

Implementing Sufistic Character Education From Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's Perspective to Strengthen Students' Religious Attitudes: A Case Study at The Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

Yanto Maulana Restu^{1*}

¹ UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: mudmaralmurja@gmail.com

Abstract: The growing moral and spiritual challenges among Muslim students have highlighted the need for character education approaches that integrate ethical, spiritual, and educational dimensions. Although previous studies have extensively discussed Islamic character education and Sufi values, limited attention has been given to reconstructing Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought into a comprehensive conceptual model applicable to contemporary Islamic boarding schools. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Sufistic character education based on Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's perspective, examine its contribution to strengthening students' religious attitudes, and formulate a conceptual model of Sufistic character education. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and textual analysis of Asy-Sya'rani's major works, including *Al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Lawaqih al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Al-Minah al-Saniyyah*, and *Al-Mizan al-Kubra*. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while triangulation was employed to ensure trustworthiness. The findings reveal that Sufistic character education is grounded in four interrelated principles: *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification), *tahdzib al-akhlaq* (moral cultivation), the integration of *sharia* and *haqiqa*, and the exemplary role of the *murshid*. These principles are implemented through devotional practices, *dhikr*, *khidmah*, moral habituation, and spiritual mentoring, contributing to students' religious discipline, sincerity, self-control, responsibility, and social awareness. This study proposes a Sufistic Character Education Model that integrates spiritual, moral, pedagogical, and social dimensions into a holistic framework for strengthening students' religious attitudes in Islamic boarding schools. The proposed model contributes to the advancement of Islamic character education theory and provides practical guidance for developing value-based education in contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Character Education; Sufistic Education; Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani; Religious Attitude; Islamic Boarding School.

Introduction

Global developments characterized by rapid advances in digital technology, cultural globalization, and changing patterns of social interaction have profoundly transformed the lives of young people. On the one hand, these developments have expanded access to information, facilitated communication, and created new opportunities for learning and educational innovation. On the other hand, they have also generated complex social and moral challenges that increasingly concern educators, policymakers, and researchers worldwide.

Recent studies have reported growing evidence of moral degradation, declining ethical sensitivity, increasing individualism, reduced social responsibility, and a weakening of young people's spiritual well-being. Phenomena such as bullying, intolerance, violence, cyber misconduct, excessive digital dependency, declining empathy, and integrity crises indicate that intellectual advancement has not always been accompanied by corresponding moral and spiritual development. Consequently, the moral crisis among younger generations has emerged as a global educational issue that requires comprehensive and transformative responses beyond conventional instructional approaches.

Against this background, character education has regained international attention as one of the central agendas of educational reform. Contemporary character education is no longer understood merely as the transmission of moral norms or socially acceptable behaviour. Rather, it seeks to cultivate individuals who possess moral integrity, social responsibility, ethical judgment, emotional maturity, and a meaningful orientation toward life. Contemporary educational scholarship further suggests that effective character education should integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions into authentic learning experiences, enabling students not only to understand moral values but also to internalize and consistently practice them. Accordingly, character formation requires educational processes that combine moral knowledge, emotional engagement, habitual practice, and exemplary leadership, thereby transforming values into enduring personal dispositions.

Despite these developments, many contemporary models of character education remain predominantly grounded in psychological and pedagogical perspectives, while the spiritual dimension receives comparatively

limited attention. However, an increasing body of educational research suggests that moral crises cannot be adequately understood without considering the erosion of students' spiritual consciousness. Spirituality extends beyond formal religious observance to encompass meaning-making, transcendental awareness, self-regulation, sincerity, compassion, and moral responsibility toward others. Educational systems that emphasize academic achievement while neglecting students' spiritual development risk producing graduates who are intellectually competent but ethically fragile and insufficiently prepared to address the complex moral challenges of contemporary society.

Within the Islamic educational tradition, the integration of spirituality and character has long constituted a fundamental educational principle. Classical concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs* conceptualize education as a holistic process aimed at developing intellectual competence, moral excellence, and spiritual maturity simultaneously. Character formation is therefore understood not merely as behavioural modification but as the purification of the soul and the cultivation of virtues rooted in faith and devotion to Allah. This perspective positions spirituality as the foundation upon which ethical behaviour and social responsibility are built. Recent scholarship on Islamic education similarly emphasizes that integrating spiritual values into character education contributes more comprehensively to students' moral, emotional, and social development than approaches that focus exclusively on secular moral competencies.

One educational approach that offers significant potential for addressing these challenges is Sufistic character education. Unlike behaviour-oriented models of character education, Sufistic education places inner transformation at the centre of educational development. Through interconnected processes such as *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), *riyadhah* (spiritual discipline), *mujahadah* (striving against the ego), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and continuous moral habituation, Sufistic education seeks to harmonize intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human development. The ultimate objective is not merely moral conformity but the cultivation of individuals whose ethical conduct emerges naturally from a purified heart and a deep awareness of God's presence.

Nevertheless, although the literature on Islamic character education and Sufism has expanded considerably, existing studies have largely examined Sufistic values, moral education, or pesantren traditions separately. Limited attention has been devoted to reconstructing Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought into a comprehensive conceptual model of Sufistic character education grounded in empirical educational practice. Consequently, the theoretical relationship between Asy-Sya'rani's Sufistic philosophy and contemporary character education remains insufficiently explored. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the implementation of Sufistic character education at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School in Tasikmalaya and develops a Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) based on the synthesis of Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought and empirical findings. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the advancement of Islamic character education theory while providing a holistic framework for strengthening students' religious attitudes within contemporary Islamic educational contexts.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Sufistic character education based on Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore educational practices, participants' experiences, institutional culture, and the meanings attached to the implementation of Sufistic character education within its natural setting. Rather than testing hypotheses, this research aimed to understand the educational process comprehensively and to formulate a conceptual model of Sufistic character education grounded in empirical findings and supported by Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought.

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Tarekat Idrisiyyah, located in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia. The pesantren was purposively selected because it represents one of Indonesia's prominent Sufi Islamic boarding schools that systematically integrates spiritual practices, character education, and formal educational programs under the guidance of a recognized *murshid*. Its long-standing tradition of combining religious instruction, spiritual mentoring, and daily character formation provided a rich context for examining the implementation of Sufistic character education.

The participants were selected purposively based on their roles and involvement in the implementation of character education within the pesantren. They consisted of the *murshid*, Islamic teachers (*ustadz*), boarding school administrators, and students (*santri*). The *murshid* provided information regarding the philosophical foundations and educational vision of the institution, while teachers and administrators explained the instructional processes, educational programs, and institutional culture. The students contributed their experiences and perceptions regarding the internalization of Sufistic values and their influence on religious attitudes.

Data were collected through four complementary techniques. First, participant observation was conducted to examine daily educational activities, including religious instruction, congregational worship, *dhikr*, *khidmah*,

moral habituation, and interactions among members of the pesantren community. Second, in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with the *murshid*, teachers, administrators, and students to explore their understanding and experiences regarding Sufistic character education. Third, documentation analysis was undertaken by examining institutional documents, educational programs, curriculum materials, organizational records, and relevant archives. Fourth, a literature study was conducted by analyzing Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's principal works, particularly *Al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Lawaqih al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Al-Minah al-Saniyyah*, and *Al-Mizan al-Kubra*, as the primary theoretical foundation of this study.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process through three interconnected stages. The first stage involved data condensation, in which interview transcripts, field notes, observational records, and documentary evidence were selected, coded, categorized, and simplified according to the research objectives. The second stage consisted of data display, where categorized findings were organized into thematic matrices and conceptual relationships to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by identifying recurring patterns, comparing multiple sources of evidence, and synthesizing empirical findings with Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought. This analytical process ultimately led to the formulation of a conceptual model of Sufistic character education.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Source and method triangulation were conducted by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, documentation, and literature analysis. Member checking was undertaken by returning selected interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to several participants to verify the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. Furthermore, an audit trail was maintained throughout the research process by systematically documenting data collection procedures, coding decisions, analytical memos, and research reflections. These strategies enhanced the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and overall trustworthiness of the study.

Results and Discussion

1. The Concept of Sufistic Character Education from Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's Perspective

The analysis of Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's major works, namely *Al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Lawaqih al-Anwar al-Qudsiyyah*, *Al-Minah al-Saniyyah*, and *Al-Mizan al-Kubra*, demonstrates that Sufistic character education is founded upon six interrelated dimensions: *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification), *tahdzib al-akhlaq* (moral cultivation), the integration of *sharia* and *haqiqa*, the central role of the *murshid*, and the attainment of *ihsan*. Rather than functioning as independent concepts, these dimensions form an integrated educational framework that directs learners toward spiritual maturity and moral excellence.

Tazkiyat al-Nafs as the Foundation of Character Formation

The findings indicate that *tazkiyat al-nafs* occupies the most fundamental position in Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought. Character formation begins with the purification of the heart from arrogance, envy, excessive worldly attachment, and other spiritual diseases. According to Asy-Sya'rani, moral behaviour cannot be sustained unless it originates from an inner transformation achieved through continuous remembrance of God, self-discipline, repentance, and spiritual exercises.

This perspective differs from many contemporary approaches to character education that emphasize behavioural outcomes. Asy-Sya'rani places spiritual purification as the primary prerequisite for ethical conduct, suggesting that external behaviour reflects one's internal spiritual condition.

Tahdzib al-Akhlaq as Moral Cultivation

Following spiritual purification, character education proceeds through *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, namely the cultivation of noble character traits. The analysis reveals that Asy-Sya'rani views virtues such as honesty, humility, patience, gratitude, sincerity, responsibility, and compassion not merely as social norms but as manifestations of spiritual excellence.

Unlike behavioural training that focuses primarily on habit formation, moral cultivation in Asy-Sya'rani's perspective integrates cognitive understanding, spiritual awareness, and continuous practice. Consequently, moral excellence becomes a natural expression of a purified soul rather than merely compliance with external regulations.

The Integration of Sharia and Haqiqa

One of the distinctive findings of this study is Asy-Sya'rani's emphasis on the inseparable relationship between *sharia* and *haqiqa*. Educational processes should simultaneously strengthen outward religious observance and inward spiritual consciousness. Ritual worship is therefore understood not only as legal compliance but also as a means of cultivating sincerity, humility, and awareness of God's presence.

This integrated perspective prevents the dichotomy between formal religiosity and spiritual experience, allowing learners to internalize Islamic values comprehensively.

The Educational Role of the Murshid

The findings further reveal that the *murshid* occupies a strategic position within Sufistic character education. Beyond serving as a religious instructor, the *murshid* functions as a spiritual mentor, moral exemplar, counsellor, and guide throughout the learners' spiritual journey. Character education is therefore transmitted not only through formal instruction but also through continuous modelling, personal interaction, and spiritual companionship.

This mentoring relationship facilitates the internalization of values because students observe and imitate authentic moral practices embodied by the *murshid*.

Ihsan as the Ultimate Educational Goal

The ultimate objective of Sufistic character education is the realization of *ihsan*, understood as worshipping God with full awareness of His constant presence. In this study, *ihsan* represents the culmination of the educational process in which spiritual purification, moral cultivation, religious practice, and guidance from the *murshid* converge to produce individuals possessing strong religious commitment and exemplary moral conduct.

Accordingly, *ihsan* functions not only as a theological concept but also as the highest indicator of successful character education.

The findings corroborate Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, particularly his emphasis on *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the foundation of moral development. Similar to Al-Ghazali, Asy-Sya'rani argues that ethical behaviour emerges from inner purification rather than external behavioural regulation alone. However, this study extends Al-Ghazali's framework by highlighting the institutional role of the *murshid* and the integration of *sharia* and *haqiqa* as complementary educational mechanisms within the pesantren context.

Compared with Thomas Lickona's model of character education, which consists of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, Asy-Sya'rani's framework introduces a more explicit spiritual dimension. While Lickona primarily focuses on cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of morality, Asy-Sya'rani positions spiritual purification as the foundational process preceding moral cognition and behaviour. This finding suggests that Sufistic character education enriches contemporary character education theory by incorporating transcendental consciousness as an essential element of character formation.

Taken together, these six dimensions form a coherent conceptual framework that underpins the implementation of Sufistic character education and provides the theoretical basis for the Sufistic Character Education Model proposed in this study.

2. The Implementation of Sufistic Character Education at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School

The findings reveal that the implementation of Sufistic character education at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School is not limited to classroom instruction but is embedded within the entire educational culture of the pesantren. Character formation is continuously internalized through spiritual practices, daily habituation, exemplary leadership, and institutional traditions. These educational components interact systematically to cultivate students' religious attitudes and moral character.

Dhikr as Spiritual Internalization

One of the most distinctive characteristics of character education at Idrisiyyah is the integration of *dhikr* into students' daily routines. Collective and individual remembrance of Allah functions not merely as ritual worship but also as a process of spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Through continuous *dhikr*, students develop self-awareness, emotional stability, sincerity, humility, and greater consciousness of God's presence in everyday life. Consequently, *dhikr* serves as a mechanism for transforming spiritual awareness into ethical behaviour.

Wird as Continuous Spiritual Discipline

The implementation of *wird* complements *dhikr* by establishing consistency in spiritual discipline. The prescribed daily recitations cultivate perseverance, self-control, and commitment to religious obligations. The findings indicate that regular *wird* encourages students to develop disciplined habits while simultaneously strengthening their emotional attachment to religious values. Rather than functioning as repetitive rituals, these practices gradually shape students' personal identity and religious commitment.

Khidmah as Experiential Character Education

Another significant component is *khidmah*, understood as voluntary service to the pesantren community. Students participate in various activities such as maintaining cleanliness, assisting teachers, serving guests, organizing religious events, and contributing to communal responsibilities. These activities cultivate humility, responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and social empathy. Character education therefore occurs through direct participation in meaningful social practices rather than through theoretical instruction alone.

Habituation of Religious Practices

Daily religious habituation constitutes another central mechanism of character formation. Congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, fasting, religious gatherings, and other devotional activities are consistently integrated into students' daily schedules. Such habituation transforms religious observance into an integral part of students' lifestyles. Repeated engagement in these practices reinforces discipline, responsibility, and spiritual commitment, enabling religious values to become internalized rather than externally imposed.

Exemplary Leadership of the Murshid and Teachers

The study further demonstrates that exemplary behaviour (*uswah hasanah*) represents one of the most influential educational strategies within the pesantren. The *murshid* and teachers embody the moral and spiritual values expected from students through their daily interactions, humility, sincerity, consistency in worship, and service to others. Students continuously observe these behaviours, making moral learning an experiential process grounded in authentic role modelling. Consequently, character education is transmitted not only through instruction but also through lived examples.

Adab Development as Cultural Formation

The cultivation of *adab* extends beyond etiquette to encompass comprehensive moral discipline governing relationships with Allah, teachers, fellow students, parents, and society. Respect, courtesy, obedience, honesty, patience, and responsibility are systematically reinforced through institutional regulations, daily interactions, and continuous guidance. Over time, these values become embedded within the pesantren culture, creating an educational environment that supports sustainable character formation.

The findings demonstrate that Sufistic character education at Idrisiyyah is implemented through an integrated educational ecosystem in which spiritual practices, moral habituation, social service, exemplary leadership, and institutional culture mutually reinforce one another. Unlike conventional character education programs that frequently rely on classroom-based moral instruction, the Idrisiyyah model emphasizes continuous value internalization through lived religious experiences and communal participation.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that Islamic boarding schools effectively strengthen students' moral and religious development through habituation, religious culture, and exemplary leadership. However, the present study extends earlier research by showing that the integration of *dhikr*, *wird*, *khidmah*, *adab*, and *murshid*-centered mentoring forms a coherent educational system rooted in Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's Sufistic educational philosophy. Rather than functioning as separate educational activities, these components operate as interconnected mechanisms that facilitate the transformation of spiritual awareness into observable religious character.

Furthermore, this study identifies that the implementation process follows a sequential pattern beginning with spiritual purification, continuing through moral cultivation and religious habituation, and culminating in the internalization of religious attitudes. This integrated process provides the empirical foundation for the Sufistic Character Education Model proposed in the subsequent section.

3. The Contribution of Sufistic Character Education to Students' Religious Attitudes

The findings indicate that the implementation of Sufistic character education at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School contributes significantly to strengthening students' religious attitudes. The educational process, which integrates spiritual practices, moral habituation, exemplary leadership, and communal participation, fosters the internalization of Islamic values that are reflected in students' daily behaviour. Rather than producing temporary behavioural compliance, the educational process encourages the development of enduring religious dispositions manifested through discipline in worship, responsibility, honesty, self-control, empathy, and social concern.

Religious Discipline

One of the most visible outcomes is the improvement of students' discipline in performing religious obligations. The consistent practice of congregational prayers, *dhikr*, *wird*, Qur'anic recitation, and other devotional activities gradually develops regularity and commitment in worship. The findings suggest that repeated spiritual practices transform worship from an institutional obligation into an intrinsic personal need. Consequently, students demonstrate greater consistency in maintaining religious duties even beyond formal supervision.

Responsibility

The implementation of *khidmah* and collective educational activities also strengthens students' sense of responsibility. Students are entrusted with various institutional duties, including maintaining the cleanliness of the pesantren, organizing religious activities, and fulfilling communal obligations. These experiences cultivate accountability, commitment, and awareness that every responsibility constitutes an act of worship. Responsibility is therefore understood not merely as organizational competence but as an ethical obligation grounded in religious values.

Honesty

The study further reveals that honesty emerges as an essential outcome of continuous spiritual guidance and moral cultivation. Daily interactions with teachers, peers, and the *murshid*, combined with the cultivation of sincerity (*ikhlas*), encourage students to develop integrity in both academic and social contexts. Honest behaviour is consistently reinforced through moral advice, self-reflection, and institutional expectations, leading students to perceive honesty as an expression of faith rather than merely a social norm.

Self-Control

The findings also demonstrate that Sufistic educational practices contribute to the development of self-

control. Spiritual disciplines such as *dhikr*, *wird*, fasting, and continuous remembrance of Allah enhance students' ability to regulate emotions, control desires, and avoid behaviours inconsistent with Islamic values. Students become more capable of managing conflicts, responding patiently to challenges, and exercising emotional restraint in daily interactions. Such self-regulation reflects the successful internalization of spiritual values into personal conduct.

Empathy

Empathy develops through continuous interaction within the pesantren community and participation in *khidmah*. Living collectively encourages students to understand the needs of others, appreciate differences, and provide mutual support in daily life. The educational environment nurtures compassion, cooperation, and mutual respect, thereby strengthening students' interpersonal relationships and emotional sensitivity.

Social Concern

Another important contribution is the enhancement of students' social concern. The pesantren's emphasis on collective worship, community service, and social responsibility encourages students to view themselves as members of a broader Muslim community with obligations toward others. Participation in charitable activities, community engagement, and institutional service reinforces the values of solidarity, generosity, and civic responsibility. Consequently, religious commitment is expressed not only through personal piety but also through meaningful social participation.

The findings demonstrate that religious attitudes are formed through a holistic educational process integrating spiritual experience, moral cultivation, exemplary leadership, and communal practice. These findings support the view that religiosity extends beyond ritual observance to encompass cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of religious life. In the context of Sufistic education, religious attitudes are developed through the continuous internalization of spiritual values that shape both personal devotion and social responsibility.

From the perspective of character education, the findings are consistent with contemporary theories asserting that character formation requires the integration of moral understanding, emotional engagement, and habitual practice. The implementation of Sufistic character education at Idrisiyyah reflects these dimensions while simultaneously introducing an explicitly spiritual foundation through *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *dhikr*, *wird*, and *murshid*-based mentoring. Thus, character is not merely acquired through behavioural training but emerges from the transformation of the inner self.

Compared with conventional character education models, the present findings suggest that the Sufistic approach provides a more comprehensive mechanism for developing religious attitudes because it integrates spiritual consciousness with moral behaviour. The six indicators identified in this study—religious discipline, responsibility, honesty, self-control, empathy, and social concern—represent interconnected outcomes of a continuous educational process rather than isolated behavioural competencies. This holistic understanding provides empirical support for the conceptual model of Sufistic character education developed in this study and demonstrates its potential contribution to the advancement of Islamic character education theory.

4. A Sufistic Character Education Model Based on Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's Perspective

Based on the synthesis of Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought and the empirical findings obtained from the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School, this study proposes a Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) as a conceptual framework explaining the holistic process through which students' religious attitudes are developed. The model demonstrates that Sufistic character education is not merely a collection of religious activities but an integrated educational system consisting of philosophical foundations, spiritual internalization, educational mediation, and character outcomes. These components operate dynamically to transform spiritual awareness into sustainable religious character.

Philosophical Foundation

The first component of the model is the philosophical foundation, consisting of Tauhid, Sharia, and Haqiqa. Tauhid functions as the fundamental worldview guiding every educational activity toward the recognition of Allah as the ultimate source of values. Within this perspective, character education is viewed as an act of worship aimed at nurturing complete servitude to God.

The second foundation is Sharia, which provides normative guidance for regulating individual and social behaviour through Islamic teachings. Religious obligations, ethical norms, and educational regulations establish the external framework within which character formation occurs.

Complementing Sharia is Haqiqa, representing the internal and spiritual dimensions of Islamic practice. Asy-Sya'rani emphasizes that genuine character formation can only be achieved when external religious observance is accompanied by inner spiritual awareness. Therefore, the integration of Sharia and Haqiqa constitutes the distinctive philosophical basis of Sufistic character education.

Internalization Process

The second component describes the process of internalizing Sufistic values. The process begins with *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, namely the purification of the soul from destructive spiritual traits such as arrogance, envy,

greed, and excessive attachment to worldly life. This stage establishes the psychological and spiritual readiness required for character development.

The second stage is Tahdzib al-Akhlaq, referring to the cultivation of noble virtues through continuous moral guidance and ethical practice. Moral values are not only taught cognitively but are consistently reinforced through daily experiences.

Following moral cultivation, students engage in Riyadhah, a series of spiritual exercises intended to strengthen discipline, sincerity, patience, and perseverance. These practices gradually shape students' capacity for self-regulation and spiritual resilience.

The next stage is Mujahadah, understood as the continuous struggle against one's ego and personal desires. Through Mujahadah, students learn to prioritize spiritual values over immediate gratification and develop stronger emotional and moral self-control.

The internalization process is reinforced through regular Dhikr, which nurtures constant remembrance of Allah and deepens students' spiritual consciousness. Dhikr functions as the central mechanism connecting inner purification with outward moral behaviour.

Finally, students participate in Khidmah, or voluntary service to the pesantren community. Khidmah translates internal spiritual values into concrete social actions by cultivating humility, responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and sincerity. Through this sequence, spiritual awareness is progressively transformed into observable moral conduct.

Educational Mediators

The effectiveness of the internalization process depends on several educational mediators. The Murshid serves as the central spiritual guide who provides religious instruction, moral direction, and personal exemplification. Rather than functioning solely as a teacher, the Murshid accompanies students throughout their spiritual development and ensures the authenticity of educational practices.

The Pesantren Environment provides a supportive learning context where religious values are continuously experienced in everyday life. The integration of worship, learning, communal living, and social interaction creates an educational ecosystem conducive to character formation.

The Pesantren Culture reinforces moral values through institutional traditions, shared norms, collective rituals, and communal responsibility. Such cultural reinforcement ensures that character education extends beyond formal instruction into students' daily experiences.

Finally, Habituation functions as the operational mechanism through which values are repeatedly practiced until they become stable personal dispositions. Continuous repetition transforms moral behaviour into enduring character.

Educational Outcomes

The interaction among philosophical foundations, internalization processes, and educational mediators generates three successive educational outcomes.

The immediate outcome is the strengthening of Religious Attitudes, reflected in students' discipline in worship, sincerity, honesty, responsibility, self-control, empathy, and social concern.

Continuous internalization subsequently produces Akhlakul Karimah, characterized by stable moral behaviour, ethical consistency, humility, compassion, and integrity in both personal and social life.

Ultimately, the educational process aspires toward the realization of Insan Kamil, understood as an individual whose intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions develop harmoniously through complete devotion to Allah and responsible engagement with society.

The proposed Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) demonstrates that character formation is neither instantaneous nor solely behaviour-oriented. Instead, it constitutes a gradual transformational process beginning with theological foundations, continuing through spiritual purification and moral cultivation, facilitated by an integrated educational environment, and culminating in holistic personality development. This model extends existing theories of character education by positioning spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the integration of Sharia and Haqiqa as the central mechanisms of character formation within Islamic education.

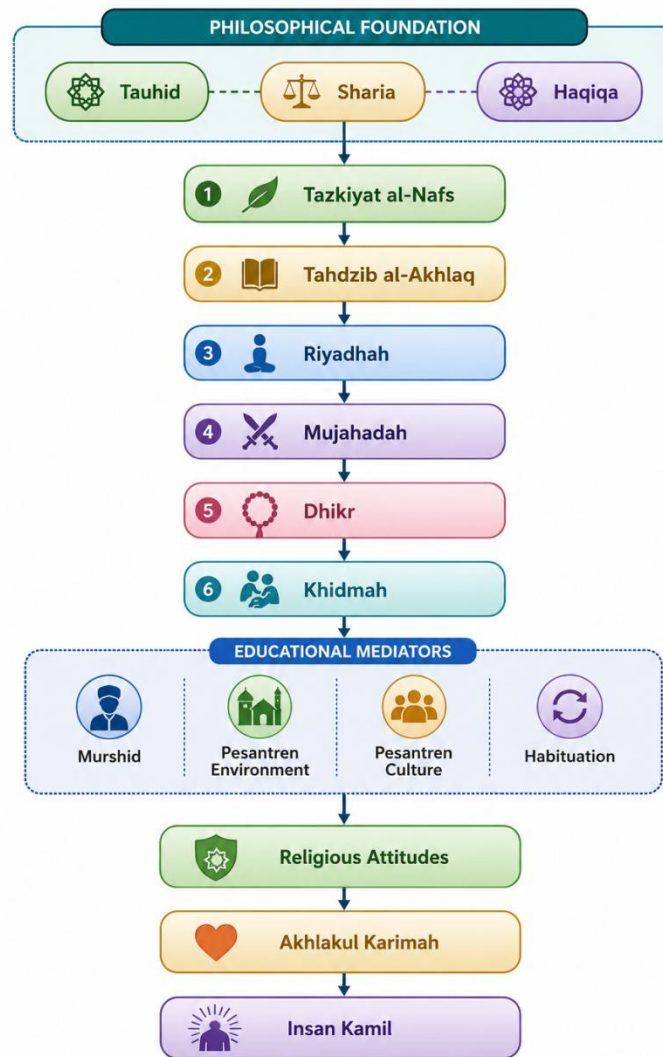


Figure 1. Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM)

The Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) proposed in this study is a conceptual synthesis derived from Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought and empirical findings from the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School. The model explains that the formation of students' religious character is a gradual and integrated process beginning with theological foundations, continuing through spiritual internalization, strengthened by educational mediators, and ultimately producing holistic character outcomes. Each component of the model is described as follows.

Philosophical Foundation: Tauhid, Sharia, and Haqiqa

The philosophical foundation represents the ontological and epistemological basis of Sufistic character education. The findings indicate that all educational activities at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School are oriented toward strengthening students' relationship with Allah (Tauhid). Tauhid is not merely taught as a theological doctrine but is internalized through worship, remembrance (*dhikr*), obedience, and daily ethical conduct. Consequently, students perceive every educational activity as part of their servitude to Allah.

The second foundation is Sharia, which provides normative guidance governing religious obligations and social behaviour. Daily congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Islamic learning sessions, and institutional regulations demonstrate that character formation is consistently rooted in Islamic law. However, the empirical findings also reveal that religious observance is not understood solely as compliance with legal obligations.

This leads to the third foundation, Haqiqa, which represents the inner spiritual meaning underlying religious practice. The *murshid* consistently emphasizes sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadhu'*), and awareness of Allah's presence in every act of worship. This finding reflects Asy-Sya'rani's educational philosophy that *Sharia* and *Haqiqa* are inseparable dimensions of Islamic education. External obedience acquires educational value only when accompanied by internal spiritual awareness.

Therefore, the integration of Tauhid, Sharia, and Haqiqa constitutes the philosophical identity of the

proposed model and distinguishes it from conventional approaches to character education that generally emphasize moral behaviour without explicitly integrating transcendental values.

Internalization Process

The second component explains how Sufistic values are transformed into students' personal character. The process begins with Tazkiyat al-Nafs, namely the purification of the soul from destructive spiritual traits such as arrogance, envy, excessive attachment to worldly life, and selfishness. Field observations indicate that regular *dhikr*, collective worship, spiritual advice (*mau'idzah*), and continuous self-reflection encourage students to evaluate their inner condition before correcting their outward behaviour. This finding supports Asy-Sya'rani's assertion that genuine moral reform always begins with purification of the heart.

Following spiritual purification, students undergo Tahdzib al-Akhlaq, namely the cultivation of noble character. Interview data reveal that honesty, discipline, patience, responsibility, humility, and respect are not only taught during formal learning but are continuously reinforced through daily interactions with teachers, senior students, and the *murshid*. Consequently, moral education becomes a continuous educational process rather than an isolated instructional activity.

The next stage is Riyadhah, referring to structured spiritual exercises intended to cultivate discipline and perseverance. Daily worship schedules, voluntary fasting, additional devotional practices, and continuous remembrance of Allah gradually train students to regulate their behaviour independently.

These practices are strengthened through Mujadahah, namely the continuous struggle against personal desires (*nafs*). The findings indicate that students are encouraged to exercise emotional restraint, avoid excessive worldly attachment, and develop patience when facing personal or social challenges. This process enables students to transform religious teachings into practical self-control.

The central mechanism of the internalization process is Dhikr. Rather than functioning solely as ritual recitation, *dhikr* serves as a continuous reminder of Allah's presence, strengthening spiritual awareness and reinforcing moral consciousness. Students reported that regular *dhikr* helped them become more patient, sincere, emotionally stable, and committed to religious obligations.

The final stage is Khidmah, which translates spiritual awareness into social action. Students actively participate in maintaining the pesantren environment, assisting teachers, serving guests, organizing religious events, and supporting fellow students. These activities nurture responsibility, cooperation, humility, empathy, and sincerity, demonstrating that spiritual values are actualized through service to others.

The findings therefore suggest that character formation follows a sequential process beginning with inner purification, progressing through moral cultivation and spiritual discipline, and culminating in concrete social responsibility.

Educational Mediators

Although spiritual internalization forms the core educational process, its effectiveness depends upon several educational mediators identified through the empirical findings. The most influential mediator is the *Murshid*, who functions not only as a religious scholar but also as a spiritual mentor and living example of Islamic ethics. Interviews consistently indicate that students learn moral values more effectively through observing the *murshid's* daily behaviour than through formal lectures alone. This finding confirms Asy-Sya'rani's emphasis on exemplary guidance (*uswah hasanah*) as a central mechanism of spiritual education.

The Pesantren Environment also contributes significantly to value internalization. Students live within an educational community where worship, learning, social interaction, and moral discipline are integrated into daily life. Such an environment continuously reinforces religious values beyond classroom instruction.

Similarly, Pesantren Culture institutionalizes Islamic values through collective traditions, communal worship, mutual assistance, respect for teachers, and obedience to institutional norms. These cultural practices gradually transform religious values into shared behavioural standards.

Finally, Habituation strengthens value internalization through continuous repetition. Daily schedules involving worship, *dhikr*, *khidmah*, Qur'anic recitation, and ethical discipline enable students to practice religious values consistently until they become stable personal habits. Together, these mediators create an educational ecosystem that supports sustainable character formation.

Educational Outcomes

The proposed model identifies three successive educational outcomes. The first outcome is the strengthening of Religious Attitudes, reflected in students' discipline in worship, responsibility, honesty, self-control, empathy, and social concern. These behavioural indicators consistently emerged across interviews, observations, and institutional documentation.

The second outcome is the development of Akhlakul Karimah. The findings indicate that students gradually internalize virtues such as humility, sincerity, patience, honesty, and compassion as stable personal characteristics rather than situational behaviours.

The final educational goal is the realization of Insan Kamil, understood as an individual whose spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions develop harmoniously. In Asy-Sya'rani's perspective, the purpose of education extends beyond academic achievement or behavioural conformity. Instead, education seeks to produce

individuals who maintain complete devotion to Allah while simultaneously demonstrating responsibility, compassion, justice, and ethical commitment within society.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the proposed Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) is a holistic educational framework in which philosophical foundations, spiritual internalization, educational mediation, and character outcomes function as interconnected components. Unlike conventional character education models that primarily emphasize behavioural change, SCEM positions spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) as the starting point of character formation and integrates Sharia and Haqiqa as complementary dimensions of Islamic education. This conceptual model therefore represents the principal theoretical contribution of the present study to the development of Islamic character education.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study provide several important theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic character education, particularly through the proposed Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM). Rather than merely describing educational practices in an Islamic boarding school, the model offers a conceptual framework that explains the dynamic relationship among theological foundations, spiritual internalization, educational mediation, and character outcomes. Consequently, this study contributes to the enrichment of contemporary character education theory by integrating Islamic spiritual traditions with modern educational discourse.

Expanding Character Education Theory through *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

The first theoretical implication concerns the reconceptualization of character education by positioning *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification) as the primary foundation of character formation. Contemporary character education theories generally emphasize the development of moral cognition, moral emotion, and moral behaviour as the principal dimensions of character development. While these dimensions remain important, the findings of this study demonstrate that sustainable moral behaviour cannot be separated from the transformation of the inner self.

Drawing upon Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought, the proposed model argues that ethical behaviour emerges from the purification of the heart through continuous spiritual discipline. Character therefore develops not only through cognitive understanding and behavioural habituation but also through the purification of intentions, emotional regulation, and spiritual consciousness. This finding expands existing character education theory by introducing an explicit transcendental dimension that precedes and supports observable moral conduct.

Accordingly, the SCEM suggests that *tazkiyat al-nafs* should be understood not merely as a religious practice but as an educational mechanism through which moral values become internalized and transformed into stable personal character.

Integrating *Sharia* and *Haqiqa* as a Holistic Educational Framework

A second theoretical contribution lies in the integration of *Sharia* and *Haqiqa* as complementary dimensions of character education. Previous approaches to Islamic character education frequently emphasize either normative religious instruction or spiritual cultivation as separate educational domains. The present findings demonstrate that Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani rejects such a dichotomy by positioning outward religious observance and inward spiritual awareness as mutually reinforcing components of educational development.

Within the proposed model, *Sharia* provides ethical guidance and behavioural structure, while *Haqiqa* nurtures sincerity, humility, and awareness of Allah's presence. Their integration enables students to understand religious practice not merely as legal compliance but as a transformative process leading to moral and spiritual excellence.

This integrated perspective enriches existing educational theory by demonstrating that effective character education requires the simultaneous development of behavioural discipline and spiritual consciousness. Consequently, the SCEM offers a more holistic educational paradigm capable of addressing both external behaviour and internal moral transformation.

Repositioning the *Murshid* and *Pesantren* Culture as Educational Mediators

The third theoretical implication concerns the educational role of the *murshid* and the *pesantren* environment. Existing character education models generally emphasize teachers, curriculum, family, and school climate as the principal agents of character formation. The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that within Sufistic education, the *murshid* performs a unique educational function that combines religious authority, spiritual mentorship, moral exemplification, and personal guidance.

The findings also indicate that the *pesantren* environment and institutional culture function as active educational mediators rather than passive learning contexts. Daily worship, collective *dhikr*, *khidmah*, communal traditions, and continuous habituation establish an educational ecosystem in which religious values are consistently experienced, practiced, and reinforced.

This theoretical perspective shifts the understanding of character education from an instructional process toward a holistic cultural process in which institutional values, social interaction, and spiritual mentoring operate simultaneously to facilitate character formation. The findings therefore support the view that sustainable character education requires an integrated educational ecology rather than isolated instructional interventions.

Contribution to Islamic Character Education Theory

Taken together, the proposed Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) contributes to the advancement of Islamic character education theory in three significant ways. First, it expands existing theories by positioning *tazkiyat al-nafs* as the foundational mechanism of character development. Second, it introduces the integration of *Sharia* and *Haqiqa* as a holistic framework connecting external religious practice with internal spiritual transformation. Third, it reconceptualizes the educational roles of the *murshid*, pesantren culture, and spiritual habituation as interconnected mediators that facilitate the internalization of religious values.

Unlike many existing models that primarily explain character development through cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions, the SCEM demonstrates that enduring character emerges through the interaction of theological foundations, spiritual purification, moral cultivation, institutional culture, and continuous religious practice. Therefore, the proposed model not only complements contemporary theories of character education but also provides a distinctive Islamic educational perspective that may serve as a conceptual framework for future research on Sufistic education, Islamic boarding schools, and value-based education.

5. Practical Implications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the proposed Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM) offers practical implications for the development of Islamic educational institutions, curriculum design, and character education programs. The model provides a holistic framework that can guide educational practitioners in integrating spiritual, moral, and social dimensions into character education.

Implications for Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren)

The findings suggest that Islamic boarding schools may strengthen character education by integrating structured spiritual formation into their educational systems. Rather than treating character education as a separate instructional program, pesantren can embed Sufistic values within their institutional culture through regular *dhikr*, *khidmah*, collective worship, moral habituation, and exemplary leadership. The proposed model emphasizes that sustainable character formation requires consistency between educational philosophy, institutional practices, and daily interactions within the boarding school environment.

Furthermore, the SCEM highlights the strategic role of the *murshid* and teachers as spiritual mentors whose exemplary conduct significantly influences students' moral development. Consequently, character education should be viewed as a continuous process of spiritual guidance rather than merely the transmission of ethical knowledge.

Implications for Islamic Schools

The practical value of the proposed model extends beyond pesantren and may also be adapted within Islamic schools. Although formal schools generally operate under different institutional structures, essential elements of the model—including value habituation, spiritual reflection, teacher role modelling, and service-based learning—can be incorporated into school culture and extracurricular activities.

Islamic schools may develop programs that combine religious instruction with reflective practices, community service, collaborative learning, and moral mentoring to strengthen students' religious attitudes. Such adaptation enables schools to promote character education that integrates intellectual achievement with spiritual and ethical development.

Implications for Curriculum Development

The findings also provide important insights for curriculum developers seeking to strengthen character education within Islamic educational institutions. The proposed model suggests that character education should not be confined to specific subjects but should be integrated across curriculum content, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and institutional culture.

Curriculum development may therefore incorporate the principles of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, *khidmah*, and reflective spiritual practices as cross-curricular values. Learning activities should encourage not only cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings but also opportunities for students to internalize these values through authentic religious experiences, social engagement, and continuous self-reflection. Accordingly, curriculum implementation should promote the integration of spiritual competence, moral competence, social responsibility, and academic learning as complementary educational objectives.

Implications for Student Character Development

The proposed model also offers practical guidance for educators responsible for students' character development. The findings indicate that effective character formation cannot rely solely on classroom instruction or disciplinary regulations. Instead, students require educational experiences that combine spiritual cultivation, moral habituation, emotional development, and meaningful social participation.

Educational programs designed to strengthen students' character should therefore provide continuous opportunities for worship, reflection, self-discipline, community service, cooperation, and ethical decision-making. Such experiences enable students to transform religious knowledge into stable personal dispositions reflected in honesty, responsibility, empathy, self-control, and social concern.

Ultimately, the SCEM demonstrates that character education is most effective when educational institutions cultivate an integrated ecosystem in which philosophical values, institutional culture, exemplary leadership, and daily educational practices consistently reinforce one another. This holistic approach provides a practical framework that may be adapted by various Islamic educational institutions seeking to strengthen students' religious attitudes while preparing them to respond ethically and responsibly to contemporary social challenges.

Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of Sufistic character education from Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's perspective and its contribution to strengthening students' religious attitudes at the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School, Tasikmalaya, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought is founded upon six interrelated dimensions: *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, the integration of *Sharia* and *Haqiqah*, the educational role of the *murshid*, and the attainment of *ihsan* as the ultimate goal of education. These principles are implemented through a comprehensive educational process involving *dhikr*, *wird*, *khidmah*, religious habituation, exemplary leadership, and the cultivation of *adab*, which collectively strengthen students' religious discipline, responsibility, honesty, self-control, empathy, and social concern.

The principal contribution of this study is the development of the Sufistic Character Education Model (SCEM), a conceptual framework synthesized from Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani's educational philosophy and empirical evidence from the Idrisiyyah Sufi Islamic Boarding School. The model conceptualizes character education as a holistic and transformative process that begins with theological foundations (*Tauhid*, *Sharia*, and *Haqiqah*), proceeds through spiritual internalization (*tazkiyat al-nafs*, *tahdzib al-akhlaq*, *riyadhah*, *mujahadah*, *dhikr*, and *khidmah*), is reinforced by educational mediators (*murshid*, pesantren environment, institutional culture, and habituation), and culminates in the development of religious attitudes, *akhlakul karimah*, and ultimately *insan kamil*. This framework extends existing character education theories by positioning spiritual purification as the foundational mechanism of character formation and by integrating external religious practice with inner spiritual transformation.

From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches the discourse on Islamic character education by introducing a Sufistic framework that complements contemporary character education theories through the integration of transcendental, moral, pedagogical, and socio-cultural dimensions. It also contributes to the educational thought of Abdul Wahab Asy-Sya'rani by translating his classical Sufi concepts into a systematic educational model applicable to contemporary Islamic educational contexts. Practically, the proposed model offers guidance for Islamic boarding schools, Islamic schools, curriculum developers, and educators seeking to strengthen students' religious character through spiritually grounded educational practices.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this research was conducted within a single Sufi Islamic boarding school, and therefore the findings represent an in-depth understanding of one institutional context rather than statistical generalizations applicable to all Islamic educational institutions. Second, the study employed a qualitative case study approach, which emphasizes contextual interpretation and conceptual development rather than measuring the effectiveness of the proposed model quantitatively. Third, although the SCEM was developed through the synthesis of empirical findings and Asy-Sya'rani's educational thought, its applicability in different educational settings has not yet been empirically examined.

Future research is therefore recommended to validate and refine the proposed model in diverse educational contexts, including non-Sufi Islamic boarding schools, madrasahs, Islamic integrated schools, and higher education institutions. Comparative studies across different pesantren traditions may provide a broader understanding of the implementation of Sufistic character education. Furthermore, mixed-methods and longitudinal research designs could be employed to examine the effectiveness of the SCEM in strengthening students' religious attitudes and character development over time. Such studies would contribute to the continued advancement of Islamic character education theory and support the wider application of spiritually integrated educational models in responding to contemporary moral and educational challenges.

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