



The Ilahi Mursyid and Spiritual Guidance in Ilahi Sufism: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study aims to examine in depth the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid* in guiding individuals through spiritual experiences within the framework of Ilahi Sufism, particularly in fostering awareness of the presence of God in everyday life. The study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to understand the meaning of spiritual experiences as lived and interpreted by practitioners of Sufism. Data were collected through a literature review of various digital sources, including scholarly journals, classical and contemporary Sufi texts, and relevant religious documents. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to the roles, qualifications, and contributions of the Ilahi Mursyid in the process of spiritual formation. The findings reveal that the Ilahi Mursyid plays a central role as a spiritual guide, moral exemplar, and mediator in cultivating an inner relationship between the disciple and God. The essential qualifications of an Ilahi Mursyid include piety and personal righteousness, profound knowledge of Islamic teachings, mature spiritual experience, and high ethical integrity. This study affirms that the presence of an Ilahi Mursyid constitutes an essential element of Ilahi Sufism, as it enables the authentic and sustainable guidance of spiritual practice. These findings are expected to contribute to the enrichment of Sufi studies and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of spiritual guidance within the Islamic tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

Sufism constitutes one of the essential dimensions of Islam that plays a significant role in shaping spiritual consciousness, social ethics, and inner balance amid modern life characterized by materialism and a crisis of meaning (Abenante & Vicini, 2017; Habib & Ullah, 2025, 2025). In various Muslim societies, Sufi practices serve as a spiritual alternative that offers tranquility, self-discipline, and a transcendent orientation of life (Ghani & Ahamd, 2024; Heck, 2006; Mishra, n.d.). The increasing phenomenon of spiritual seeking indicates that society requires religious approaches that are not merely normative but also inwardly transformative. Numerous studies demonstrate that Sufism contributes to moral development, social harmony, and individual psychological well-being. However, the success of such spiritual transformation cannot be separated from a structured system. Therefore, research on the role of spiritual mentors within the Sufi tradition is crucial to ensure that Sufi practices remain authentic and grounded in Islamic values of spiritual guidance (Fadilah, 2025; Habib & Ullah, 2025; Khan et al., 2025). Therefore, research on the role of spiritual mentors within the Sufi tradition is crucial to ensure that Sufi practices remain authentic and grounded in Islamic values. By understanding the mechanisms of spiritual guidance in Sufism, particularly through the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid*, this study holds broad relevance for society in fostering a healthy, moderate, and sustainable spirituality.

Despite the significant potential of Sufism in shaping spiritual and moral character, its practical implementation does not always proceed ideally. One of the main problems faced by contemporary society is the emergence of spiritual practices that are individualistic, instant-oriented, and lacking authoritative guidance (Tooley, 2016). In certain contexts, the pursuit of mystical experiences occurs without the accompaniment of competent spiritual teachers, which may lead to deviations in religious understanding and practice. Furthermore,

globalization and the rapid flow of digital information have contributed to the rise of spiritual figures who lack sufficient scholarly and spiritual legitimacy. This condition creates confusion among spiritual seekers in determining trustworthy religious authority. These issues highlight the urgent need to reexamine the role of legitimate spiritual guides within the Sufi tradition. Without a clear understanding of the role and qualifications of the *Ilahi Mursyid*, Sufi practice risks losing its spiritual substance and ethical orientation. Accordingly, this study seeks to respond to these fundamental challenges through a scholarly approach (Habib & Ullah, 2025; Khan et al., 2025; Muvid & Kholis, 2024).

Empirical phenomena indicate that *tariqa* (Sufi orders) continue to serve as primary platforms for many individuals in pursuing a structured spiritual life (Habib & Ullah, 2025; Rasyad et al., 2025; Rifqi, 2025). Within various Sufi communities, the relationship between disciple and *Ilahi Mursyid* is regarded as the foundational element in the process of spiritual transformation (Karim & Rahman, 2026; Zein & Faza, 2025; Zenrif et al., 2024). The *Mursyid* functions not only as an instructor of rituals but also as an inner guide who directs disciples through spiritual and psychological dynamics (Priyana et al., 2024; Setiadi et al., 2024; Suhayib & Arifin, 2025). Nevertheless, reality reveals variations in the quality of spiritual guidance across different *tariqa*. Some communities successfully cultivate individuals with high levels of spiritual and social maturity, while others exhibit tendencies toward exclusivism and excessive dependence on the spiritual master. This phenomenon suggests that the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid* is not uniform but is influenced by competence, integrity, and spiritual approach. Therefore, an in-depth analysis is required to examine how the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid* is enacted within the framework of *Ilahi Sufism* and the extent of its influence on mystical experience and spiritual personality formation.

Academic studies on Sufism have developed significantly from theological, historical, and sociological perspectives. Numerous studies emphasize *tariqa* as

spiritual institutions that function as channels for transmitting Sufi teachings and shaping religious identity. Several scholars also highlight the importance of the teacher-disciple relationship in the Sufi tradition as a means of internalizing spiritual values. Moreover, research on mystical experience in Sufism indicates that spiritual guidance plays a critical role in maintaining balance between inner experience and adherence to Islamic law (Kausar & Parveen, 2024; Syurbakti, 2025; Taher et al., 2025). However, most of these studies remain descriptive in nature and focus primarily on ritual practices or organizational structures of *tariqa*. In-depth analysis of the *Ilahi Mursyid* as a central actor in the process of spiritual guidance is often addressed only superficially, without comprehensive conceptual exploration. As a result, understanding of the mechanisms of *Ilahi Sufism* within the context of *tariqa* remains insufficiently developed.

Furthermore, previous studies tend to treat *tariqa*, mystical experience, and the figure of the *Mursyid* as separate analytical domains. This approach results in a lack of integration between the structural dimension of *tariqa* and the personal dimension of spiritual guidance (Habib & Ullah, 2025; Kamaludin, 2025; Muvid & Kholis, 2024; Rifqi, 2025). Additionally, few studies explicitly employ the perspective of *Ilahi Sufism* to analyze the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid* as a mediator of divine consciousness. This research gap indicates the absence of systematic investigation into how the *Ilahi Mursyid* shapes disciples' mystical experiences through sustained spiritual guidance. Such understanding is essential for explaining the success or failure of spiritual transformation within *tariqa*. Therefore, research is needed that not only describes Sufi practices but also critically examines the spiritual relationship between the *Ilahi Mursyid* and disciples within the framework of *Ilahi Sufism*.

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to integrate the analysis of *tariqa*, mystical experience, and the role of the *Ilahi Mursyid* into a single conceptual framework of *Ilahi Sufism*. This study positions the *Ilahi Mursyid* not merely as a

structural figure within tariqa but as a key agent in the internalization of divine values. Through this approach, the research offers a new perspective on understanding Sufism as a holistic system of spiritual guidance. By focusing on individual mystical experiences, this study explores the subjective dimensions of spirituality that have received limited scholarly attention. Moreover, this research is important to address contemporary needs by providing a theoretical foundation for more authentic and responsible Sufi practice. In this way, the study contributes to the development of contemporary Sufi studies that are relevant to the spiritual challenges of modern society.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on how the role of the Ilahi Mursyid is exercised within tariqa and the extent of its contribution to individual mystical experience within the framework of Ilahi Sufism. This research argues that the Ilahi Mursyid constitutes an essential element in ensuring the continuity and authenticity of Sufi practice. Without competent and ethically grounded spiritual guidance, mystical experience risks losing direction and meaning. Therefore, this study seeks to address questions concerning the role, qualifications, and influence of the Ilahi Mursyid in shaping the spiritual consciousness of disciples. The contribution of this research is expected to be not only theoretical but also practical, providing references for the development of healthy and moderate tariqa. Consequently, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of Ilahi Sufistic analysis with a particular focus on the role of the Ilahi Mursyid.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, selected to understand the meaning of spiritual experiences as lived and interpreted by individuals within the Sufi tradition, particularly in relation to the role of the Ilahi Mursyid in tariqa (Qomariyah, 2025; Romsy, 2025; Rustiman,

2025; Yulista, 2025). The phenomenological approach enables the researcher to explore the subjective reality of mystical experience and the spiritual relationship between disciples and their spiritual guide without reducing these phenomena to quantitative data. Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover the essence of spiritual experience and the structures of consciousness formed through the guidance of the Ilahi Mursyid within the framework of Ilahi Sufism.

The research is conducted through a literature-based study utilizing digital sources and Islamic texts and is therefore not confined to a specific geographical location. Data sources focus on classical and contemporary Sufi works, peer-reviewed academic journals, and relevant religious documents addressing tariqa, mystical experience, and the role of the Ilahi Mursyid. This approach is appropriate because Ilahi Sufism is conceptual, historical, and phenomenological in nature, while the use of digital sources enables cross-regional access that enhances analytical depth and interpretive breadth.

Data collection is carried out through documentation and literature review using purposive sampling based on thematic relevance. Data are analyzed thematically through three main stages: data condensation or reduction, data display in the form of analytical narratives, and conclusion drawing and verification. This iterative process is employed to identify patterns related to the roles, qualifications, and contributions of the Ilahi Mursyid in spiritual formation.

Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, prolonged and critical engagement with key Sufi texts, and the use of an audit trail to maintain transparency and traceability of the analytical process (Almusaed et al., 2025; Cascais Brás et al., 2025; Dashti et al., 2024). In addition, theoretical consistency is applied by ensuring that data interpretation remains aligned with the framework of Ilahi Sufism. These strategies are implemented to ensure the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings (Muhammad, 2026; Sayuti Ismail & Inayatillah, 2026).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The Ilahi Mursyid and Spiritual Guidance in Ilahi Sufism

Operationally, the sub-finding The Ilahi Mursyid and Spiritual Guidance in Ilahi Sufism in this study is understood as the concrete role of the Ilahi Mursyid in guiding, directing, and accompanying disciples throughout a sustained process of spiritual experience. In the field, the Ilahi Mursyid is not merely perceived as a transmitter of Sufi teachings, but rather as an inner spiritual guide whose primary function is to orient the disciple's consciousness toward a continuous awareness of the presence of Allah in all aspects of life. The spiritual guidance provided is personal, contextual, and oriented toward the formation of divine consciousness, spiritual maturity, and the integration of ritual worship with social conduct. Accordingly, the Ilahi Mursyid functions as the central axis of spiritual formation within the framework of Ilahi Sufism.

One informant, identified as a prominent tariqa figure, stated that:

without the guidance of a Mursyid, the spiritual journey often loses direction and becomes susceptible to misleading inner experiences." This statement indicates that the Ilahi Mursyid is perceived as a determinant of spiritual direction and as a guardian of balance between mystical experience and adherence to Islamic law (shari'a). The researcher interprets this finding to suggest that the presence of a Mursyid functions as a form of spiritual control that prevents disciples from becoming confined within purely subjective inner experiences. Through guidance, the Mursyid assists disciples in interpreting spiritual experiences proportionately and responsibly, transforming such experiences into instruments of spiritual maturation rather than mere pursuits of spiritual sensation (*I-AA*)."

Another informant, a tarekat practitioner, described her experience and stated that:

the Mursyid does not only teach dhikr and devotional litanies, but also teaches how to manifest awareness of Allah in work, attitudes, and interactions with others.” This account demonstrates that the guidance of the Ilahi Mursyid is holistic and applicative in nature. The researcher interprets this to mean that the role of the Mursyid in Ilahi Sufism transcends formal ritual boundaries and extends into the practical dimensions of everyday life. Through this approach, disciples experience not only inner spiritual transformation but also observable changes in social behavior, work ethics, and self-regulation (*I-ZS*).”

The thematic flow emerging from this sub-finding reveals a continuous relationship between the guidance of the Ilahi Mursyid, the internalization of divine consciousness, and the formation of the disciple’s spiritual conduct. The process begins with the Mursyid’s exemplary conduct, followed by personalized guidance, structured spiritual practice, and the internalization of divine values in daily life. The researcher interprets this flow as reflecting the distinctive character of Ilahi Sufism, which positions the Mursyid as a mediator between the normative values of Sufism and the lived realities of disciples. Consequently, spiritual experience does not remain confined to inner awareness but culminates in the transformation of character and social ethics.

Observational findings indicate that disciples who consistently follow the guidance of an Ilahi Mursyid exhibit emotional stability, disciplined devotional practice, and more courteous and inclusive social attitudes. The interaction between the Mursyid and disciples is intensive yet non-authoritarian, characterized by reflective spiritual dialogue and gradual mentorship. The researcher interprets this pattern of guidance as strengthening the disciple’s

internal awareness, such that religious behavior is driven not by external pressure but by an internalized divine consciousness.

Overall, the research data affirm that the Ilahi Mursyid serves as the primary axis within the spiritual guidance system of Ilahi Sufism. The data demonstrate that the success of a disciple's spiritual experience is strongly influenced by the quality of guidance, moral exemplarity, and personal integrity of the Mursyid. A consistent and linear pattern emerges, indicating a direct relationship between the intensity of Mursyid guidance and the level of spiritual maturity, divine awareness, and moral quality of the disciple. These findings underscore that Ilahi Sufism operates as a continuous system of spiritual formation rather than as a series of momentary mystical experiences.

Table 1. Ideal Influence of the Ilahi Mursyid

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Tariqa Leader	"Without a Mursyid, the spiritual journey often loses direction."	Spiritual direction and control
Tariqa Practitioner	"The Mursyid teaches awareness of Allah in every life activity."	Practical divine consciousness
Sufism Academic	"The Mursyid's exemplarity determines the success of Sufi value internalization."	Moral exemplarity
Senior Tariqa Disciple	"The Mursyid's guidance makes me calmer and more self-controlled in life."	Emotional stability

The data pattern demonstrates that the more ideal the role performance and qualifications of the Ilahi Mursyid, the higher the quality of the disciple's spiritual experience and moral maturity. This relationship appears consistently and repeatedly across all data sources, affirming that the Ilahi Mursyid constitutes a key element in the successful practice of Ilahi Sufism.

The table illustrates that the ideal influence of the Ilahi Mursyid encompasses spiritual, moral, and psychological dimensions. Across diverse informant positions, the Mursyid is consistently perceived as a determinant of spiritual direction, a source of moral exemplarity, and a catalyst for practical divine

awareness. This indicates that the legitimacy of the Mursyid is derived not solely from scholarly authority, but also from moral integrity and lived spiritual experience as directly perceived by disciples.

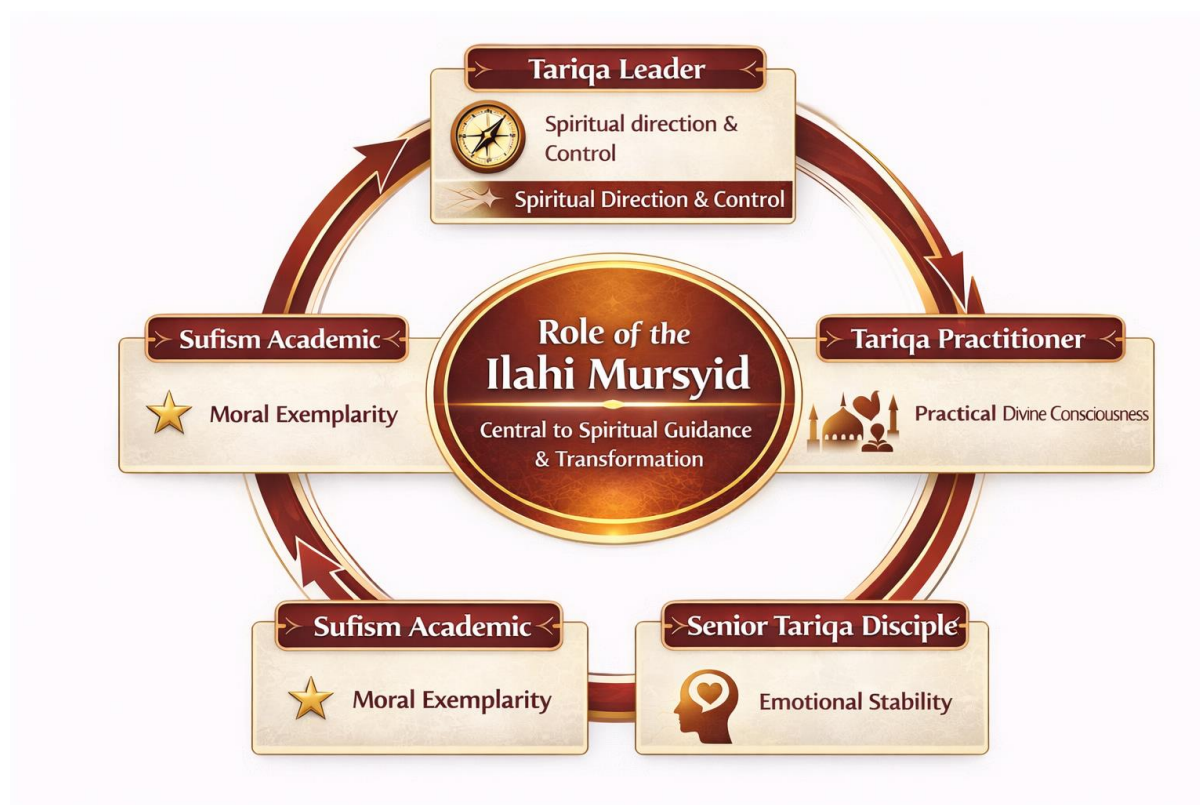


Figure 1. Roles of the Ilahi Mursyid in Shaping Sufi Spiritual and Emotional Maturity

At a deeper level, the tabulated data reveal that the influence of the Mursyid is both transformative and sustainable. The Ilahi Mursyid shapes not only individual spiritual experiences but also constructs a value system that influences social behavior and emotional balance. Accordingly, the role of the Mursyid in Ilahi Sufism can be understood as that of a primary agent in the formation of an integrated spiritual personality.

Table 2. Core Findings on the Ilahi Mursyid and Spiritual Guidance in Ilahi Sufism

Dimension of Findings	Empirical Description (Field Data)	Interpretive Meaning
Operational Role of the Ilahi Mursyid	The Ilahi Mursyid is perceived as a spiritual guide who continuously accompanies disciples in their inner journey, not merely teaching rituals but shaping awareness of Allah in daily life.	The Mursyid functions as the central axis of spiritual formation, mediating between mystical experience and lived religious practice.
Spiritual Direction and Control	Informants emphasize that without Mursyid guidance, spiritual experiences risk becoming misleading or losing direction.	The Mursyid operates as a regulator of spiritual meaning, ensuring balance between mystical awareness and adherence to Islamic norms.
Holistic Spiritual Guidance	Guidance includes not only <i>dhikr</i> and devotional practices but also ethical conduct, work discipline, and social interaction.	Spirituality in Ilahi Sufism is integrative, embedding divine consciousness into everyday praxis rather than isolating it within ritual spaces.
Process of Spiritual Internalization	Guidance follows a structured flow: exemplarity of the Mursyid, personalized mentoring, disciplined practice, and internalization of divine values.	Spiritual consciousness is cultivated relationally and gradually, reflecting a sustained phenomenological process.
Observed Transformative Outcomes	Disciples exhibit emotional stability, disciplined worship, and inclusive social behavior under consistent Mursyid guidance.	Effective spiritual mentorship produces internalized religiosity driven by awareness rather than external compulsion.
Pattern of Influence	Increased intensity and quality of Mursyid guidance correspond with higher levels of spiritual maturity and moral integrity.	The influence of the Ilahi Mursyid is transformative and sustainable, shaping integrated spiritual personalities.

The table demonstrates that the Ilahi Mursyid's influence extends across spiritual, ethical, and psychological domains, forming a coherent system of guidance within Ilahi Sufism. The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which the Mursyid serves as both a spiritual authority and a lived moral exemplar, enabling disciples to internalize divine consciousness in a balanced and responsible manner. Rather than fostering momentary mystical states, the guidance model emphasizes sustained transformation, positioning the Ilahi Mursyid as a key agent in the holistic formation of spiritual character.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reaffirm and extend existing scholarship on Sufism that emphasizes the centrality of spiritual authority and guidance in the mystical path. Classical Sufi literature consistently positions the Mursyid as an indispensable guide in navigating the complexities of inner spiritual experience, particularly in maintaining balance between mystical insight and adherence to Islamic law (Kuehn, 2023; Muhammad, 2026). The present findings align with these perspectives by demonstrating that the Ilahi Mursyid functions not merely as an instructor of devotional practices, but as a regulator of spiritual meaning-making who prevents disciples from becoming absorbed in purely subjective or potentially misleading experiences. This confirms earlier studies that underscore the necessity of guided spiritual formation, while adding phenomenological depth by highlighting how disciples experience and internalize such guidance in lived practice (Arends, 2025; Burger, 2025).

At the same time, this study advances prior research by showing that the role of the Ilahi Mursyid in Ilahi Sufism extends beyond ritual instruction into the practical domains of daily life (Habib & Ullah, 2025; Muvid & Kholis, 2024; Rafly & Ramadhani, 2025). While much of the existing literature tends to focus on formal practices such as dhikr, ascetic discipline, or metaphysical doctrines, the present findings reveal a more holistic model of spiritual guidance. The Mursyid is shown to actively shape ethical behavior, emotional regulation, and social interaction, thereby integrating spirituality with everyday praxis. This finding complements contemporary Sufi studies that argue for the social relevance of tasawuf, yet it also challenges narrower interpretations that confine Sufi guidance primarily to ritual or contemplative spaces (Khan, 2025; Mathiesen, n.d.; *No Title*, n.d.).

From a theoretical perspective, the results contribute to phenomenological studies of religion by illustrating how spiritual authority is experienced as relational, embodied, and transformative. The Ilahi Mursyid emerges as a

mediating figure who bridges normative Sufi values and the lived realities of disciples, enabling the internalization of divine consciousness through sustained interaction and exemplarity (Habib & Ullah, 2025; Khan et al., 2025; Aziza Khan, 2025). This supports phenomenological theories that emphasize lived experience and intersubjectivity in religious formation, suggesting that spiritual consciousness is not constructed in isolation but is cultivated through guided relational processes. Consequently, Ilahi Sufism can be theoretically understood as a dynamic system of spiritual formation rather than a collection of isolated mystical experiences.

Practically, the findings have important implications for contemporary Sufi communities and spiritual education. The demonstrated relationship between consistent Mursyid guidance and emotional stability, ethical behavior, and disciplined religiosity suggests that effective spiritual mentorship can serve as a stabilizing force in modern religious life (Umamatul Khaeriyah, Septi Gumiandari, Ilman Nafi'a, 2025). In contexts where spiritual practices risk becoming fragmented, individualized, or commodified, the Ilahi Mursyid model offers a framework for sustaining authentic and responsible spiritual development. This has relevance not only for tariqa-based communities but also for broader Islamic educational contexts seeking to integrate spirituality with character formation.

Overall, this study highlights that the effectiveness of Ilahi Sufism as a spiritual path is deeply contingent upon the quality of the Mursyid-disciple relationship (Khan et al., 2025; Muvid, 2024; Zarrabi-zadeh, 2024). The consistent pattern observed across data sources linking ideal Mursyid qualifications with higher levels of spiritual maturity and moral integrity underscores the Mursyid's role as a foundational agent of transformation. By situating the Ilahi Mursyid at the center of sustained spiritual formation, this research contributes a nuanced understanding of spiritual guidance that is both theoretically robust and

practically relevant, reinforcing the view that authentic Sufi practice is inseparable from guided ethical and spiritual cultivation.

CONCLUSION

First, the most important finding of this research shows that **Spiritual Purification in Islam: Tazkiyatun Nafs and the Practice of Amali Sufism** constitutes an essential foundation for forming a complete Muslim personality that is balanced between inward and outward dimensions. The main lesson derived is that tazkiyatun nafs does not stop at a conceptual and normative level, but requires a continuous practical process through amali Sufism. Consistent spiritual practices such as muhasabah, dhikr, controlling desires, and habituating noble character are proven to be effective means of purifying the heart, cultivating inner tranquility, and generating ethical and constructive social behavior. This study affirms that a person's spiritual success is largely determined by the quality of the heart's purity, which ultimately becomes a source of moral strength, self-awareness, and happiness in both this world and the hereafter.

Second, the main strength of this paper lies in its scholarly contribution in integratively connecting the theoretical dimension of tazkiyatun nafs with the practical dimension of amali Sufism. This research enriches the body of Sufi studies by asserting that Sufism is not merely an elitist or individual mystical experience, but an applicative spiritual formation system that is relevant to social life. Through a qualitative library research approach combined with conceptual interpretation, this study provides a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how soul-purification values can be internalized in concrete ways. This contribution is significant for the development of Islamic education studies, Islamic ethics, and spirituality-based character formation.

Third, this study has limitations that need to be acknowledged. Its reliance on a library research approach causes the findings to emphasize conceptual and

interpretative analysis, so they do not yet fully capture the empirical dynamics of tazkiyatun nafs and amali Sufism practices in diverse social contexts. In addition, the limited availability of contemporary primary sources and the absence of extensive field data restrict the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to develop this study through empirical approaches, such as field research, case studies, or mixed methods, to examine the implementation of amali Sufism in specific communities. Further studies may also explore the relevance of tazkiyatun nafs in addressing modern spiritual challenges, such as identity crises, mental health issues, and moral degradation, so that this field of study becomes increasingly contextual and impactful.

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