world. From this process, they will contemplate and get to know Allah Almighty with vision that will

form their future bliss. In this world, humans must preserve and strengthen their soul. They must also protect and nurture their body. The appropriate nutrition for the soul is knowledge and the love of Allah Almighty. The destruction of the soul will occur if one assimilates love other than Allah Almighty. The body itself will be safeguarded by the soul. The body is just a carriage for the soul and will die, while the soul remains.<sup>64</sup> Humans should be reminded to be cautious about the worldly characteristics that could trap them to become more absorbed in this fake world. If they become continuously engrossed with the false beauty of this world, eventually they will go astray.<sup>65</sup>

- The Knowledge of the Next World

The fourth knowledge is of the next world. In this section, al-Ghazālī discusses the soul's condition in the future; the soul remains, while the body perishes. He also discusses about love of Allah Almighty for some people that already separate themselves from worldly matters. Apart from that, al-Ghazālī explains suffering in the afterlife due to the lavish love for the world, spiritual suffering of those who fail to achieve their purpose in life, the evolution of human soul with animal-like and angel-like characteristics (subject to their good deeds and good heart), and the benefit of uncertainties.<sup>66</sup> Humans are reminded to prepare for the next world and believe in its existence.<sup>67</sup>

- Music

The first good deed is music, as aids to the religious life. In this section, al-Ghazālī discusses music, religion, and the symbolism of poetry. Music plays an important role for spiritual groups to express their love in songs and poetry, so they can obtain vibrant thought and wisdom. They also attain a level of purity of the heart.<sup>68</sup> Particularly, music is allowed with certain permission as long as it does not include alcohol drinks, no suggestive sexual movements, and minimum engagements in music/ singing activities, as Islam forbid excess and extravagance in anything.<sup>69</sup>

- Self-Examination and Remembrance of Allah Almighty

The second good deed is self-examination and remembrance of Allah Almighty. This section explains the remembrance of Allah Almighty, how the Saints remember Allah Almighty, questions in terms of the remembrance of Allah Almighty, the burden of human sins, and the benefits of preparing for the next world. In the introduction of this section, humans are reminded to perform good deeds now, without postponing them to another time or day. This is

because in the hereafter, during judgment day, humans will witness how their time in the world was occupied.<sup>70</sup> Humans are also reminded to always check, evaluate, and examine themselves before their deeds are weighed during the judgment day.<sup>71</sup>

- Marriage

The third good deed is marriage, as help or hindrance to religious life. In this section, al-Ghazālī discusses the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, criteria of a wife, wedding ceremony, behaviour towards the wife, protection for the wife, and husband's rights. Marriage can help individuals to easily worship and devote to Allah Almighty and learn appropriately, as the spouses could take care of the household such as cooking and cleaning. However, marriage can also prevent individuals from remembering Allah Almighty as they would be preoccupied in taking care of the family. Hence, one must be careful to ensure that his devotion to Allah Almighty and future life are unaffected after marriage. In terms of the criteria of a wife, the most significant of all is chastity.<sup>72</sup> In terms of wedding ceremony, it must be religiously organised. In this case, music such as drums are also allowed. As for behaviour towards the wife, the husband must maintain good relationship with his wife and must allow his wife to have her own period of relaxation, and not try to stop her. In terms of protection for the wife, one must watch over his wife from seeing or being seen by a stranger, as the start of misdemeanour is in the eye. As for the husband's rights, the wife must respect her husband and be grateful for the necessities her husband provides. If the wife commits a mistake, her husband must follow the steps prescribed by the religion, in order for her to improve and behave better. Marriage must always be safeguarded in order to avoid divorce.<sup>73</sup>

- The Love of Allah Almighty

The fourth good deed is the love of Allah Almighty. This section discusses the beauty of the inner aspects, the factors that evoke love of Allah Almighty, the vision of Allah Almighty, and the signs of the love of Allah Almighty. In terms of inner beauty, normally humans like each other not because of physical appearances. It comes from the beauty of the inner aspects such as good moral and good words.<sup>74</sup> There are several factors that evoke the love of Allah Almighty. Among the factors is the fact that a man loves himself and the magnificence of his own essence. This guides him straight to the love of Allah Almighty, as the existence and quality of a man are nothing else but the endowment of Allah Almighty. As for the vision of Allah Almighty, it discusses the happiness that humans feel when they see Allah Almighty in the hereafter.<sup>75</sup> Among the signs of the

love of Allah Almighty is that one does not dread the thought of death. If one is really truthful, he/she will be hard-working in preparing before death comes.<sup>76</sup>

### **6.3 The Happiness Approach according to Bertrand Russell**

According to Russell, happiness can be achieved through meditation, education, enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, and efforts and acceptance.

- Meditation

First factor of happiness is meditation. Meditation requires someone to contemplate and examine their misconduct, silliness, and faults in order to be happy. From the evaluation of the misconduct, change can be made. The change can make someone to progressively focus his attention upon external things such as a different field of knowledge, which can be called as an external passion. As long as this external passion remains in existence, it can prevent unhappiness completely.<sup>77</sup>

- Education

Second, education also brings happiness to humans. Knowledgeable people are known to be happy. They can always practise their own skills and make themselves happy.<sup>78</sup>

- Enthusiasm

Third, enthusiasm is the typical mark of happy men. The more things a man is interested in; the more possibilities of happiness he has. They also know how to endure losses by improving themselves with intellect and knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

- Affection

The fourth factor of happiness is affection. Children who feel secure due to the affection of their parents will always be happy. Children who are loved by their parents will be brave.<sup>80</sup>

- Family

The fifth factor of happiness is family. Parental affection is a special kind of feeling towards own children. Parental love makes children feel safer when with their parents than with anyone else. In times of success, this may appear insignificant, but in times of failure,

it is really important because it provides comfort and safety not to be found elsewhere.<sup>81</sup>

- Work

The sixth factor of happiness is work, as the desire for greater income will be the desire for success. Continuity of purpose in work will provide happiness in the long run. Meaningful happiness comes from success in completing an important piece of work.<sup>82</sup>

- Impersonal interests

The seventh factor of happiness is impersonal interests. An impersonal interest is a small interest to fill idle hours that can raise relaxation. A great many delightful things can fulfil this condition such as watching games, going to the theatre, and playing golf.<sup>83</sup>

- Efforts and acceptance

The eighth factor of happiness is efforts and acceptance. As an effort to gain happiness, individuals must become aware of strategies in managing numerous factors of unhappiness that trouble them. Acceptance is preferable in nearly all occasions, because in a contentious society, outstanding success is exclusively viable to the minority.<sup>84</sup>

## **7. Discussion**

Both scholars propose eight factors of happiness. The eight factors of happiness from al-Ghazālī are four types of knowledge and four good deeds to be mastered by humankind in order to obtain happiness. They are knowledge of self, knowledge of Allah Almighty, knowledge of this world, and the knowledge of the next world. The good deeds are music, self-examination and remembrance of Allah Almighty, marriage, and the love of Allah Almighty. Meanwhile, the eight factors of happiness from Russell are meditation, education, enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, and efforts and acceptance. Generally, both of them have different perspectives about happiness. Apparently, this is inevitable. Previous studies also suggested several factors of happiness such as faith, firm/fitness, family, friends, taking care of other people, health, safety and affection.<sup>85</sup>

The views from al-Ghazālī are more comprehensive, as his discussion of happiness encompasses this world and the afterlife. Most of the knowledge and good deeds are related to the happiness in the hereafter. In the knowledge of self, he suggests that humans must

know themselves in order to know Allah Almighty. In the knowledge of Allah Almighty, contemplation within oneself can bring humans to know and love Allah Almighty. In the knowledge of this world, humans are reminded of their roles in this world and the worldly characteristics which can engulf them. In the knowledge of the next world, humans are reminded about the rewards and punishment for their deeds during their time in the world. In music as a good deed, al-Ghazālī discusses that they are allowed in religion as well as poetry, which are used to express the love of Allah Almighty. In self-examination and remembrance of Allah Almighty as a good deed, humans must always be aware of their deeds before being judged during the judgement day. Humans are also reminded to perform frequent introspection and extrospection and repurpose their life only for the sake of Allah Almighty. In marriage as a good deed, al-Ghazālī discusses the advantages and disadvantages of marriage, criteria of a wife, wedding ceremony, protection of the wife, the safeguarding of marriage, and husband's rights. In this section, al-Ghazālī reminds the wife to be grateful and always treats her husband in a good way. In the love of Allah Almighty as a good deed, al-Ghazālī discusses the pleasure when humans can see Allah Almighty in the afterlife and also the signs of the love of Allah Almighty. Al-Ghazālī's approach in the pursuit of happiness through knowledge and good deeds confirmed the results from previous studies which proposed that those who are knowledgeable and do good deeds can attain the spiritual joy in their heart and mind. Most people feel good by doing good and the one who lives conferring with his/her true self is the happier person.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, Russell's approach of happiness mostly refers to worldly happiness and how to obtain it without harm. In this point, definitely Russell's views contradicted with al-Ghazālī's point of view. In meditation as a factor of happiness, Russell states that he who always contemplates his misconduct, silliness, and faults will always be happy. In education, he states that the one who is knowledgeable is happy. In enthusiasm, the one who has many interests is always happy. In affection, the one who gets enough affection is typically happy because he/she feels safe. In family, parental affection is crucial especially during hard times, and can bring comfort and safety. In work, continuity of purpose in work will provide happiness in the long run. In impersonal interests, humans can gain happiness through hobbies in order to find calmness. In efforts and acceptance, humans must identify which problems trouble them and be aware of the strategies to defeat them. Earlier study also confirmed this finding, whereas meditation can increase the level of happiness through mindfulness meditation.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, education can also lead to improved happiness because educational background may enhance individual's political position, personal status, health and family social level.<sup>88</sup>



From the discussion, the approach of happiness from both scholars are really dissimilar. Generally, al-Ghazālī's views focus on happiness in this world and the afterlife. Meanwhile, Russell's views focus on worldly happiness only. However, there are some similarities from both scholars in other aspects. First, al-Ghazālī suggests contemplation for individuals so they know themselves, Allah Almighty, their past actions, and so forth. In every aspect of his discussion, purification of the soul is the key to all knowledge and good deeds in order to gain happiness in the world and the hereafter. Russell has similar views. He suggests meditation as a part of contemplation that can evoke happiness when human observed, assessed, and examined their misconduct, silliness, and faults. Contemplation is also featured in al-Ghazālī's discussions on the knowledge of Allah Almighty, as well as in self-examination and remembrance of Allah Almighty as a good deed. Second, al-Ghazālī suggests music such as poetry as a means to gain happiness. Russell is also of the opinion that minor interests such as watching games, going to the theatre, playing golf, and so forth as long as they are harmless, can bring happiness to someone. Third, al-Ghazālī suggests the four types of knowledge and four good deeds as a means of education for humankind to gain happiness. Russell also states that the one who is educated and knowledgeable will always be happy. Fourth, al-Ghazālī explains about marriage which can bring happiness too as the man focuses on his worship to Allah Almighty, while his spouse manages all household matters. Marriage brings calmness to man in his worship to Allah Almighty as he maintains good relationship with his wife and other family members. Russell also states that parental affection and familial love can bring happiness to individuals. Both of them suggest family bonding in order to lead a happy life. Previous study also confirmed that mindfulness-based interventions such as meditation can bring more life satisfaction, self-awareness, and emotional regulation to someone in order to cultivate their own happiness.<sup>89</sup> Prior studies reported contemplation as a likely and peaceful practice that can refine spiritual insight, elevate observance of the divine presence, and comfort the soul. This example of spiritual happiness has already been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, "*Listen, the hearts find peace only in the remembrance of Allah.*"<sup>90</sup> Other than that, previous studies also reported that family bonding can bring happiness to family members through marital commitment and positive communication quality.<sup>91</sup> Besides, being educated and having minor interests such as having fun with friends can lead to life satisfaction as well as happiness in someone's life.<sup>92</sup>

Other than that, enthusiasm, work, as well as efforts and acceptance can be supporting factors to happiness, and these views

from Russell are really dissimilar from al-Ghazālī's views. Al-Ghazālī's approach of happiness is complete and gives credit to all aspects. The figures below summarises this discussion.

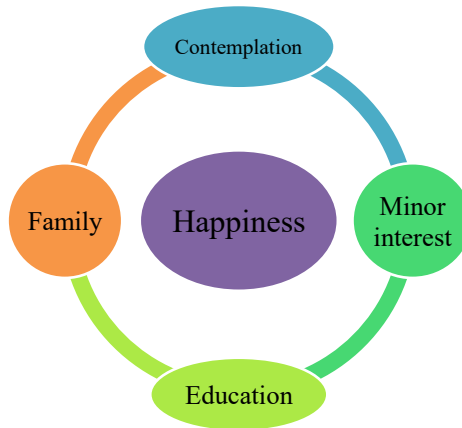


Figure 2: The similarities of al-Ghazālī' and Russell's thought regarding happiness in certain aspects

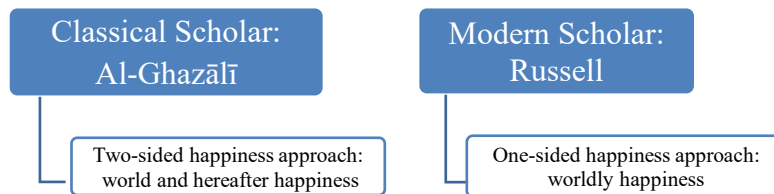


Figure 3: The contradiction (differences) of al-Ghazālī' and Russell's thought regarding happiness generally

## 8. Conclusion

Based on their life experiences, it is proved that every human being will be always desire for happiness, but, in their own way. The way to obtain happiness will develop someone's thought and influenced the progress of his/her thought. Russell's thought more focused on worldly aspect in his writing in order to achieve happiness. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī's thought more focused on spiritual well-being in his works based on his experience with the *ṣūfīs*.

Although coming from different eras, both scholars hold the same opinion in terms of achieving happiness. The differences are that al-Ghazālī's views are all-inclusive and include happiness in the afterlife. Meanwhile, Russell's views only focus on the worldly happiness. Their similarities, however, cannot be denied. Even in certain aspects, both scholars agreed that meditation can evoke

happiness in the world and the hereafter. One who always inspect himself is indeed happy. Other than that, both scholars also held the same opinion that education, marriage, family, affection, music, and impersonal interests can lead to a happy life. The findings of the research have shown that there are many similarities between both scholars. Nonetheless, a clash of ideas still occurs as both of them come from different eras and have distinct epistemology. They contradicted from each other from the general overview of happiness. Russell's views focus on one-sided happiness, which is only centred on worldly happiness. Meanwhile, al-Ghazālī's views engage two-sided happiness, which are happiness in this world and the hereafter. It is fair to conclude that each scholar's thoughts have their own strengths. However, this research has concluded that al-Ghazālī's views of happiness are all-encompassing because the factors are not only for worldly happiness, but also for the afterlife. In this context, al-Ghazālī's thought is far-reaching as he recommends everlasting happiness that will remain unchanged from time to time. As his thoughts are all-inclusive, he also provides guidelines for the humankind to follow the path in order to gain happiness, both in this world and the hereafter. He explains the knowledge of self, Allah Almighty, this world, the hereafter, music, self-examination, remembrance of Allah Almighty, marriage, and love of Allah Almighty, with various detailed analogies. Russell, as a modern scholar, proposes factors of worldly happiness such as meditation, education, enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, and efforts and acceptance. Russell was also really careful in his writing to ensure the suggestions about happiness do not harm his readers who want to follow his advice. Most of the suggestions are to remind humans to appreciate what they already have. In this context, Russell wants humans to always be grateful in order to achieve happiness in this world.

The reasons for the similarities and differences in their thought have already been stated in the discussion presented in the problem statement section. To summarise, first, both figures had lived in different eras and times, with the background of their times being based on monarchy reigns. Second, the mastery of the field of knowledge of both scholars was different. However, both scholars shared some similarities, as both figures can be said to be defiant during their time and preferred to write in other methods to express their views. Both scholars had gone through almost similar experiences of losing a close family member when they were young. They had both been involved in the academic field and held the highest positions in academia. The work and writings from both scholars are still referred until today, which firmly established both of them as prolific writers and prominent scholars during their time.

## 9. Limitations and future directions

The present research proposes several future directions. First, the present research has discussed happiness according to a classical scholar, al-Ghazālī and a modern scholar, Russell. Future research can focus on views from contemporary scholars that discussed other perspectives of real happiness. Second, this research has only focused on the discussion of happiness and the differences in order to demonstrate the clash of ideas between both scholars. Future research may consider exploring the work of scholars from similar schools of thought or even from different eras to discuss happiness in the modern day.

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<sup>65</sup> The worldly characteristics are expressed by al-Ghazālī in various analogies (Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy*, 18–20).

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<sup>72</sup> The next criteria are good personality, good looking, moderate in the sum paid as the wife's marriage portion, fertile, comes from a good family, not previously married, and not of her husband's close family (Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy*, 36–38).

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<sup>92</sup> Satoshi Araki, "Does Education Make People Happy? Spotlighting the Overlooked Societal Condition," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 23 (2022): 587; Munevver Mertoğlu, "Factors Affecting Happiness of School Children," *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 8, no. 3 (2020): 10.