

## THE ELABORATION OF SUFISM VALUE AND PSYCHOLOGY TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH IN FACING PANDEMICS

**Ahmad Saifuddin**

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia  
Corresponding Email: [ahmad.saifuddin48@iain-surakarta.ac.id](mailto:ahmad.saifuddin48@iain-surakarta.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

Indonesia is one of the countries affected by Covid-19 virus. These impacts influence both physical and psychological health. This study aimed to conceptualize the elaboration of Sufism values with psychology to deal with Covid-19. The research was conducted with a literature review. This research showed that many values of Sufism play an essential role in dealing with Covid-19, for example seclusion is the essence of physical distancing to prevent individuals from worrying; zuhud, qana'ah, and tawakal attitudes prevent individuals from stress; meditative dhikr helps individuals turn irrational thoughts into rational ones; and imitating Sufism as a social movement can create an impact on the society so that they can face Covid-19 together. Thus, this study found that Sufism has a down-to-earth role, namely improving the mental health of individuals during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Mental Health, Sufism Value

Submission	Review Process	Revised	Accepted	Published
January 29, 2021	August 28, 2021 – November 22, 2022	December 4, 2022	December 5, 2022	December 27, 2022

### INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, different disease symptoms were found in Wuhan, China. After investigation, the disease was caused by a new type of betacoronavirus, which was later named SARS-CoV-2. The disease was then called Coronavirus Disease-2019, abbreviated as Covid-19 (Yuliana, 2020; Wu, Chen, & Chan, 2020). The number of cases in various countries that were positive for Covid-19 until September 21, 2020, at 04:00, was 31,237,539. Death cases reached 965,065 and recovered cases reached 22,829,678. The number of positive cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia as of September 20, 2020, reached 244,676 with death cases reached 9,553 and the recovered cases reached 177,327. The condition of the development of Covid-19 in Indonesia differs from several other countries that have reduced the Covid-19 development curve. Indonesia is considered still unable to reduce the rate of transmission of Covid-19.

In the last few days, the number of cases in Indonesia could reach more than 3,000 cases every day.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has also impacted various aspects of life, for example, decreasing economic growth in several sectors (Brodeur et al., 2020; McKibbin & Fernando, 2020; Supriatna, 2020). In addition, Covid-19 has also hampered the educational process and turned into a new model, namely distance learning using online methods (Mustafa, 2020a; Onyema et al., 2020; Saradhamani & Krishnakumari, 2020; Yulia, 2020). This online learning then causes other impacts like academic stress on students (AlAteeq et al., 2020; Hasanah et al., 2020; Moawad, 2020) and students and stress on parents because the burden increases in the form of accompanying children to study. The religious aspect was also not spared the negative impact of this Covid-19. Religious activities that are classical or congregational

are prohibited and diverted by praying at home or praying at a masjid with social distancing.

Various policies have been implemented to reduce the number of transmissions of Covid-19. For example, PSBB (Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar or Large-Scale Social Restrictions), cash support, and socialization at various levels of society regarding how to avoid Covid-19. However, these various policies have yet to be able to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 in Indonesia. As a result, the negative impact of Covid-19 has also not been able to be adequately overcome. For example, the impact on the economy and the implementation of worship. In addition, another impact that is no less important is the impact of Covid-19 on the mental condition of the community. Covid-19 impacts psychiatric conditions and mental health (Khan et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Serafini et al., 2020), for example, stress, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (Kumar & Somani, 2020). ; Mustafa, 2020b; zdin & zdin, 2020).

Various parties have taken various strategies to resolve these negative impacts, especially the impact on psychology and mental health. For example, in the context of Indonesia, the Indonesian Psychological Association (HIMPSI) held a free counseling service program for individuals experiencing psychological problems as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, other approaches that can be used to deal with mental health and mental health problems are spiritual and religious approaches. For example, Fardin (2020) advised medical personnel to pay attention to the spiritual and religious beliefs of patients infected with Covid-19 to improve their welfare and mental health. This is because religion and spirituality are believed to play a role in crisis conditions, one of which is the crisis due to

the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, according to Cohen and Koenig (2004); Koenig (2009); Verghese (2008), religion and spirituality can improve individual mental health.

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In the Islamic context, there are three important concepts in practising religion, the concept of faith (belief), Islam (ritual worship), and ihsan (morals and behaviour). This concept of faith then made the science of monotheism and theology, Islam made ushul fiqh and fiqh, and the concept of ihsan made Sufism or Tasawuf. Sufism or Tasawuf emphasises deep religious appreciation so that it becomes part of a religion that plays an important role in mental health (Nizamie et al., 2013).

Suppose religion and spirituality play an important role in dealing with crises, one of which is the crisis due to the Covid-19 pandemic. What about the role of Sufism

values in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic? Especially if you remember that Sufism is a part of Islam. On the other hand, as part of Islam, Sufism focuses on mental processing. Therefore, the implementation of Sufism impacts the particular mental condition. This study aims to conceptualize and ground the value of Sufism to improve mental health in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. This research is important so that Sufism is interpreted equally. In addition, it is also an effort to integrate Sufism and Islam with psychology.

Many previous researchers have researched spirituality and religion's role in the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the research of Fardin (2020) and Ferrell et al. (2020) emphasizes a spiritual approach in dealing with individuals infected with Covid-19; Roman, Mthembu, and Hoosen (2020) research provides insight into the importance of providing spiritual care as a way to cope with anxiety and improve the well-being of families, patients and healthcare workers during the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa. In addition, research by Pirutinsky, Cherniak, and Rosmarin (2020) found that individuals who perform religious coping accompanied by high levels of religiosity tend to be less prone to stress and anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, research related to Sufism as a healing method has been carried out by Umam and Suryadi (2019); Syukur (2012); Arroisi (2018); Hasbullah, Saifullah, and Hasbi (2018); Rahmatiah (2017); Nur (2015); Mitha (2018); Rahman (2014).

There are differences between this study and previous research in several aspects. First, the theme of aspect. This study specifically analyzes the role of Sufism values during the Covid-19 pandemic in overcoming psychological and behavioural problems, while several previous studies (Fardin, 2020; Ferrell et al., 2020; Roman et al., 2020)

examined the role of spirituality in mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, this study tries to elaborate on Sufism and psychology to improve mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Second is the context aspect. This research is different from previous research related to healing methods with Sufism values because previous research is still in a general context and not in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic (Arroisi, 2018; Hasbullah et al., 2018; Mitha, 2018; Nur, 2015; Rahman, 2014; Rahmatiah, 2017; Syukur, 2012; Umam & Suryadi, 2019), while this study covers the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach and literature review methods. The literature is related to Sufism values, for example, zuhud, uzlah and khalwat, tawakal, and good prejudice. In addition, there is also literature related to health. The literature used is books and journals. The analysis used is content analysis (Seuring & Gold, 2012).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sufism is a part of Islam. Although Sufism developed rapidly after the Prophet Muhammad SAW's death, the values carried out in Sufism existed in the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Bakri & Saifuddin, 2019) for example, uzlah and khalwat. Some assume that both have something in common (Fleet et al., 1997), while others think they are different. Uzlah can be interpreted as alienating behaviour carried out by individuals to increase spirituality.

Meanwhile, khalwat means being alone. Both are often associated because when somebody isolates themselves, they will also be alone. However, self-isolation is not always in a state of solitude. Group seclusion occurs less frequently and has been carried out by a group of youths known as ashabul

kahf. Meanwhile, the self-isolation by the Prophet Muhammad was carried out by himself.

One of the goals of *uzlah* and *khalwat* is to focus on getting closer and getting to know God. In addition, *uzlah* and *khalwat* are carried out to increase the time to carry out spiritual processing and worship rituals to bring up inner experiences (Abdullah, 2018). Thus, *uzlah* and *khalwat* can impact individuals' mental and spiritual condition (Arifin & Rhoyachin, 2019). In addition, *uzlah* and *khalwat* also have an impact on individual psychological conditions, including being a means for meditation and relaxation (Khanam, 2006; Saliyo, 2017).

*Khalwat* and *uzlah* can be the soul of psychological distancing. Physical distancing is one of the efforts that can be done to break the chain of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Previously, the term social distancing was used first. However, the term was replaced with physical distancing because it more accurately describes the effort to keep a physical and social distance to break the spread of Covid-19 (Aminnejad & Alikhani, 2020). However, physically distancing can be done by isolating yourself and being alone in a faraway place. This is because humans are social creatures who cannot live alone for a long time. On the other hand, physical distancing can also be done at home without moving places. Like the concept of *uzlah* and *khalwat*, which are only sometimes carried out in distant places. This is because *uzlah* and *khalwat* in the tarekat or tasawuf tradition can be done in a small room that is quite dark (Lings, 1999).

Alloof behaviour, which is carried out by not distancing oneself in faraway places, is carried out by one of the tarekat, namely the Naqsabandiyah congregation with the concept of *khalwat dar anjuman* or *khalwat* in a crowd (Abdullah, 2018). This concept can inspire everybody to refrain from being influenced by

others who continue to do crowds amidst the Covid-19 virus still spreading. Thus, even though others do not do it, somebody who continues to do physical distancing will not feel that their efforts are in vain. Moreover, if each other understands the positive meaning and usefulness of *khalwat* and *uzlah* as the spirit of physical distancing, everyone will be able to do physical distancing. When physically distanced, people have more time to solve unfinished self-problems due to the many activities. In addition, during the physical distancing process, people can do meditation to prevent susceptibility to stress due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Meditation is a behaviour that reduces thinking and awareness without reducing the level of alertness and vigilance (Manocha, 2000). In addition, meditation contains an element of concentration (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Because it contains an element of concentration, thinking activities are reduced so that people can focus their thoughts on one thing during the meditation process. In addition, meditation can reduce levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and negative affect (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010; May, Ostafin, and Snippe, 2019; Sampaio, Lima, and Ladeia, 2016; Soliman & Mohamed, 2013; Goldstein et al., 2018; Sharma, 2015; Yang, Su, and Huang 2009; Dwi & Werdani 2017; Bamber & Schneider 2016; Chen et al. 2012; Orme-Johnson and Barnes 2013; Burns, Lee, and Brown 2011). Thus, meditation positively impacts mental health (Innes et al., 2012; Sampaio et al., 2016; Sharma, 2015). This meditation is a part of the ritual of Sufism practice (Omar et al., 2017; Fahm, 2014; Abdurahman, 2018; Bakri, 2009; Budiyanto, 2012). In the context of Sufism, meditation can be a ritual that becomes a means of remembrance.

Meditation can also be a media for contemplation and relaxation. This is because, during the meditation process, people are

required to reduce their thinking activities and focus their attention on one thing. One thing that becomes the target of this focus can be something positive. For example, imagine pleasant conditions and expect the Covid-19 pandemic to end soon. Positive thinking manifests the teachings of good prejudice in the Sufism tradition (Rusydi, 2012). This kind of practice can then reduce stress and anxiety levels. Thus, meditation can help people to achieve mental health. In addition, positive thinking will affect the law of attraction. The law of attraction is a law that works when individuals think positively; it will emit positive thinking energy waves and are responded to by particles in the universe in a positive form (Albina, 2018; Losier, 2010). When someone thinks positively and has good prejudice, it is the same as someone who wants and plans good things. Quantum physicists explain that humans can change the reality (quanta energy composition) of their lives by changing the vibrations of their thoughts and prejudices through feelings at the bottom of the heart (Sentanu, 2013).

This meditation practice can also be realized by doing Dhikr. Dhikr contains utterances that are positive and good. For example, Allahu akbar, which means Allah is Great. In addition, Dhikr can also be done by mentioning Asmaul Husna. Positive mention in this Dhikr will help people to change irrational thoughts into rational ones (Bakri & Saifuddin, 2019). This mechanism is called cognitive restructuring (Clark, 2014; Saputra, 2017). These irrational thoughts are in the form of fear and anxiety about things that may not happen.

Meanwhile, rational thought is a form of thought that is more adaptive because it comes from appropriate cognitive processes. For example, when somebody feels anxious and cannot deal with the negative impacts of Covid-19, they make Dhikr by calling Ya 'Aziz (God Almighty). The Dhikr process will

help someone to change his anxious feelings and thoughts that are no longer capable of again, leading to the thought that strength comes from God and God must give His strength to His servants. Someone who becomes aware that strength comes from God should draw closer to God to ask for strength.

Zuhud and qana'ah are also Sufism values that play an important role in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. As explained earlier, one of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic is the emergence of anxiety. One of these concerns is related to economic adequacy. Zuhud and qana'ah become one of the strategies to reduce this anxiety. Zuhud is a behaviour of keeping away from everything worldly.

On the other hand, zuhud can also be interpreted as an attitude of not being attached to anything worldly. Qana'ah is defined as an attitude of accepting every gift as it is. Zuhud and qana'ah correlate; that is, when an individual is zuhud, it will create a qana'ah attitude. In other words, qana'ah becomes the impact of the zuhud attitude (Hidayati, 2016). The important point of zuhud is not to be tied to anything material. Suppose the individual is not bound by material goods, for example, property and money. In that case, the individual will not feel the loss of the material goods if the material goods are lost. In other words, the individual's mental condition is not shaken when they lose something (Saripah et al., 2017).

Zuhud is similar to the concept of letting go. Letting go is someone's effort to realize that he has lost something and then to give up and let go of something (Bouchal et al., 2015). Letting can be categorized as part of an emotion-focused coping (EFC) strategy (Goody et al., 2014). Emotion-focused coping is a strategy to relieve depressed conditions in oneself by focusing on awareness of emotional conditions and then managing them (Lazarus, 1966; Baqutayan, 2015). For



example, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused many people to lose their jobs. If the job loss does not cause excessive anxiety, people can develop an attitude of *zuhud*. In the next process, *zuhud* causes the people to accept everything God has given them, no matter the amount. For example, in a job loss situation, you can still eat, or there are neighbours and other people who are kind enough to donate food. Thus, *zuhud* and *qana'ah* will help people to maintain mental health because they avoid being vulnerable to anxiety.

*Zuhud* and *qana'ah* also need to be elaborated with other Sufism values, namely *tawakal*. *Tawakkal* is an attitude of surrender. According to Rusdi (Bakri & Saifuddin, 2019), *tawakal* consists of two dimensions or aspects. First, the dimension of the willingness of the heart with everything that happens. Second, the business dimension or strive optimally to achieve the best results. Therefore, *Tawakal* combines all efforts to find the cause of success and then surrenders to Allah SWT. Based on this explanation, *tawakal* is a physical effort that is followed up with a resigned attitude regarding the results of these efforts. For individuals who are already *zuhud* and *qana'ah*, it is necessary to continue with the process of *tawakkal*. For example, even though they have lost their jobs and income due to the Covid-19 pandemic, people can release their hearts and minds to work and income, so they are not anxious, depressed, and stressed.

Furthermore, people must look for other efforts to subsequently surrender to the situation by looking for other job opportunities. Then, when someone has made an effort and is resigned to God as a form of trust, they will not be burdened with the results obtained. Therefore, *tawakal* helps someone avoid stress (Husnar et al., 2017) and anxiety (Mulyana, 2015) and increase resilience (Habibah et al., 2018).

Sufism is a teaching that encourages people to achieve wisdom (Lewin, 2000). Wisdom is very much needed in conditions of the spread of the Covid-19 virus because some people are not wise; for example, interpreting verses and hadiths to judge the attitude of other groups regarding their response to Covid-19 is wrong. A heuristic mindset causes this unwise attitude. According to West, Toplak, and Stanovich (2008), heuristics are conclusions that are not based on complete data and are not accompanied by serious efforts. This unwise attitude can also form prejudice, for example, thinking that the Covid-19 virus is aimed at certain groups as punishment. According to Fein and Spencer (1997) and Steele, Spencer, and Lynch (1993), prejudice occurs because they want to increase self-esteem and self-concept but by lowering the self-esteem and self-concept of other individuals or groups. Sufism avoids this unwise attitude.

Besides being an individual movement, Sufism is also a social movement (Nur & Abdurahman, 2017; Sulaiman, 2016). Therefore, in the context of Covid-19, the public can implement the value of Sufism as a social movement to raise awareness that Covid-19 is easily transmitted. Therefore, we must be careful and always follow health protocols, invite people to think positively, unite to face Covid-19, and make people aware that taking preventive measures is easier than treating our neighbours or those infected with the Covid-19 virus. Furthermore, we must be aware that we will be more useful if we play a role in preventing Covid-19 than if we only condemn or do not play a role. We also can give an example to the community to prevent Covid-19 and make religion a means to achieve the benefit of avoiding Covid-19 rather than using it as a tool of judgment.

In Sufism, there is the teaching of *maqamat*. *Maqamat* are levels that exist in

Sufism. These levels are repentance, wara', asceticism, patience, qana'ah, pleasure, sincerity, and trust. These levels can impact an individual's mental condition (Firdaus, 2015; Miswar, 2017; Pradityas et al., 2015). Several arguments have an impact on the individual's mental condition. First, each maqamat has a mechanism that nourishes mental conditions for example, repentance has an element of behaviour modification, zuhud has an element of releasing the burden and attachment between oneself and something, patience has an element of emotional regulation, and tawakal has an element of resignation. Second, the maqamat is a hierarchy. When people have arrived at a maqamat, they can proceed to the next maqamat, which requires a harder effort. Thus, individuals will seek to develop skills to achieve the next maqamat. The development of these skills will then develop his personality and adaptive behaviour.

In the Covid-19 pandemic, people will be spared from the vulnerability of mental and mental disorders when each maqamat is passed. The Covid-19 pandemic virus causes people to repent because they remember death. Repentance causes people to change bad behaviour that is maladaptive into good adaptive behaviour. It is known that bad behaviour causes somebody to become psychologically uneasy, causing them to be vulnerable to mental disorders. When someone changes his behaviour to be good, it will help them achieve peace of mind. Zuhud, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, helps someone not to be tied to their possessions. So, it can keep people calm and not burdened if their income is reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, individuals avoid stress and depression. Patience helps people not to rush for the Covid-19 pandemic to end. Patience allows everybody to survive even though the Covid-19 pandemic is not over yet. So, patience can prevent everybody

from having mental disorders. Tawakkal helps people to surrender something they cannot do to God. Some things in life are things you can work on yourself.

Meanwhile, some other things cannot be pursued and become God's territory. Therefore, Tawakal is a mechanism for letting go of something that cannot be worked on—for example, surrendering to the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, surrendering to the difficult conditions of life due to the impact of Covid-19. Therefore, tawakal can prevent people from psychological and mental disorders.

Maqamat also contains an element of skill development because it is hierarchical. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, skills development is necessary. Just like maqamat which contains skill development in every situation, the Covid-19 pandemic also encourages everybody to adapt to new conditions. This self-adaptation is one of the elements of mental health. When everybody can adapt, they can improve their thinking and acting skills to master the environment, not be controlled by it. When people can improve their skills, it becomes an effort towards mental health. Developed skills indicate that someone can solve problems in the environment by formulating solutions to them.

## CONCLUSION

The concepts of Sufism can be used to deal with various psychological problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 virus occurs if people inhale droplets of saliva (droplets and mini droplets); thus, crowded conditions are very vulnerable to transmitting the Covid-19 virus. Therefore, Sufism teaches us to do uzlah and khalwat. Uzlah and khalwat are the spirits of physical distancing to break the chain of transmission of Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic has also caused anxiety, stress, and depression. In this case,

the concepts of Sufism that play a role are meditation and dhikr. In addition, various psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, stress, and depression can also be reduced by developing an attitude of zuhud, qana'ah, and tawakal. Furthermore, Sufism encourages people to achieve wisdom, so those who carry out Sufism teachings related to wisdom will not think judgmentally and be prejudiced against other groups.

This research only focused on the literature reviews related to the concept of Sufism, its role in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, and the integration between Sufism and psychology. Therefore, further research can develop into field research to test the effectiveness of these concepts.

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