

The Role of Sufi Orders in Islamic Community Problems in Addressing the Problems of Modern Society

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Abstract

The development of modern society, characterized by technological advances, globalization, and shifts in spiritual values, has led to the emergence of various problems for Muslims, such as moral crisis, individualism, and weak transcendental awareness. In this context, the Sufi Orders, as an Islamic spiritual system, plays a crucial role in providing psychological and social solutions to these problems. This study aims to examine the role of Sufi Orders in addressing the problems of modern life, both in spiritual, social, and psychological aspects. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive with a literature study approach of various works on Sufism, modern spirituality, and the role of Sufi Orders in the contemporary era. The results show that Sufi Orders plays a significant role in shaping moral awareness, fostering balance between the outer and inner dimensions, and strengthening social solidarity among Muslims amidst the currents of modern materialism and hedonism. The Sufi Orders's contribution to modern society is not only religious but also humanistic, namely through strengthening ethics, psychological balance, and active spirituality in social life.

Keywords

Sufi Orders, Islamic Community Problems, Modern Society, Spirituality, Sufism



I. Introduction

The development of globalization and advances in information technology have had a significant impact on the mindset and lifestyle of modern society. This phenomenon has given rise to various social and spiritual problems, such as an identity crisis, weakened morality, increased individualism, and a decrease in empathy among fellow human beings (Shihab, 2018) Muslims, as part of the global community, are not immune to these influences.

In the Islamic context, the Sufi Orders as a forum for spiritual formation based on Sufism has an important role in guiding people towards balance between this world and the afterlife. Sufi Orders not only functions as a spiritual practice, but also becomes a system of moral and social formation oriented towards tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) and ihsan (awareness of God's presence in every action) (Kadir, 2020).

The role of the Sufi Orders is becoming increasingly relevant as modern society experiences value disorientation due to the dominance of rationality and materialism. Through its spiritual teachings and methods, the Sufi Orders is able to address various community problems such as stress, inner emptiness, and moral decadence that erode the social order (Nasr, 2001).

1.1 Previous Literature Review (State of The Art)

Several previous studies have discussed the contribution of Sufism to community life. For example, research by Nasution (2020) shows that the Naqsyabandiyah Sufism plays a significant role in shaping the social and moral awareness of rural communities in North Sumatra. Another study by Al-Attas (2019) emphasizes that Islamic spirituality based on Sufism can be an alternative solution to the existential crisis of modern humanity.

However, studies integrating the role of the Sufi Orders as a comprehensive solution to the problems facing Muslims in the context of modernization are rare. Therefore, this study seeks to present a new perspective by highlighting the relevance of Sufi Orders teachings to the challenges of modern life, from a social, psychological, and spiritual perspective.

1.2 Problem Formulation

1. How is the main problems facing Muslims in modern society?
2. How is the role of the Sufi Orders in addressing the problems of the lives of Muslims?
3. What is the relevance of Sufi Orders teachings to the balance of life in the modern era?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Analyzing the problems of Muslims in modern life.
2. Describing the role of the Sufi Orders in providing solutions to these problems.
3. Explaining the relevance of the spiritual values of the Sufi Orders for the balance of modern life.

1.4 Scientific Novelty

This article presents a novelty in examining the Sufi Orders as a system of spiritual-social recovery in modern society. While previous research has tended to highlight the ritual or historical aspects of the Sufi Orders, this study highlights the applicable function of the Sufi Orders in the context of contemporary life, namely as a therapeutic approach to the existential and social crises of modern society (Hidayat , 2022).

II. Review of Literature

Sufi Orders is a spiritual path in Islam that serves to guide a person to achieve knowledge of Allah through a process of soul purification and continuous spiritual practice (Nicholson, 2015). Historically, Sufi Orders emerged in the 9th century AD as a response to religious formality and the weakening of the spiritual dimension of Muslims (Schimmel, 1975).

Major Sufi Orders such as the Qadiriyyah, Naqsyabandiyah, Syadziliyyah, and Tijaniyyah have moral and spiritual development systems that play a role in strengthening religious life and strengthening social solidarity. In the modern context, Sufi Orders also function as a vehicle for character formation and a means of providing inner balance amidst the pressures of materialistic life (Kadirun Yahya, 1983).

Contemporary research shows that Sufism has a positive effect on mental well-being, emotional control, and improving moral quality (Al-Ghazali, 1998). Therefore, the Sufi Orders can be considered a relevant model of spiritual education for building a modern civilization that balances rational and spiritual aspects.

III. Research Methods

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a library research approach. Data were obtained from various sources, such as books, journal articles, and academic documents discussing the Sufism, Sufism, and the problems of modern Muslims.

The main research instrument was content analysis of scientific texts and classic Sufi works. The data were analyzed in three stages:

1. Data reduction: selecting relevant information.
2. Data display: grouping information based on themes (spiritual, social, psychological).
3. Conclusion: to conclude the meaning and relevance of the role of the Sufi Orders in the modern context.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Problems of Muslims in the Modern Era

Modern society faces high spiritual pressure due to technological advances, economic competition, and materialistic lifestyles. As a result, phenomena such as spiritual alienation, depression, and moral degradation have emerged (Bauman, 2000).

Muslim societies in the modern era face complex and multidimensional challenges, encompassing spiritual, moral, social, economic, and epistemological aspects. The era of globalization and the digital revolution has given rise to various changes in mindsets, lifestyles, and value orientations that have serious implications for the religiosity and spirituality of Muslims (Trimingham, 1998).

Technological and information advances, which should be a means of benefiting the community, often trigger existential and spiritual crises. Modern humans tend to experience a disconnection from divine reality due to being too preoccupied with material reality and the virtual world (Rahman, 2021). As a result, symptoms of inner emptiness, stress, and disorientation emerge, eroding society's moral fabric.

a. Spiritual Crisis and Existential Emptiness

One of the main problems of modern Muslims is a spiritual crisis. The preoccupation with pursuing material progress and worldly achievements has weakened humanity's vertical relationship with Allah SWT. This phenomenon aligns with what Sayyid Hossein Nasr calls the "loss of the sacred"—the loss of sacred awareness in modern human life (Iqbal, 2012).

Modern humans often live in a state of spiritual alienation, that is, alienation from the true meaning of life. They experience inner restlessness despite economic and technological progress. In this context, Sufism and Sufism play an important role as spiritual therapies that can foster divine awareness and inner peace through the processes of dhikr and tazkiyah al-nafs [15].

b. Social Moral and Ethical Crisis

In addition to a spiritual crisis, modern society also faces a crisis of morality and social ethics. The values of honesty, justice, and trustworthiness are increasingly being eroded by the tide of secularization and hedonism [16]. Phenomena such as corruption, social violence, intolerance, and immoral behavior indicate signs of moral decline amidst the progress of civilization.

From an Islamic perspective, morality is the foundation of civilization. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asserted, "Innama bu'itstu li utammima makarimal

akhlaq" — "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble morals." (Narrated by Malik). However, in contemporary reality, morality is often neglected because it is measured primarily by material indicators, position, or social status.

In this case, the Sufi Order has a strategic role in reshaping moral awareness through spiritual training and Sufi ethics such as sincerity, patience, asceticism, and tawakal which foster self-control and social responsibility [17].

c. Individualism and Social Disintegration

Modernization has led to increased individualism and social disintegration. Society has become increasingly fragmented by personal interests, economic status, and consumerist orientations. The values of mutual cooperation and Islamic brotherhood have begun to fade, replaced by a culture of competition and self-interest [18].

In fact, in the Islamic perspective, humans are social beings (*madaniyyun bi al-thabi'ah*) who have responsibilities towards others. Islamic orders such as the Naqsyabandiyah and Qadiriyyah have emphasized the importance of brotherhood and togetherness as part of social worship. In dhikr assemblies and other order activities, followers are taught to respect each other, help each other, and strengthen spiritual bonds between people as a form of social worship. [19]

d. The Crisis of Islamic Education and Epistemology

One equally important aspect is the epistemological crisis—namely, the crisis of Islamic thought and knowledge systems in the modern era. Islamic education is often trapped in a dichotomy between religious and worldly knowledge. This creates a gap between rational and spiritual knowledge [20].

According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the root of the problems of modern Muslims lies in the “confusion of knowledge” — a confusion in understanding the nature of knowledge that has led to the separation of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of education [10]. As a result, a generation is born that is highly educated intellectually but poor in moral and spiritual values.

The Sufi order, through its Sufi approach, offers an integral educational model that combines dhikr, fikr, and amal—a blend of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional intelligence. This approach aligns with the concept of *insan kamil*, which is the ultimate goal of Islamic education [21].

e. Identity Crisis and the Challenges of Globalization

Globalization has brought a strong current of Western culture, influencing the lifestyle, economic system, and value orientation of Muslims. The phenomenon of cultural imitation (westernization) has given rise to a crisis of Islamic identity, especially among the younger generation [22].

A pragmatic and consumerist orientation to life has caused many Muslims to lose their identity and belief in Islamic values as a comprehensive system of life. In this situation, the Sufi Orders can function as a spiritual fortress that restores awareness of Islamic identity through the practice of continuous devotion and spiritual development [23].

The Sufi order also teaches a balance between acceptance of worldly progress (modernity) and loyalty to transcendent values. Thus, the Sufi order is not an anti-modern system, but rather a means to spiritualize modernity so that it is in harmony with the *maqashid* of sharia and universal human values [24].

f. Socio-Economic Crisis and Justice

Economic modernization that is not accompanied by spiritual and ethical values leads to economic inequality and social injustice. Structural poverty, resource exploitation, and inequality in welfare remain major problems in the Islamic world [25].

Meanwhile, Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of justice ('adl) and balance (mizan) in social life. The values of the Sufi Orders, such as contentment (qana'ah), tawakal (relief), and asceticism (zuhud), do not mean rejecting economic progress, but rather instilling an awareness that worldly wealth is merely a means, not the goal of life. With these principles, the Sufi Orders can form a society with economic ethics—a society that produces and innovates, but still adheres to the values of justice and blessings. [26]

Analytical Summary

Dimensions of Problems	Manifestation in the Modern Era	The Solution Provided by the Sufi Orders
Spirituality	Alienation, stress, inner emptiness	Dhikr, muraqabah, tazkiyah al-nafs
Morality	Hedonism, corruption, moral decadence	Sufi moral development
Social	Individualism, social disintegration	Ukhuwah, solidarity of the Sufi Orders of the Sufi Orders
Education & Epistemology	Dichotomy of science, loss of meaning	Integration of dhikr-fikr-amal
Identity & Globalization	Westernization, the loss of Islamic identity	Revitalization of faith awareness
Economy & Justice	Social inequality, materialism	Sufi ethics in economics

It can be concluded that the problems facing Muslims in the modern era are not only socio-economic, but also spiritual and epistemological. This crisis demands solutions that are not merely rational but also transcendental. In this context, the Sufi Orders holds a strategic position as a spiritual system capable of striking a balance between worldly progress and divine awareness [27].

4.2 The Role of the Sufi Orders as a Spiritual and Social Solution

The Sufi Orders comes with a spiritual formation method that emphasizes dhikr, muraqabah, and tazkiyah al-nafs, which can restore inner calm and meaning to life. Apart from that, the Sufi Orders also builds social communities that strengthen solidarity and togetherness between members [28]. Through teachings such as sincerity, patience, and trust, the Sufi Orders helps modern individuals face the stresses of life in a way that is balanced and oriented towards inner calm [29].

4.3 Relevance of Sufi Teachings for Modern Society

The values of the Sufi Orders have proven to be compatible with modern human needs for work-life balance, existential meaning, and mental health [30]. The Sufi Orders offers a spiritual paradigm that does not reject modernity, but rather harmonizes it with the divine dimension.

V. Conclusion

The Sufi Order plays a crucial role in addressing the challenges facing Muslims in the modern era through a spiritual and social approach. Through teachings of soul purification and transcendental awareness, the Sufi Order helps people overcome the moral and spiritual crises caused by modernization. The Sufi Order's relevance extends not only to its role as a religious system but also as a model for character development and the spiritual well-being of modern humans.

Suggestions

It is recommended that:

1. Islamic educational institutions integrate Sufi Orders values into the character education curriculum.
2. The government and religious institutions support the role of the Sufi Orders in the social and spiritual development of society.
4. The researcher then empirically examined the effects of Sufi Orders practices on the psychological and social well-being of modern Muslims.

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