

The Dimension of Ethics in Sufism as a Solution to the Moral Crisis in the Era of Globalization

Muh. Dzihab Aminudin Sa.^{1,*}, b.²Siti Umi Kulsum, c.³Mursyid Fikri, d.⁴Trias Andika MS, e.⁵Dylan Chown

a,b,dSekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Tanggamus, Lampung

c Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia

e University of South Australia

*¹dzihab.aminudin@stittanggamus.ac.id; ²ummikulsum@stittanggamus.ac.id; ³mursyidfikri@unismuh.ac.id;

⁴trias.andika@stittanggamus.ac.id, ⁵dylan.chown@adelaide.edu.au

Received: 07-07-2026

Revised: 17-08-2026

Accepted: 27-09-2026

KEYWORDS

Keyword ; *Sufism, Character, Moral Crisis, Globalization, Tazkiyatun Nafs (Purification of the Soul)*

ABSTRACT

The 21st-century era of globalization has brought a significant impact on the decline of moral and spiritual values, manifested through hedonistic lifestyles, materialism, and individualism. This study aims to identify the extent to which the moral dimension in Sufism plays a role as an effective solution in overcoming the moral crisis faced by modern humans. The method used is qualitative, employing a library research approach that examines various literature, reference books, and relevant previous research findings. The results show that Sufism, through the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul)* and the stages of *takhalli (cleansing oneself of blameworthy traits)* and *tahalli (adorning oneself with praiseworthy traits)*, is able to provide a solid spiritual foundation for individuals. Sufi moral values such as honesty (*shiddiq*), patience (*i*), divine love (*mahabbah*), humility (*tawadhu'*), and justice (*'adl*) play an important role in improving individual behavior and building social solidarity amid the challenges of globalization. This study concludes that integrating Sufi values into character education, spiritual communities, and daily life can serve as a holistic solution for creating a more civilized, harmonious, and moral society.

This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA license.



Received: dd mm yyyy

Revised: dd mm yyyy

Accepted: dd mm yyyy

INTRODUCTION

Sufism (tasawuf) is a serious spiritual practice (riyadhah, mujahadah) aimed at purifying the heart, strengthening faith, and deepening one's spiritual dimension in order to draw closer to God, so that one's full attention is directed solely to Him. As an example of the application of Sufi knowledge, the case of a member of the Indonesian National Police (POLRI) who broke into an ATM in Lubuklinggau after becoming trapped in debt from online gambling (slot machines) can serve as material for reflection. Based on this, the researchers became interested in examining the role of Sufism in solving the problems of modern humanity. Sufism offers a perspective that emphasizes cleansing the heart of bad traits oriented toward worldly glory. In addition, Sufism teaches morality, values, character, and ethics, and encourages individuals to repent to Allah for all their sins and mistakes.

Sufism basically teaches humans to draw closer to Allah SWT. However, over time, some people have come to view Sufism as a way of escaping worldly life. There is also a view that Sufis are only capable of cultivating personal piety without contributing to the social life of the community. This view arises because such people tend to focus on the core of the teaching (such as the individual practice of zuhd, or asceticism) without paying attention to the context of its application (Syukur, n.d.).

The 21st-century era of globalization, which is already well underway, has had a significant impact on various problems in society at large. Emerging challenges include hedonistic lifestyles, the decline of morals and spirituality, and the need to restructure patterns of human relationships to suit the needs of the times. It is in this context that Sufism plays a role as a solution to the ailments caused by modernization and its negative impacts. With its spiritual teachings and noble moral values, Sufism is becoming increasingly important and is receiving greater attention within modern society. Indeed, the science of Sufism is regarded by many as the long-awaited answer to the various problems of contemporary society. The relevance of Sufism in addressing the challenges of modernity has been discussed by a number of previous researchers. Nurhasanah (2017), citing the thought of Sayyid Hossein Nasr, asserts that Sufism is able to safeguard the spiritual integrity of modern humans against the threat of secularism without losing the

principle of its purity. Mahmud (2018) describes the institutional and methodological transformation of Sufism into a contextual spiritual movement aimed at quenching the thirst for contemporary spirituality. Furthermore, Rozi (2017) emphasizes the importance of actualizing Sufi morality as a values curriculum, both within formal educational institutions and in the sociological public sphere. Complementing these earlier studies, this research focuses its analysis on the operationalization of the moral dimension of Sufism specifically the systematics of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli as a formulation of moral engineering for addressing the ethical crisis of the era of globalization.

The purpose of this study is to identify the extent to which Sufism plays a role in overcoming the everyday problems faced by modern humans. This study uses a qualitative method with a library research approach to answer the questions that form the focus of the author's inquiry. It is hoped that this research will produce an understanding that Sufism can be an effective solution for resolving various problems through the application of the values it teaches.

As a theoretical foundation, a strong conceptual basis is needed to support the discussion. Sufism plays an important role in human life, particularly in facing and resolving the various problems that arise in the modern era. Modernization often brings negative impacts, such as an unavoidable shift in morality. Humans, as agents of modernization, are confronted with a variety of differing points of view, which ultimately causes them to lose their identity as servants of Allah. As a result, many individuals in the modern era experience spiritual crises and inner suffering.

In modern life, humans need something that can heal inner wounds and fill the void left by the absence of spiritual values. Sufism, as the core of Islamic teaching, has the potential to be a relevant solution. It can function as a remedy for human suffering, a liberator from oppression, and a much-needed alternative. Sufism is a spiritual journey in which the mind is directed toward finding tranquility through spiritual messages. The benefits of Sufism are not limited to restoring spiritual values and drawing closer to Allah, but also extend positively to various aspects of modern human life (Lina Nurhasana, 2017).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method oriented toward library research. Primary and secondary data were obtained through a review of authoritative Sufism textbooks, indexed

scientific journal articles, and publication documents relevant to the topic of the moral dimension and the moral crisis of the era of globalization. Data collection techniques were carried out through document inventory, thematic categorization, and data reduction. The data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques and a descriptive-critical approach in order to formulate a synthesized concept of the transformative role of Sufi morality in modern society.

DISCUSSION Understanding Sufism

According to Nilayati, Sufism is one of the intellectual treasures of the Islamic tradition whose presence is increasingly felt today. Historically and theologically, Sufism functions to guide people in living a life aimed at salvation in this world and the hereafter (Nilyati, 2015). Sufism is a branch of Islamic knowledge that focuses on the purification of the human spiritual dimension, directed toward the attainment of good character. This process of spiritual cleansing is known as the esoteric dimension of the human self. Through Sufism, a person can learn how to purify themselves and put this into practice, thereby becoming someone capable of self-control while upholding honesty, sincerity, and responsibility. Ismail Hasan explains that the essence of Sufism is spiritual training through various activities that free individuals from the influence of worldly life, so that noble character and closeness to Allah SWT are realized. In other words, Sufism is an effort to cultivate spiritual mentality so as to remain constantly close to God, which is the true essence of Sufism itself (Ismail Hasan, 2014).

Sufism emerged as a response to the moral decadence caused by the human soul being far removed from divine guidance, since it never makes an effort to draw closer to God. To address this problem, Sufism plays an important role by offering an approach through which humans continually feel the presence of God in daily life, so that they feel ashamed to commit deviant acts, sensing that they are constantly being watched by God.

Zaki Hidayatuloh states that through the study of Sufism, a person can learn the methods and practices for purifying themselves and applying them correctly. The aim is for humans to be able to interact with others, or carry out worldly activities, while upholding honesty, sincerity, responsibility, and trust (Zaki Hidayatulloh, 2014). Thus, Sufism can be concluded to be a form of spiritual life that constitutes an innate human nature (*fitrah*), aimed at attaining a higher reality and drawing closer to Allah by purifying the soul and cleansing it of blameworthy traits and deeds.

Ethical Sufism (Tasawuf Akhlaqi)

Ethical Sufism (tasawuf akhlaqi) can be understood as purifying one's own behavior or purifying the behavior of others. When human beings become the focus of a situation, human behavior becomes the target of attention. One way of viewing this form of Sufism is as an important order for upholding human morality, or, in terms more familiar to the social sciences, as the morality of society (Dwi Muthia Ridha Lubis, n.d.). Ethical Sufism is a type of Sufism that emphasizes the improvement of character, the search for the essence of truth, and the awareness that human beings are capable of understanding Allah SWT. Various methodologies have been designed and employed to achieve this goal. The Sunni school is another name for this Sufi moral tradition. This form of Sufism seeks to cultivate noble character within the Sufi, while at the same time freeing the Sufi from akhlaq madzmumah, which may be translated as 'blameworthy' or 'reprehensible' character. The righteous predecessors (salaf al-shalih) bore responsibility for developing this Sufi morality. Both the capacity for good and the capacity for evil can be found within human beings. It cannot be denied that Sufi morality strives to nurture the potential for good so that humans become good, while simultaneously exercising control over the potential for evil so that it does not manifest as negative (immoral) action. Both reason (al-'aql) and the heart (al-qalb) carry the potential to turn negative. An-nafs also known as desire or lust is the driving force behind evil, assisted by Satan. As a result, ethical Sufism is a field of scholarly study that, to be mastered, requires a great deal of direct, lived experience. It is not merely theoretical knowledge, but something that must be enacted through the conduct of human life (Siti Mariyatul Kiptiyah, 2019).

Human beings also possess other capacities. Fitrah is a quality marked by a natural inclination toward goodness. There is also what is called nafsu (desire), which can lead to negative outcomes. Ethical Sufism, accordingly, refers to a body of knowledge related to moral philosophy (Setianingsih, 2019). The important characteristics of a morally upright Sufi include: 1) teachings grounded in the strong foundation provided by the Qur'an and the tradition of the Companions; 2) the relationship between Sufism (as mystical practice) and sharia (legal rulings, as the external aspect); 3) a more dualistic approach to teaching about God and humanity; 4) a greater emphasis placed on mental care, moral instruction, and character development; and 5) the avoidance of philosophical jargon, in favor of language that is clearer and easier to understand.

Restoring an unwholesome mental attitude, according to Sufi thought, through the Ethical Sufism guidance system will not succeed if the therapy comes only from outside oneself. For this reason, a prospective Sufi, at the early stage of the spiritual journey, is expected to engage in a number of demanding spiritual practices and exercises. The idea is to reduce a person's emotional reactivity to a minimum, or even to eliminate it altogether.

1. Takhalli: The stage of purifying and emptying oneself of every blameworthy trait and spiritual disease (such as envy, jealousy, ostentation, and arrogance), as well as excessive attachment to materialistic pleasures (Haidar Putra Daulay, 2021). This stage is grounded in the word of Allah SWT: "Indeed, he succeeds who purifies it [the soul]" (QS. Ash-Shams: 9).
2. Tahalli: The stage of filling and adorning oneself with praiseworthy values and behavior, both in the dimension of ritual worship and in social ethics. This stage rests on the principles of justice and virtue as set out in QS. An-Nahl: 90.
3. Tajalli: The stage in which divine consciousness is unveiled and inner enlightenment is attained, as the fruit of consistency in takhalli and tahalli. At this stage, noble character is no longer a heavy obligation to be borne, but has become ingrained as a natural disposition an ethical spontaneity in responding to every problem of life.

Basic Concepts of Morality in Sufism

Sufism is one of the most important elements of the Islamic spiritual tradition, focusing on the purification of the soul and drawing the heart closer to Allah. The concept of Sufism relates not only to the performance of ritual worship, but also to the cultivation of noble character and conduct in accordance with Islamic teachings. At the heart of Sufism lies the process of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), through which individuals strive to eliminate bad traits and replace them with noble ones that bring inner peace and closeness to the Creator.

Morality in Sufism is defined as conduct that is in harmony with divine values that is, conduct that reflects the character of Allah, the All-Perfect, such as compassion, justice, patience, and goodness. In Sufism, morality concerns not only external action but also intention and the deep purity of the heart. The principal dimensions of morality in Sufism comprise five key traits, namely:

Moral Dimension	Spiritual & Conceptual Indicator	Solutive Projection Toward the Moral Crisis
Shiddiq (Honesty)	Absolute alignment between intention, speech, and action.	Preventing information manipulation, hoaxes, and systemic corruption.
Sabr (Patience)	Spiritual and mental resilience in facing life's pressures and the temptations of desire.	Curbing instant-gratification behavior, hedonism, and economic crime.
Mahabbah (Divine Love)	A deep awareness of love for the Creator that radiates outward to fellow creatures.	Eroding individualism and fostering social solidarity.
Tawadhu' (Humility)	The absence of any feeling of superiority over others.	Eliminating social arrogance, the arrogance of power, and inter-group conflict.
'Adl (Justice)	Objectivity, and placing things proportionally according to their due right.	Ensuring the enforcement of public ethics and the protection of human rights.

Moral Crisis in the Era of Globalization

The era of globalization has had a major impact on human thought patterns and behavior. With the increasing spread of information and cross-cultural interaction, negative influences such as materialism, individualism, and secularism have also emerged. Materialism drives individuals to pursue wealth and worldly pleasure without regard for the impact on moral and ethical values. Individualism creates distance between people by placing personal interest above the common good. Secularism, which separates religion from social and political life, diminishes the influence of spiritual values in guiding human conduct.

This moral crisis manifests in many forms, such as corruption, social conflict, the decline of public ethics, and destructive behavior that disregards moral and legal norms. In a society that is increasingly materialistic and secular, spiritual balance is often neglected, resulting in the loss of guidance needed to live a meaningful and moral life.

The Role of Morality in Sufism as a Solution to the Moral Crisis

Sufism offers a comprehensive approach to overcoming the moral problems arising from the influence of globalization. Through the concept of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), Sufism teaches the importance of cleansing the heart of bad traits such as envy,

arrogance, and selfishness. This process helps individuals return to the good human nature (fitrah) that is aligned with divine values.

The concept of mahabbah (divine love) plays an important role in fostering compassion and social solidarity amid the divisions caused by individualism. Through divine love, a person can build more humane relationships, show concern for others, and cultivate empathy and cooperation.

Akhlaq karimah (noble character) in Sufism also revives cherished values such as honesty, generosity, and responsibility values that are sorely needed to repair a societal morality increasingly eroded by the currents of globalization. Applying these values in daily life can improve individual conduct and help build a more ethical and harmonious society.

Implementation of Sufi Values in the Era of Globalization

To overcome the moral crisis of the era of globalization, the implementation of Sufi values can take place through a variety of channels. Education grounded in Sufi morality, within both formal and informal educational institutions, can serve as an important vehicle for instilling moral and spiritual values in the younger generation. In addition, social media now an inseparable part of daily life can be harnessed to spread messages of spirituality and morality, helping to build moral awareness within society.

Integrating Sufi values into public policy is likewise essential for creating a more civilized and ethical society. Governments can play a role by applying the principles of noble character within social, political, and economic policy. Furthermore, expanding Sufism-based da'wah (religious outreach) can offer a spiritual solution that touches the hearts of the community, providing a more holistic and meaningful guide for living amid the challenges of globalization.

Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Sufi Morality

The principal challenge in integrating Sufi morality within the era of globalization is the hegemony of materialistic culture and secularization, which dominates the mindset of modern society. Spiritual values are frequently regarded as outdated or irrelevant to the times. In addition, resistance to spiritual values particularly from segments of society skeptical of religion also poses an obstacle.

Yet behind these challenges lies considerable opportunity, given the resurgence of interest in spirituality among modern society. Many individuals are beginning to seek a balance between worldly life and their spiritual needs, and feel a growing need to return

to higher moral values. The integration of Sufi morality can therefore serve as a relevant solution for confronting the moral crisis and building a more ethical and harmonious society in the era of globalization.

The Role of Morality in Sufism as a Solution to the Moral Crisis in the Era of Globalization

The era of globalization has brought significant change to many aspects of life, including moral values. Consumerism, materialism, and individualism accompanying globalization have triggered a widespread moral crisis. This phenomenon is further aggravated by technological development that lacks ethical guidance, enabling the spread of negative content such as pornography, hoaxes, and hate speech. In addition, the tide of globalization often erodes traditional and local values, causing the younger generation to lose touch with its cultural identity. The impact of this moral crisis is evident in various forms, including weakened social bonds, rising crime, and the erosion of solidarity and trust among individuals.

In facing this challenge, Sufism, as the spiritual dimension of Islam, offers a solution through the cultivation of noble character. Morality in Sufism has a broad scope, encompassing one's relationship with Allah (*hablum minallah*), one's relationship with fellow human beings (*hablum minannas*), and one's relationship with oneself. Imam Al-Ghazali, in his work *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, defines morality as a disposition embedded within the soul that gives rise to good actions spontaneously. Values such as sincerity (*ikhlas*), reliance on God (*tawakal*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*syukur*), and humility (*tawadhu'*) lie at the core of Sufi teaching, which emphasizes the purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and the mastery of desire.

The role of morality in Sufism can be seen in the spiritual transformation of the individual. Through remembrance of God (*dhikr*), prayer, and spiritual striving (*mujahadah*), individuals can purify their hearts and cultivate good character. Individuals with a pure heart and noble character are able to become moral role models within their communities. Sufism also contributes to raising social awareness: the values of compassion, justice, and empathy that it teaches can help rebuild solidarity within a society fragmented by the influence of globalization.

Sufism further plays an important role in preserving traditional values that are increasingly eroded by modernity. By strengthening local culture grounded in Islamic moral

teaching, communities can safeguard their identity and cultural heritage. Sufi values also remain relevant to modern life, including the use of technology: through a Sufi approach, technology can be employed ethically and responsibly. Community leaders who embrace Sufi values can likewise offer sound moral role models, thereby improving the social order and fostering fairer and more dignified policy.

In terms of implementation, Sufism-based education can serve as an initial step in shaping the character of the younger generation. An education system that integrates Sufi values such as dhikr, contemplation (tafakur), and the stories of the Sufis can help students cultivate a personality of noble character. In addition, Sufism-based spiritual communities, such as dhikr gatherings and Sufi study circles (halaqah), can offer a forum for society to strengthen its spirituality. Regulation of social media also needs to be strengthened so that technology does not become a medium for spreading negative values.

Morality in Sufism thus holds considerable potential as a solution to the moral crisis of the era of globalization. Through individual spiritual transformation, the strengthening of social relationships, the preservation of local values, and the ethical use of technology, Sufism can help create a society that is more moral, harmonious, and just. Sufi teachings, if applied collectively, can serve as a guide for confronting moral challenges amid the powerful currents of globalization.

Relevance and Implementation Strategy of Sufi Values in the Era of Globalization

Overcoming the hegemony of secularism and materialism requires an integrated strategy for implementing Sufi values:

1. Sufism-Based Character Education: Implementing an inclusive spirituality curriculum in schools and universities through the habituation of self-introspection (muhasabah), moral discipline training, and digital ethics literacy.
2. Optimizing Spiritual Communities and Digital Media: Making use of digital platforms and community gatherings (majelis) to ground Sufi teaching in language that is rational, accessible, and closely attuned to the problems faced by the younger generation.
3. Integrity in Public Ethics and Leadership: Adopting the principle of tazkiyatun nafs as a framework of ethical governance for leaders and policymakers, in order to realize a clean and just system of Good Governance.

CONCLUSION

Sufism, through its ethical (akhlaqi) dimension, provides a comprehensive framework for addressing the moral crisis of the era of globalization. Through the pillars of takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli, Sufism not only transforms the individual's inner awareness but also radiates positive effects in the form of strengthened justice, social empathy, and human ethics. Integrating Sufi teachings into the education system, media, and social governance is a strategic key to weaving together a civilization that is harmonious, progressive, and morally noble.

REFERENCES

- Dr. Amir Mahmud, M. (2018). Peran Dan Respon Tasawuf Terhadap Problematika Era Modern. *Jurnal Dikdas Bantara*.
- Dwi Muthia Ridha Lubis. (n.d.). Konsep Pemikiran Tasawuf Akhlaqi. *Islam & Contemporary Issues* No. 2 (12 September 2021): 28–35.
- Haidar Putra Daulay. (2021). Takhalli, Tahalli dan Tajali. *PANDAWA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Dakwah*.
- Nilyati. (2015). Peranan Tasawuf Dalam Kehidupan Modern. *Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin*.
- Nurhasanah, L. (2017). Peran Tasawuf Dalam Kehidupan Manusia Modern. *El-Afkar: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman Dan Tafsir Hadis*.
- Rozi, B. (2017). Akhlak Tasawuf Sebagai Alternatif Dalam Memecahkan Problematika Masyarakat Modern. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*.
- Setianingsih, Y. (2019). Nilai Nasionalisme dan Moral dalam Novel Diponegoro dan Perang Jawa Karya Ms Ardian Gajah dan Penerapannya Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia. *Linguista: Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pembelajarannya*, 3, 50–50.
- Siti Mariyatul Kiptiyah. (2019). Kisah Qabil dan Habil dalam Al-Quran. *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Al-Hadist*.
- Syukur, M. A. (n.d.). *Menggugat Tasawuf*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012.
- Zaki Hidayatulloh, M. (2014). Pemahaman Islam Melalui Pendekatan Tasawuf. *At-Tahdzib: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Muamalah*.