

## Sufism and Character: Education Practices in Islamic Boarding Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Character education is a system of instilling character values which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement values that are considered noble. Islamic boarding schools are one of the Islamic religious educational institutions that have a role in contributing to instilling character education values in students or students. One of the studies carried out in Islamic boarding schools is the study of Sufism, which is the science that teaches about how to have a noble ahlak. This research uses a qualitative approach by applying descriptive-analytical methods. The purpose of this study is to find out how the practice of internalizing character education in the Sufism-based Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School. The results showed that the practice of recitation of shalawat, recitation of dhikr, and Sufistic therapy has a correlation in the cultivation of character education.

**Keywords:** Character Education, Sufism, Islamic Boarding Schools

### INTRODUCTION

Sufism is an Islamic ritual that has a focus on the realm of the heart to get closer to God (*taqarrub ilallah*) (Al-Ghazali, 1998; Bakri & Wahyudi, 2021; Bruinessen & Howell, 2007). Sufism practices in the current context are carried out in a pesantren and become a special space for those who will pursue Sufism (Bruinessen, 1996). Sufism followers are not only adults, but also some teenagers have followed the tariqat, this is the success of Sufism in adapting (Shadiqin & Hayani, 2020). Education in Sufism has contributed to the formation of the character of its followers (Nurani, 2020; Rahayu, 2021).

Education is an inseparable part of human life, its role is one of the needs and means of growth in acquiring knowledge, therefore every human being essentially needs what is called formal and non-formal education. In general, education has a role to develop the intellectual and emotional learners. In particular, Islamic education has a role to prepare students physically and spiritually to become human beings who benefit themselves and others. (Al-Syaibany & Langgung, 1979).

Azyumardi Azra revealed that Islamic education has three principles: First, an emphasis on seeking knowledge. Second, one's ability to develop. Third, the servant's responsibility to God. (Azra, 2019). Islamic education has many different meanings, but there is an understanding that Islamic education is conscious guidance or direction by educators for the physical and spiritual growth of students towards the formation of a noble personality.

According to Ibn Khaldun, the goals of Islamic education are spiritual and worldly oriented. Forming a servant who is obedient to Allah and forming a human being who is able to face all forms of problems in world life. Meanwhile, al-Ghazali said that the goal of Islamic education is human perfection in this world and the hereafter (Ghofur, 2018). Humans can achieve perfection through knowledge to give happiness in the world and as a way to get closer to God.

Islamic education is not only limited to forming students in matters of intellectual intelligence, but also has a responsibility in forming human beings who have morals. As was done by the Prophet Muhammad, one of the factors for the success of his da'wah was

caused by his noble character. So in behavior, what was done by the Prophet Muhammad can be emulated and applied in the world of education.

The problems that society is currently facing are in addition to economic, educational, health, political problems, and actions and actions that are not good for school students, for example, such as brawls, criminal acts, and even drug abuse. Regarding this problem, education is expected to provide solutions and handling in stemming the problems carried out by students or students. One of them, education can improve character education that emphasizes aspects of spirituality.

In this context, character education has not yet formed spiritual-based character values. So, there is a need for a tasawwuf-minded approach in shaping character. Sufism is a spiritual movement in Islam that has a role in improving morals (Zaini, 2016). Sufism is generally studied in a pesantren and several other religious organizations. One of the Islamic educational institutions in which there is the study of Sufism is the Islamic boarding school (Hidayati, 2020).

Pondok Pesantren is a traditional Islamic educational institution where students (santri) live together and study under the guidance of a teacher who is better known as a "kyai" and has a dormitory for students to stay. (Bali, 2017). Islamic boarding schools, as the oldest education in Indonesia, are a great asset from the aspect of character development. There is great attention from the kiai towards the santri, respect and humility of the santri towards the kiai, a simple, thrifty and independent life, solidarity and mutual assistance, discipline and endurance. In the life of the pesantren, one can see the melting of individualism and egoism.

The material taught in Islamic boarding schools covers various disciplines of religious knowledge, including: monotheism

(theology), tasawuf (sufism) and morality, fiqh (Islamic law), and Arabic. The study of Sufism is one of the studies carried out at the Darul Afkar Islamic Boarding School. Sufism is an esoteric aspect in Islam that has a role in clarity of heart and drawing closer to Allah. The fruit of clarity of heart is good character and behavior.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative research design. Because the data is in the form of phenomena and narratives, not figures (Sudarwan, 2002). Qualitative type research is a type of approach that functions to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions of the community. This is then described holistically in the form of contextual words and language so that it acquires natural value. This research is descriptive-analytic in nature because it aims to describe linguistic phenomena (Moleong, 2005).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Profile of the Darul Afkar Islamic Boarding School in Klaten**

Darul Afkar Islamic Boarding School has a secretariat office in Tegalrejo Village RT 01/ RW 06, Ceper District, Klaten Regency. This Islamic boarding school has carried out transformative Islamic studies activities starting in 2007. The founder of this institution is Prof. Dr. KH. Syamsul Bakri, S.Ag., M.Ag. Darul Afkar Islamic Boarding School is a religious institution that studies aqidah, fiqh, sharia, and tasawuf (Prasantiwi, 2020).

Daily activities at the Darul Afkar Islamic Boarding School include, on Sunday and Monday nights, a study of the *Ihya' 'Ulumiddin* tasawuf book. Tuesday night Wednesday, Zikr khawajagan (a tasawuf remembrance). Thursday night Friday, yasinan and tahlilan activities. Friday night Saturday,

Sufi healing therapy activities and scientific discussions. In addition there are selapanan (monthly) activities for reading al-Barzanji.

Through the activities described above, the cultivation of character education values is implemented. So that when students take part in Islamic boarding school activities, the process of instilling character education values is indirectly obtained by the students. To make it easier for how this process occurs, then it will be explained about what are the aspects of character education and how the practice of Sufism-based character education is carried out at the Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School.

### **Character Education**

Character education is a system of cultivating character values which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to carry out values that are considered noble, both towards God, oneself, others, the environment, and nationality, which are embodied in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, and customs so that they become perfect human beings (Siswanto & Karimullah, 2019).

Character refers to a series of actions (attitudes), behaviors (behaviors), motivations (motivations), and skills (skills). According to Zubaedi, character includes attitudes such as the desire to do the best, intellectual capacity such as critical and moral reasoning, behavior such as being honest and responsible, maintaining moral principles in situations of injustice, interpersonal and emotional skills that allow a person to interact effectively in various circumstances, and a commitment to contribute to the community and its people (Zubaedi, 2011).

A person's character is formed because of habits that are carried out either in the form of behavior or words in responding to circumstances which in the end these

characters stick to him. The process of forming one's character can be known through the following stages: *Thoughts - Desires - Actions - Habits - Character*. Character education has the same essence and meaning as moral education and moral education. This becomes a special personality that becomes the driving force so that it is different from other people. The goal is to form good human beings, citizens, and good citizens.

### **Sufism-Based Character Education Practices**

Strengthening character requires a process of internalizing values. So a pattern of character education is needed in the hearts of the congregation so that awareness grows from within and becomes a habit in the behavior of everyday life. Sufism-based character education in strengthening character values is carried out through a special pattern that is characteristic of Islamic boarding schools, namely:

#### ***Prayer Reading (Pembacaan Shalawat)***

The activity of reading blessings is a routine activity carried out by Islamic boarding schools every Tuesday night and Wednesday. In reading the shalawat it is hoped that it will prioritize morals or adab, so that our spirit is connected to the spirit of the Prophet. Therefore, this heart must be arranged, and cleaned of dirty thoughts that interfere with the process of reading blessings. If the heart is clean, it will manifest in behaviors starting in daily life (Bakri, 2020). One of the impacts is related to character values by having caring traits for others, helping each other, and respecting each other.

One of the students admitted that this Islamic boarding school has its own pattern of strengthening character values. This planting is done by entering the character values in what is read. Among these values are mutual help, and brotherhood. At every prayer, the students feel that they are always under the protection

of Allah. Instilling character values through a pattern like this can be said to be quite effective (FRS, 2023).

Based on the stimulus from reading the prayer, a response appears in the form of awareness in each individual trying something positive. Sufism-based character education touches the hearts of the students, so that they have understanding, appreciation and awareness to apply character values such as love for the motherland, helping each other and brotherhood.

### ***Zikr reading (Pembacaan Zikir)***

Zikr means remember. Remember here the meaning is to remember Allah. So, Zikr can be interpreted as an activity that always remembers Allah (Wahyudi, 2018). There is also the term "zikrullah" which means remembering and mentioning Allah's names (Saifuddin, 2019). It can be distinguished again, the term "remember" is an impulse, while the essence of "name" is an oral movement. Zikr is essentially a simultaneous combination of verbal and heart in remembering and mentioning Allah's names.

The activity of remembrance is a characteristic of Sufism, all tarekat within Sufism have the practice of remembrance, although there are differences regarding the lafadz remembrance that they read, they have the same goal, namely remembering Allah. Awareness of God's presence in every remembrance made by students will have a spiritual impact so that they feel that God sees them in their every behavior (Bakri & Saifuddin, 2019).

Psychologically, remembrance is one way of therapy that can make a person relax and make the heart calm. Remembrance is a physical and mental activity that accelerates reflection, attitude and behavior during the life process that reminds us of Allah (Syukur, 2012). So it can be said that Zikr activities are not only limited to religious rituals, but have a positive impact on the mental processes of

someone who performs Zikr, then this mental condition manifests through his behavior.

The Zikr activity implemented at the Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School is called Zikr quantum Sufi, that is, a Zikr sir silently. Then the next stage is applied in the form of good deeds, thereby creating character values in the students. As conveyed by one santri, that by reciting the Quantum Sufi he has an awareness of the importance of doing good and caring for others, and is more responsible (SR, 2023).

Thus, as stated in the previous chapter, one of the indicators of character education is awareness of doing good and having a sense of responsibility. This has been experienced by one student who took part in recitation activities at Islamic boarding schools. So that recitation activities can foster character education values in students.

### ***Sufistic Therapy (Terapi Sufistik)***

This Sufistic therapy that is meant is treatment with Islamic nuances with the aim of realizing human mental health. The approach can be taken through extension guidance, the repentance approach, the remembrance approach, and the practices taught in Sufism (Bakri & Wahyudi, 2021). Such mystical therapy activities are carried out at the Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School every Friday and Saturday night. Therapy participants include the general public and especially the students.

Sufistic therapy activities are not only given to people or patients who are sick or who have physical or psychological problems. However, Sufistic therapy carried out in Islamic boarding schools can improve intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. As Kamila's research, that therapy with the nuances of Sufism can awaken the emotional and intellectual aspects of individuals (Kamila, 2022).

The model of Sufistic therapy at the Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School is

carried out in several combinations, one of which combines meditation and Zikr techniques. The therapy participants were guided to meditate, but on the other hand the therapy participants were also directed to do Zikr silently and remember Allah. Meditation is a form of exercise to focus and clear your mind, so you can feel calmer, more comfortable and more productive (Mulyaningrat et al., 2022).

One of the therapy participants said that the therapy was started by reading a prayer by the practitioner (the therapy guide). I was asked to sit back and relax while silently chanting Allah's name (Zikr). When the therapy process was carried out, my feelings arose many things, including remembering the mistakes I had made to other people and to myself, thus I was aware of my own shortcomings and tried to improve myself. Because Allah always forgives his servant who asks for forgiveness. As for what I feel after attending this therapy is that I am more careful or consider everything I do so it doesn't have a bad impact on others and myself (TM, 2023).

Thus, it can be said that Sufistic therapy has relevance to character education, especially in matters of actions towards oneself and others. A good relationship with what is around him and in himself is part of character education. In Islam, it is recommended to treat oneself and others in a kind manner. As the words of the Prophet narrated by Abu Sa'id, Sa'ad bin Sinan Al Khudri radhiallahuanhu, in fact the Prophet said: "It is not permissible to commit acts (harm) that harm oneself and others".

## CONCLUSION

Sufism has a ritual called character education which is a system of cultivating character values which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to carry out values that are considered noble, good for God. So that character education has

an important role for every individual, especially the students and students. Pondok Pesantren is an Islamic educational institution whose study contains values that can improve character education for students (santri).

As with the learning practices carried out at the Darul Afkar Klaten Islamic Boarding School, there is a study of Sufism which can trigger the growth of character education in students. Among the activities at the Islamic boarding school that are related to character education are the activities of reciting blessings; recitation of remembrance; Sufistic therapy. Through these activities the students have self-awareness in doing good, helping each other, loving the homeland, and having a sense of responsibility.

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