

Internalization of Sufi Moral Values in Contemporary Islamic Education Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study stems from the problems of moral crisis and academic ethical degradation in contemporary Islamic education, indicating that the integration of spiritual dimensions into the learning process is not yet optimal. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the process of internalizing Sufi moral values in Islamic education practices and identify their impact on character building among students. The research uses a qualitative approach, employing field research methods such as direct observation, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of documentation from lecturers and students, who serve as the main informants. The results show that the internalization of Sufi moral values occurs through three main mechanisms: integrating values into the curriculum and learning, consistent spiritual habits, and strengthening communication ethics in academic interactions. Values such as sincerity, patience, humility, and *muraqabah* (self-reflection) have been proven to shape polite attitudes, improve emotional control, and strengthen students' academic integrity. These findings confirm that the internalization of Sufi moral values contributes to the development of a dialogical, reflective, and character-oriented Islamic educational culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education faces serious challenges, including a moral crisis, the degradation of academic ethics, and the weakening of students' spiritual dimension amid globalization and the development of digital technology [1]. The phenomena of increasing individualism, low social empathy, and academic dishonesty indicate that the dominant orientation of education towards cognitive aspects has not been fully capable of shaping inner character and deep moral awareness [2]. This condition shows a gap between the ideal

goals of Islamic education, which emphasize the formation of moral character, and educational practices that still focus solely on the transfer of knowledge [3].

As an effort to address this problem, Sufi moral values are considered strategically relevant for strengthening character education. Sufism not only functions as an individual spiritual practice but also as an ethical system that emphasizes the process of soul purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*), self-control, and reflective awareness through the concept of *muraqabah* [4]. According to Baharuddin et al. (2024) in their study "*The Tasawwuf as the Character Education Solution in Indonesia*," the integration of Sufi values in education has been proven to strengthen religious character and increase the moral awareness of students through spiritual habits and the example set by educators [5]. This shows that the Sufi approach has the potential as a pedagogical alternative in responding to the moral crisis in modern education.

From a theoretical perspective, the internalization of values in education is understood as a gradual process involving understanding, appreciation, and habit formation, culminating in the values becoming part of an individual's personality [6]. Rahmi & Arisnaini (2025), in their study "*Revitalizing Sufi Values in Islamic Character Education in the Digital Age*," explain that Sufi-based education emphasizes inner transformation through continuous spiritual experiences, so that character is formed not only through external regulation but also through the internal awareness of students [7]. This approach reinforces the view that effective character education requires integrating cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions [8].

A number of previous studies have shown that Sufi values are strongly relevant in shaping students' character. For example, Ali Mustofa's (2018) research in the article *Tasawuf Education As The Effort Of Spiritual and Character Building Capability* asserts that Sufi education is capable of building spiritual and moral integration through the practice of *wirid*, prayer, and habitual worship, which has an impact on the character formation of students with good morals. This study uses a conceptual approach and shows that the moral weaknesses of the younger generation are related to the lack of a spiritual dimension in formal education [9].

Another study was conducted by Muhammad Hariyadi et al. (2022) in the article titled "*Character Education Through Ethical Sufism from the Perspective of the Qur'an*." This study shows that *maqāmāt* in Sufism, such as patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and *zuhud*, directly contribute to character development, including self-control, social awareness, and moral resilience. This study is conceptual and based on the study of the Qur'an, thereby providing a normative basis for integrating Sufism into character education [10].

Furthermore, Baihaqi's (2019) research in the article *Integration of Ushul, Fiqh, and Sufism in Building the Character of Believers in Students* emphasizes that fragmented religious learning is one of the causes of suboptimal character education. This study shows that integrating Sufism with other Islamic disciplines can more comprehensively strengthen students' moral and spiritual dimensions [11].

Although these three studies affirm the importance of Sufism in character education, most are still conceptual and normative and have not yet deeply examined the process of internalizing Sufi values in daily educational practices. Studies that empirically examine the

practice of internalizing Sufi values in higher education, particularly in the dynamics of student learning and academic culture, remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study makes a new contribution by adopting an empirical approach, based on field observations and in-depth interviews, to understand the dynamics of the contextual internalization of Sufi moral values in contemporary Islamic education.

This study aims to: (1) describe the internalization of Sufi moral values in contemporary Islamic education practices, (2) analyze the strategies used by educators in the process of internalizing values, and (3) identify the impact on student character building. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of character education grounded in Islamic spirituality through empirical contextual evidence. In practice, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in designing integrative, reflective, and adaptive character education models.

In addition, this research is expected to provide social benefits by strengthening a dialogical, ethical academic culture oriented towards student moral integrity. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of a Sufism-based character education theory but also to practical efforts to address the moral challenges of Islamic education in the global era.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative, field-based approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of internalizing Sufi moral values in contemporary Islamic education practices. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and social dynamics that occur naturally in the educational environment. The research design is descriptive-analytical, with a phenomenological orientation, seeking to capture the lived experience and understanding of the internalization of values by educational practitioners [12]. This research was conducted at Pamulang University, South Tangerang. The research subjects included lecturers teaching Islamic Education courses, students, and academic staff involved in character-building activities grounded in Islamic spiritual values.

The research procedure was carried out in several stages: instrument preparation, field data collection, data processing, and analysis of research results. In the data collection stage, the researcher conducted direct observations of the Islamic Religious Education lecture process, academic activities that contained elements of moral guidance, and daily interactions between lecturers and students on campus. In addition, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain comprehensive information on strategies for internalizing Sufi moral values and their impact on student character development. The materials and tools used in this study included observation guidelines, interview guidelines, voice recorders, field notes, and supporting documents such as the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), syllabus, and student activity programs.

The data obtained were analyzed using interactive analysis techniques, which included data reduction, data presentation, and gradual conclusion drawing [13]. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and grouping information relevant to the research focus, then presenting it in narrative descriptions and thematic categories. To maintain the

validity and credibility of the findings, this study applied source and method triangulation, namely by comparing the results of observations with those of interviews and documentation. With these procedures, this study is expected to produce a systematic and academically accountable empirical description of the internalization of Sufi moral values in contemporary Islamic education practices in higher education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on direct observation and in-depth interviews conducted at the research site, a number of findings emerged that addressed the research questions related to the internalization of Sufi moral values, implementation strategies, and their impact on students' character development. Data were collected through observation of learning and spiritual habituation activities, as well as daily interactions in the educational institution environment. Interviews were conducted with the institution's head, three teachers, and six students, all of whom served as key informants.

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Integration of Sufi Moral Values in the Curriculum and Learning

Based on direct observations conducted during the process, it was found that Sufi moral values had been integrated into the planning and implementation of learning. This integration was evident in the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) document, which contained learning outcomes in the affective domain, such as the formation of religious attitudes, self-control, and spiritual awareness. The values of sincerity, patience, humility, *muraqabah*, and tazkiyatun nafs are not only explicitly conveyed in Sufism material but are also integrated into discussions on social ethics, academic responsibility, and social media ethics. In practice, lecturers relate the material to the realities of student life, such as the importance of straightening intentions in seeking knowledge and maintaining academic integrity as a form of implementing the value of *muraqabah*.



Figure 1. Lecture process during daily exams

Figure 1 shows the atmosphere during daily exams, with the lecturer giving instructions before emphasizing the importance of honesty, sincerity, and self-awareness (*muraqabah*) in implementing the values of tazkiyatun nafs in an academic context.

Students are seen sitting neatly and focusing on completing the exam questions independently, with no indication of rule-breaking collaboration.

These observations were subsequently confirmed through in-depth interviews with the lecturers, who stated that integrating Sufi values is part of a learning strategy aimed at building students' character amid the complex challenges of campus life. The lecturer emphasized that moral guidance is not sufficient through the enforcement of academic rules; it must also address students' self-awareness as individuals who are responsible before Allah and society. In addition, the Sufi approach helps students understand learning as worship rather than just an administrative obligation.

Table 1. Results of interviews with lecturers about the integration of Sufi moral values

| Sufism Values | Forms of Integration in Learning | Strategies Used | Observed Impact on Students |
|---|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Sincerity | Emphasis on intention before lectures begin | Initial reflection on lectures | Students are more focused and serious in attending lectures |
| Patience | Guidance on perseverance in completing assignments | Academic mentoring | Students are more consistent in completing assignments on time |
| Humility | Instilling discussion ethics and mutual respect | Group discussions | Discussions are more orderly, and there is minimal conflict |
| <i>Muraqabah</i> (self-reflection) | Emphasis on academic honesty | Case studies & evaluations | Decrease in cases of academic misconduct |
| <i>Tazkiyatun Nafs</i> (purification of the soul) | Self-reflection at the end of lectures | Written reflections | Students are more introspective |
| <i>Zuhud</i> (detachment) | Education on not being excessive in campus lifestyle | Contextual dialogues | Students are wiser in their use of social media |
| Gratitude | Linking academic achievement with gratitude | Experience sharing | Increased motivation to learn |
| Trustworthiness | Emphasis on responsibility for group assignments | Learning contracts | Students are more responsible in teamwork |
| Contentment | Instilling an attitude of accepting evaluation results with an open mind | Academic counseling | Students are more emotionally stable |
| <i>Husnuzan</i> (good opinion) | Developing good intentions in campus interactions | Case simulations | Relationships between students are more harmonious |

The table summarizes the interview results, which show that sincerity is instilled by emphasizing intention in every academic activity, patience by fostering perseverance in completing tasks, and humility by cultivating mutual respect in class discussions. In addition, the value of *muraqabah* is emphasized in the context of academic honesty, such as the prohibition of cheating and the importance of integrity in exams. This interview data reinforces the observation that the integration of Sufi moral values is deliberately and consciously carried out within the learning system.

Thus, the internalization of Sufi moral values takes place through curriculum integration and contextual learning. Sufi values are not presented as separate, additional material, but as an ethical and spiritual foundation integrated into the academic process. These findings directly address the research hypothesis that contemporary Islamic education can systematically internalize Sufi moral values through reflective, applicable pedagogical strategies [14].

3.1.2 Spiritual Habituation as an Internalization Strategy

Based on in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, it was found that spiritual habituation is the primary strategy for internalizing Sufi moral values. Lecturers explained that character building cannot be achieved solely through classroom teaching, but must be reinforced through consistent spiritual routines. Students also acknowledged that regular spiritual activities had a tangible impact on their attitudes, discipline, and self-control. The interviews revealed a consensus among lecturers and students on the importance of habits for developing inner awareness (*muraqabah*) and self-purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*).

Table 2. Interview results on spiritual habits

| Informant | Forms of Spiritual Habituation | Spiritual Values | Sufi | Perceived/Observed Impact |
|-----------|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Lecturer | Regular Islamic studies | | Tazkiyatun nafs | Students are more reflective |
| Lecturer | Prayer together before activities | | Sincerity | Students are calmer |
| Lecturer | Prayer in congregation during campus activities | | Discipline, <i>Muraqabah</i> | Improved orderliness |
| Student | Participating in Islamic studies and discussions | | Humility | Greater appreciation for others' opinions |
| Student | Prayer together before exams | | Sincerity and Trustworthiness | Reduced anxiety |
| Student | Prayer at noon during campus activities | | Patience and Responsibility | Greater emotional control |

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that spiritual habits are consistently practiced and involve active student participation. Lecturers view these habits as a means of fostering internal control, while students feel their impact in terms of calmness, discipline, and increased self-awareness. The findings of these interviews show that the habit-forming strategy is not merely a ceremonial activity but an effective means of internalizing Sufi moral values.

Field observations further reinforce the findings of these interviews. During the research period, the researcher observed students' routine Islamic study activities culminating in communal prayer. In these activities, students participated in a series of events in an orderly and attentive manner. In addition, during the new student orientation, the researcher documented the implementation of congregational midday prayers, even though they were not held in a mosque but in a room adapted to the existing conditions. This situation shows a commitment to the habit of worship as part of academic culture.



Figure 2. Spiritual habits through Islamic studies and congregational prayer

Figure (a) shows students participating in Islamic studies in a conducive atmosphere, ending with a communal prayer as a form of strengthening the values of sincerity and *tazkiyatun nafs*. Meanwhile, image (b) shows students performing the midday congregational prayer at the activity location, even though they were not in a mosque. This reflects the implementation of the values of *muraqabah* and spiritual discipline in any situation. The observation documentation reinforces the interview data that spiritual habits are a concrete strategy in shaping student character through direct practice, not just through the delivery of theory.

Thus, spiritual habits are an effective strategy for internalizing Sufi moral values. Routine activities such as studies, communal prayers, and congregational prayers serve to foster inner awareness and self-control, thereby enabling Sufi values to be internalized through direct experience and continuous practice [15].

3.1.3 The Impact of Internalization on Student Character Building

Based on interviews with lecturers, it was found that the internalization of Sufi moral values has a significant impact on student character development, particularly in communication ethics, self-control, and mutual respect. The lecturers said that when values such as humility, *muraqabah*, sincerity, and patience were consistently applied, changes in student interaction were observed, especially during class discussions. These changes were not instantaneous but developed gradually through a continuous guidance process. The interviews revealed a common view among lecturers that the spiritual dimension emphasized in learning contributed to the formation of internal self-control, rather than mere compliance with academic rules.

Based on the interview results in Table 3, the internalization of Sufi values affects changes in students' communication patterns. The most prominent indicators are increased politeness in discussions, the ability to restrain oneself when there are differences of opinion, and a reduction in attitudes of belittling or blaming others. These findings indicate that cultivating Sufi values not only affects personal spiritual development but also social and academic ethics.

Table 3. Interview Results on the Impact of Internalization on Character

| Sufism Values Emphasized | Observed Character Changes | Behavioral Indicators | Additional Information |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Humility | More respectful of others' opinions | Not interrupting conversations | Visible in group discussions |
| Patience | More calm when disagreeing | Not easily provoked | Discussions are conducive |
| <i>Muraqabah</i> (self-reflection) | Increased self-control | Avoiding harsh words | Awareness arises without reprimands |
| Sincerity | Focus on substance, not winning debates | Arguments presented politely | Does not seek self-justification |
| <i>Husnuzan</i> (good intentions) | Developing good intentions | Not blaming or mocking | Interactions are more harmonious |

The interview findings were further reinforced by direct observation during class discussions. During the observation, students expressed their opinions more structure and politely. When differences of opinion arose, the response was not emotional rejection but rather arguments grounded in logical reasoning and mutual respect. There was no mocking, insulting, or cornering of fellow discussants' opinions. Even in fairly intense debates, the atmosphere remained controlled and free of anger.



Figure 3. Student discussion activities in class

Observations also showed that students tended to use expressions that reflected humility, such as “in my understanding” or “please correct me if I am wrong,” which indicated the internalization of the value of *tawadhu*. The discussion was healthy, focusing on the substance of the material rather than on individual dominance. The lecturer acted as a facilitator, while the students demonstrated the ability to manage differences maturely.

Thus, based on interview and observation results, it can be concluded that the internalization of Sufi moral values significantly shapes students' character development, particularly in communication ethics and emotional control. Values such as humility, patience, and *muraqabah* (self-reflection) have been shown to foster internal control, as reflected in classroom behavior [16]. These findings confirm that Sufi-based education not only strengthens the spiritual dimension but also produces a more polite, dialogical, and constructive academic culture.

3.2 Discussion

The results of this study show that the internalization of Sufi moral values occurs through three main mechanisms: curriculum integration, spiritual habituation, and exemplary behavior in academic interactions, which impact students' character development. These findings directly address the research objectives formulated in the introduction: to analyze how Sufi values are internalized in contemporary Islamic educational practices and how they impact character. Empirically, the integration of values such as sincerity, humility, patience, and *muraqabah* in the learning process and non-formal activities has been proven to shape self-control and more polite communication ethics [17]. This aligns with the view that Islamic education not only transmits knowledge but also transforms personality through spiritual guidance.

Scientifically, these findings can be interpreted within the theoretical framework of value internalization, which emphasizes habituation and reflection as the keys to character formation. From a Sufi perspective, the formation of morals is not sufficient through normative teaching but requires a continuous process of *tazkiyatun nafs* [18]. The observation of a shift toward more polite discussion patterns indicates a shift from external control to internal control. This aligns with the theory of spiritually-based character education, which holds that values become part of one's personality once they have passed through the stages of understanding, internalization, and habituation. Thus, the internalization of Sufi values in this context is not merely symbolic but substantive, reflected in real behavior [19].

The findings of this study are also consistent with a number of previous studies, which state that integrating Sufi values into education contributes to the formation of students' religious and social character. Previous studies have shown that the Sufi approach can strengthen the affective and spiritual dimensions of contemporary Islamic education [20]. The similarity of these results reinforces the argument that Sufism has actual relevance in addressing the moral crisis in modern education. However, this study adds an empirical dimension by providing observational evidence of changes in discussion ethics and academic behavior, which have not been directly documented in previous studies [21].

However, some nuances differ from those in several other studies, which highlight that the internalization of values often faces structural obstacles, such as limited learning time and inconsistent habit formation [22]. In this study, these obstacles can be minimized through a collective approach and consistent spiritual activities. This difference is likely influenced by the implementation context and educators' commitment to grounding Sufi values in pedagogy. This shows that the success of value internalization is highly dependent on the continuity of strategies and role models provided [23].

The broader implication of these findings is that contemporary Islamic education can use Sufism as a strategic approach in building a dialogical, polite, and integrity-based academic culture [24]. Sufi values have been shown not to conflict with modernity, but rather to serve as an ethical foundation for addressing the challenges of globalization and moral disruption [25]. For future research, longitudinal studies are needed to assess the long-term impact of Sufi value internalization on students' social and professional behavior after they complete their education. In addition, comparative research across various

educational contexts is important to enrich our understanding of this approach's effectiveness on a broader scale.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the internalization of Sufi moral values in contemporary Islamic education is a transformative educational process that emphasizes the development of self-awareness, emotional control, and moral integrity through the integration of values into learning, spiritual practices, and exemplary academic interactions [26]. The synthesis of findings confirms that the success of Sufi value internalization depends not only on the delivery of normative material but also on reflective experiences and the practice of values in everyday academic life. Thus, Sufi-based education can be understood as an integrative approach that connects the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in the character formation of students [27].

The implications of this study indicate that contemporary Islamic education needs to develop a character education model that emphasizes spiritual experience, habit formation, and exemplary behavior as strategies for sustainable character building. The integration of Sufi values has the potential to strengthen a dialogical, ethical, and morally integrity-oriented academic culture. However, this study has limitations in terms of the scope of the location and the research duration, so it does not fully represent the dynamics of the internalization of Sufi values in a broader, more diverse educational context.

Given these limitations, further research is recommended to develop longitudinal studies to assess the sustainability of Sufi value internalization's impact on students' moral and professional development, as well as comparative research across various educational institutions to test the consistency of the findings. Socially, this study contributes to strengthening the discourse on integrating spirituality into education as an effort to build a generation that is not only academically superior but also reflective and of integrity. Thus, the internalization of Sufi moral values can be a strategic approach to addressing the challenges posed by the moral crisis while strengthening the quality of academic and social life.

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