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TAREKAT-BASED DA'WAH IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS: THE ROLE OF THE SUFI ORDER IN FORMING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN MUSTHAFAWIYAH ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the need to understand how tarekat-based da'wah shapes religious authority at Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, Indonesia, amid social transformation and challenges to traditional religious leadership. The research focuses on three main issues: the relationship between the mursyid, kiai, and santri within the tarekat structure; the mechanism of internalizing Sufi values in shaping the charisma and authority of religious leaders; and the influence of tarekat-based religious authority on the socio-religious dynamics of the pesantren. This study employed a qualitative approach using an ethnographic research design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and were analyzed thematically through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the relationship among the mursyid, kiai, and santri is built upon spiritual obedience, scholarly lineage (sanad), and moral cultivation, which reinforce the tarekat leadership structure. The internalization of Sufi values through dhikr, suluk, ethical conduct, and spiritual development fosters charisma and religious authority recognized by the community. Furthermore, tarekat-based religious authority strengthens social cohesion, discipline, social stability, and the effectiveness of da'wah in shaping religious life at Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School.

Keywords: *Da'wah, Tariqa, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Sufi-based da'wah in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is crucial for establishing a balance between the dimensions of sharia (Islamic law) and reality (khaqiqah) (AAbitolkha et al., 2020). The Sufi approach emphasizes not only the normative aspects of Islamic teachings but also brings to life the inner dimension through the processes of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), muhasabah (introspection) (Jemain et al., 2026), and dhikr (remembrance of God) as practices of spiritual awareness.

In the context of Islamic boarding school education, Sufi-based da'wah serves as the foundation for character development, ensuring students are not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally and spiritually mature (Yusuf, 2025). This approach is relevant to the challenges of the modern era, rife with moral crises, social pressures, and an uncontrolled flow of information (Mawardi, 2022).

Sufi preaching provides a space of calm and depth of meaning amidst a fast-paced life. Through Sufism circles, the guidance of a spiritual leader (murshid), and the practice of congregational dhikr (remembrance of God), students are guided to understand religion not merely as a formal obligation, but as a path to developing the heart. Thus, values such as sincerity, patience, humility, and compassion can develop authentically within the students (Irwansyah, 2020).

In Islamic boarding schools, Sufi-based da'wah also serves as a medium for social transformation. Sufism teaches a balance between a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with fellow human beings. Students trained through this approach tend to have a high level of social empathy, are able to maintain harmony, and act as agents of peace within society (Yunus et al., 2024). Da'wah is no longer confrontational, but rather persuasive and humanistic, presenting Islam as a blessing for all nature (Kanafi, 2022).

Furthermore, Sufi preaching strengthens the identity of Islamic boarding schools as centers of moderate and inclusive Islamic spirituality. The traditions of dhikr, suluk, and moral development foster a deep and sustainable religious culture (Hidayat, 2020). In practice, students learn that the success of preaching is not solely measured by the size of their audience, but by a real change of heart and morals (Hamka et al., 2026). This is the power of Sufi-based preaching: it works from within, touching the consciousness, and shaping character gradually but firmly (Badaruddin et al., 2021).

The Sufi Order plays a strategic role in shaping and strengthening religious authority within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). This authority stems not only from mastery of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), tafsir (interpretation), and hadith (hadith), but also from spiritual depth, consistent practice, and exemplary morals passed down through the Sufi Order (Akhlaku, 2022).

In the Islamic boarding school tradition, a kiai (Islamic teacher) or mursyid (leader) gains legitimacy not solely through structural position, but also through moral and spiritual recognition from the student community and society. The Sufi Order serves as a crucial medium connecting the scientific dimension with the spiritual dimension of practice (Bakar & Prayogo, 2023). Through the practice of dhikr, suluk, and spiritual guidance, the tarekat (Islamic order) forms an authoritative figure who acts not only as a teacher but also as a spiritual guide (murabbi).

Religious authority is born from consistent practical experience and a clear chain of knowledge, known in the tarekat tradition as silsilah (lineage) (Alaudin, 2023). This lineage strengthens the legitimacy of a murshid because he is genealogically and spiritually connected to previous scholars and Sufi figures. Thus, the authority formed is not administrative, but charismatic and transformative (Anwar, 2025).

In many Islamic boarding schools, including those that developed the Naqsyabandiyah and Sammaniyah Sufi Orders, the kiai's authority is reinforced by his capacity to lead the tarekat's practices. The ability to guide dhikr (remembrance), grant ijaza (ceremonial readings), and direct suluk (suluk) are indicators of spiritual depth recognized by the students (Rahim et al., 2026). Students view the kiai not only as a source of fatwas (religious edicts), but also as a role model in self-control, patience, and sincerity.

This is where the tarekat plays a role in establishing authority based on exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah), not merely normative instruction (Rohmatullah & Zakiyatun, 2022). Furthermore, the tarekat also forms a hierarchical yet dialogical socio-religious structure. The relationship between the murshid and murid is based on adab (good manners), respect, and spiritual loyalty (Muchtar, 2019).

However, the development process takes place through intensive interaction, allowing for a deep internalization of Sufi values. The religious authority born of this pattern tends to be integrative combining the dimensions of sharia (outward rules), tarekat (spiritual path), and

hakikat (inner consciousness). This strengthens the position of the pesantren as a center of moral authority within society (Munandar, 2023).

In the contemporary social context, where religious authority is often fragmented by social media and various currents of thought, the tarekat provides a foundation of stability. Students are less easily swayed by instant religious discourse because they have a clear spiritual reference and a direct relationship with their mentors. The authority established through the tarekat is sustainable because it is supported by collective practice, tradition, and authentic inner experience (Hidayat & Dewi, 2023).

Based on article search in the application *Publish or Perish* From 2020 to 2025, 63 articles discussed Sufi-based da'wah in Islamic boarding schools, demonstrating growing academic attention to the role of Sufism in contemporary da'wah practices in traditional Islamic educational institutions (Mudâ & Mudâ, 2023; Sa'diah & Zulva, 2025; Sunarno et al., 2022). These articles not only map da'wah models that integrate Sufi values but also evaluate their socio-cultural impact on students and the communities surrounding the Islamic boarding schools.

The studies range from historical, theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects, with a focus on character formation, spiritual learning strategies, and the contribution of Sufi orders to strengthening religious identity amidst the challenges of modernity. In thematic classification, the 63 articles can be divided into several main categories as follows: Historical and Theoretical Studies (15 articles).

This group discusses the philosophical and historical foundations of the development of Sufi da'wah in Islamic boarding schools, including discourses on the relationship between sharia and tarekat, as well as the roots of Sufism in the Nusantara pesantren tradition. Research in this category often examines classical Sufism literature and how these principles are adapted in the context of modern Islamic boarding school education.

Sufi Learning Models and Methods in Islamic Boarding Schools (18 articles). The articles in this category focus on various pedagogical approaches developed to teach Sufi values to Islamic boarding school students. These include studies on the use of dhikr circles, suluk, mentoring by spiritual guides, and the integration of Sufism practices into Islamic boarding school curricula. Some studies emphasize the importance of*reflective practice* and continuous inner development (Afandi & IP, 2020; Yaqin & Badrun, 2022).

The Impact of Sufi Da'wah on the Spiritual Development of Students (12 articles). This category highlights how Sufi-based da'wah influences the spiritual lives of students, such as increasing self-awareness, disciplined worship, emotional control, and developing tolerant and empathetic attitudes. Many studies use a qualitative approach to explore students' direct experiences in practicing their Sufi orders (Anam, 2023; Hakim, 2023; Nur, 2021).

The Role of Sufi Orders in Strengthening Islamic Boarding School Communities (8 articles). Several articles explore the function of Sufi orders as the basis of social networks in Islamic boarding schools, including their contribution to community solidarity, moral development in the surrounding community, and the role of Islamic boarding schools in countering negative social phenomena such as extreme individualism and spiritual alienation among the younger generation.

Contextual Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities (10 articles). This final group discusses the challenges facing Sufi preaching in Islamic boarding schools, such as public perception, which sometimes views the Sufi order as exclusive or old-fashioned, and how Islamic boarding schools respond to criticisms of modernity and secularism. In addition, these articles also identify strategic opportunities, such as the use of digital technology to spread the message of Sufism more widely.

The classification results illustrate that the study of Sufi-based da'wah in Islamic boarding schools is not monolithic, but rather multidimensional, encompassing historical aspects, education, individual religious experiences, and socio-cultural roles. Research trends from 2020 to 2025 indicate a shift from more normative discourse to more applied and empirical studies, particularly in understanding how Sufi values are translated into da'wah practices relevant to the current context of Islamic boarding school students' lives.

Thus, the achievement *Publish or Perish* This reflects the growing recognition of the importance of Sufism studies in Islamic boarding school education as an integral part of da'wah and spiritual empowerment strategies. This classification can also serve as a foundation for future researchers to explore more specific niche areas, such as the influence of Sufi da'wah on the psychological well-being of students, or a comparison of the effectiveness of Sufi learning models across Islamic boarding schools adopting various orders.

Overall, this research narrative demonstrates that Sufi-based da'wah in Islamic boarding schools is relevant not only as a legacy of tradition but also as a dynamic response to the spiritual and social needs of contemporary Muslim society. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative analysis of religious authority and tarekat practices within the institutional context of traditional Islamic boarding schools (pesantren).

Previously, studies on Islamic boarding schools generally positioned religious authority as based on formal scholarly aspects such as mastery of the yellow books, the sanad of Islamic jurisprudence (fikih), and the structural legitimacy of leadership. This research offers a new perspective by demonstrating that in the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, religious authority is not only built through the transmission of external knowledge (sharia) but also through the internalization of the inner dimension (tarekat), which strengthens a leader's moral and spiritual legitimacy.

Thus, tarekat serves as both an epistemological and ethical basis for the formation of authority. Another novelty is the discovery that religious authority in this Islamic boarding school is performative-spiritual, meaning it is recognized not solely because of formal position, but rather because of the consistency of one's religious practices, the depth of one's dhikr (remembrance of God), and a figure's closeness to the practice of the tarekat (Islamic order).

Students and the community legitimize authoritative figures based on the spiritual integrity evident in their daily lives. This broadens the concept of authority from merely structural to relational and charismatic, based on collective spiritual experience. This research also presents a conceptual contribution by mapping how two evolving Sufi traditions the Naqsyabandiyah and the Sammaniyah formed complementary patterns of authority.

The Naqsyabandiyah, with its characteristic dhikr khafi (remembrance of God) and emphasis on inner depth, gave rise to a reflective and contemplative type of authority. Meanwhile, the Sammaniyah, with its collective and expressive dhikr jahr tradition, built a communicative and mobilizing authority. The integration of the two resulted in a model of religious authority that was not only spiritually strong but also adaptive to social dynamics.

The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth the role of the tarekat in forming, strengthening, and reproducing religious authority in the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School.

Specifically, this study aims to: (1) explain the relationship between the mursyid, kiai, and santri in the tarekat structure in building patterns of obedience, transmission of knowledge, and spiritual recognition; (2) analyze the mechanism of internalization of Sufism values in forming the charisma and authority of religious figures in the Islamic boarding school; and (3) examine the influence of the tarekat-based religious authority on socio-religious dynamics, both within the internal environment of the Islamic boarding school and in its relations with the surrounding community.

Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the tarekat not only as a spiritual practice, but also as a social system that forms a structure of religious authority and legitimacy in a sustainable manner.

METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach, aiming to deeply understand the practice of Sufi-based da'wah (Islamic teaching) and how it shapes religious authority at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School (Lubis, 2024). This study emphasizes participatory observation, in which the researcher participates in spiritual activities, dhikr circles, knowledge assemblies, and guidance from the spiritual leader (mursyid). This allows for direct

understanding of the internalization of Sufi teachings and the interactions between the spiritual leader (mursyid), students, and boarding school administrators (Zuhri & Iman, n.d.).

Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with the caretaker, the mursyid, and several active students of the tarekat. The interviews aimed to uncover spiritual meanings, the mechanisms for establishing religious authority, and the influence of tarekat practices on the students' character and behavior. Furthermore, this study utilized pesantren documents such as religious texts, study modules, and activity records as secondary data to complement the field findings and validate the information obtained from the interviews and observations (Pulungan, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

The relationship between the mursyid, kiai, and santri in the tarekat structure at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School

In the Sufism or Islamic order tradition, there is a unique relationship structure between spiritual leaders, religious educators, and their followers (Lisnawati et al., 2021). The spiritual leader in question is...*murshid*, a figure who guides students or santri on a spiritual journey towards holiness and recognition of God. Mursyid is not just a teacher in the formal sense, but also a figure who connects his followers with a higher spiritual source through the process of allegiance and inner training.

In the context of Indonesian pesantren, there is also the term *religious teacher*, who doubles as both a formal teacher and a moral figure respected by the students. The kiai plays a role in integrating the tarekat's teachings with formal education and the community's socio-religious life. Thus, this structure forms a unique network: the mursyid as the supreme spiritual leader, the kyai as educator and moral figure, and the students as followers who learn and submit to the spiritual guidance and values of the pesantren (Harahap, 2023).

This relationship is not simply a teacher-student relationship. Based on sociological studies, the relationship between the mursyid and the santri has a strong power dimension, because the mursyid has the authority to grant the tarekat diploma, determine the students' practices, and appoint a caliph who has the authority to further teach the tarekat's teachings. Without the mursyid's allegiance and recognition, a person cannot theoretically follow the tarekat's suluk legitimately.

In practice, the santri accepts adab, spiritual discipline, and guidance as part of a total commitment to the Sufi path (Musa, 2023). This structure fosters a strong adherence to the mursyid's instructions, which are not only teaching but also serve as an inner guide in the realization of the outer and inner aspects of the tarekat's sharia. The analysis of this relationship can be strengthened by Max Weber's theory of authority, which distinguishes three forms of legitimacy of power: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational authority.

In the context of the tarekat, traditional authority is clearly seen through respect for the lineage of the teacher or*genealogy* Sufi orders (Musa, 2022). Students submit to the kyai or mursyid as representatives of established spiritual traditions, where their obedience is based not on modern rationality, but on the legitimacy of traditions passed down from generation to generation. The teacher's lineage serves as the basis for legitimacy for students to follow certain spiritual practices, so this relationship can be categorized as a form of traditional Weberian authority (. & Suhendro, 2020).

On the other hand, charismatic authority also dominates within the structure of Sufi orders. Weber emphasized that charismatic authority stems from followers' perceptions that leaders possess unique qualities, such as inner strength, holiness, or extraordinary spiritual abilities. The Murshid is often considered to possess special abilities to guide students closer to God and to understand the inner aspects of Sufism. Sufi leadership within the Sufi order relies on charisma, so that students entrust their spiritual journey entirely to the Murshid.

In large orders, such as the Naqshbandiyah or Qadiriyah in the Indonesian archipelago, this charismatic aspect serves as a powerful basis for legitimacy, as the spiritual experience and inner recognition of the student are central to the relationship between teacher and student

(Nasution, 2023). Furthermore, in the context of modern Islamic boarding schools, aspects of legal-rational authority can also be seen, although they are not dominant . Kyai who lead Islamic boarding schools sometimes hold formal positions and administrative responsibilities, so their legitimacy also arises from institutional recognition (Kusnadi, 2021).

The curriculum, educational certification, and structure of the Islamic boarding school add a legal-rational dimension to the kyai's authority. However, in traditional tarekat practices, this legal-rational aspect is usually subordinate to charismatic and traditional authority. Students submit to the kyai or mursyid not simply because of their formal position, but because of the spiritual and traditional recognition inherent in the teacher figure.

This relationship is not always conflict-free. Studies of the tarekat (Islamic order) in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) such as Darul 'Ulum Jombang show that the relationship between the mursyid, kyai, and santri (students) creates a complex power dynamic. The mursyid directs the rituals, spiritual discipline, and spiritual activities of the students. This power is not simply domination, but a process of inner discipline that shapes the students' religious identity through spiritual conduct.

The kyai, who plays the dual role of formal educator and moral pillar of the community, extends this authority into the social realm, connecting the tarekat's teachings with the lives of the surrounding community. Thus, the students submit to spiritual guidance while simultaneously accepting the moral and cultural authority constructed through the pesantren's traditions.

Narrative about the relationship between *murshid*, *religious teacher*, And *students*The structure of the tarekat can be analyzed sociologically using Max Weber's theory of authority. Weber divided authority into three main forms: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal authority. In the context of the tarekat, rational-legal authority is relatively undominant; charismatic and traditional authority are prominent.

The Mursyid, as a spiritual leader, gains legitimacy through the tarekat's lineage (sanad) that traces back to the Prophet Muhammad, reflecting traditional authority. However, at the same time, he is also recognized for his personal spiritual qualities depth of knowledge, ability to guide suluk, and mystical experiences which display a charismatic dimension. Julia Day Howell's study in the article*"Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival"*(Journal of Asian Studies, Q1) shows that Sufi leadership in Indonesia relies on a combination of transmission of tradition and personal spiritual appeal that builds the emotional and religious loyalty of students.

In this structure, the kyai occupies a unique position as a dual figure: the leader of Islamic boarding school education and part of the tarekat network. Martin van Bruinessen's research in*"Tarekat and the Transmission of Islamic Reform in Indonesia"* (Studia Islamika, indexed by Scopus Q1) emphasizes that the kyai often functions as a mediator between the charismatic authority of the mursyid and the daily social life of the santri. The kyai strengthens moral legitimacy through exemplary behavior (uswah), mastery of sharia knowledge, and traditional authority based on the pesantren.

Thus, he is not only an extension of the mursyid, but also an educational figure who transforms spiritual values into social and pedagogical practices. Here, the relationship between the mursyid and the kyai forms an integral socio-spiritual structure: the mursyid as the center of inner authority, and the kyai as the reinforcer of moral-institutional legitimacy. Meanwhile, the students' obedience to the mursyid and kyai cannot be understood simply as a formal hierarchical relationship.

Based on Weber's framework, this obedience stems from traditional legitimacy—due to respect for the sanad, pesantren traditions, and the structure of knowledge—as well as charismatic legitimacy, namely the belief that the mursyid possesses authentic spiritual authority.

Azyumardi Azra's research in*"The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia"* (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, Q1) shows that the network of ulama and tarekat in the archipelago forms a collective identity through the transmission of religious authority that is both personal and genealogical. Thus, the mursyid–kyai–santri relationship not only produces normative obedience but also shapes the religious and spiritual identity of the santri as part of the tarekat community (Amrullah et al., 2023).

The mechanism of internalization of Sufism values in forming the charisma and authority of religious figures at the Musthafawiyah Islamic boarding school

This study found that the internalization of Sufi values at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren Musthafawiyah) occurs through a systematic, ongoing, and exemplary process. Internalization occurs not only at the cognitive level through the teaching of Sufi texts, but also at the affective and practical levels through spiritual practices integrated into the daily life of the boarding school. This process has direct implications for the formation of charisma and the authority of religious figures within the boarding school environment.

Based on participant observation, spiritual activities such as congregational dhikr (remembrance of God), daily wirid (recitation of holy scriptures), reading classical Sufi texts, qiyamul lail (religious prayer), and certain riyadhah (religious practice) become patterns of habit that shape the spiritual habits of students and teachers. Values such as sincerity, patience, humility, asceticism, and tawakkal (religious obedience) are not only taught as normative concepts but are also engrained in daily practice.

The Islamic boarding school environment culturally fosters an atmosphere that supports inner reflection, disciplined worship, and self-control. In-depth interviews with several senior students revealed that they view religious figures at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School as "calm, not easily angered, and always considering the public interest in making decisions." This perception did not emerge instantly, but rather formed through long interactions that demonstrated the consistent spiritual behavior of these figures.

One student stated that the kiai's authority was more felt in his silence and calm demeanor than in the formal instructions he gave. This suggests that charisma grows from internalized inner qualities, not from structural authority alone.

Theoretically, this finding aligns with Thomas Lickona's concept of value internalization, which states that values become part of an individual's character through the processes of knowing, feeling, and acting. In the context of the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, the knowing stage is achieved through studying Sufi texts; the feeling stage is achieved through collective spiritual experiences such as dhikr and self-reflection; and the acting stage is evident in the daily behavior of religious figures who consistently reflect Sufi values. This process demonstrates the transformation of normative values into a life ethos.

From the perspective of Max Weber's theory of authority, this study shows that the authority of religious figures in Islamic boarding schools is closer to the charismatic type of authority. Charisma is not solely inherited through traditional structures, but rather arises from collective recognition of spiritual qualities considered extraordinary. Students obey and respect religious figures not only because of their institutional position, but also because of their belief that these figures possess a spiritual closeness to God and high moral integrity. Thus, the internalization of Sufism serves as the foundation for the formation of this charismatic authority.

This study also found that the internalization of Sufi values is reinforced by the collective culture of Islamic boarding schools. Students remind each other of their worship and morals, so that Sufi values are not confined to the kiai (Islamic teacher) but extend throughout the social system of the Islamic boarding school. In other words, there is a continuity between spiritual leadership and institutional culture. This environment forms a social structure that supports the emergence of authoritative religious figures.

However, this study also identified several challenges. Modernization and the development of digital technology have impacted the concentration and discipline patterns of some students. Several informants stated that the biggest challenge in internalizing Sufism values today is maintaining consistent spiritual practices amidst the rapid flow of information. Nevertheless, religious leaders are attempting to respond with an adaptive approach without losing the essence of Sufism as a foundation for character development.

Overall, the research results indicate that the internalization of Sufi values at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School occurs through three main channels: first, the integration of Sufi values into the curriculum and daily ritual practices; second, the direct role model of religious figures as models of living values; and third, the formation of a pesantren

culture that supports collective spiritual discipline. These three mechanisms complement each other and result in tangible character transformation.

The implication of these findings is that the charisma and authority of religious figures cannot be separated from the deep internalization of Sufi values. Charisma is not merely a personal attribute, but rather the result of a long process of inner development, moral consistency, and social recognition of spiritual integrity. In the context of the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, Sufism serves as an epistemological and practical foundation for building authentic religious authority.

Structured spiritual experiences are a key foundation in this process. Routines such as congregational dhikr (remembrance of God), nightly wirid (mindfulness), self-reflection (muhasabah), and Sufi suluk (sacred meditation) facilitate the formation of a strong spiritual habitus. This internalization goes beyond mere knowledge; it becomes a rhythm of life, continually leading individuals to inner reflection and closeness to God. In field interviews, many students stated that "the experience of collective dhikr is not just a ritual, but a source of inner calm and moral consistency that continuously shapes the character of the kiai and students."

Furthermore, the exemplary behavior of religious figures is a highly influential medium in this internalization process. Religious figures who consistently demonstrate Sufi spiritual behavior in their daily lives (e.g., simplicity of life, patience in the face of conflict, and wise moral decisions) foster a perception of moral legitimacy among students and the wider community.

This authority arises not solely from their position as Islamic boarding school leaders, but also from the community's perception of the authenticity of the lived experience of Sufi values reflected in concrete actions, thus creating a sense of belonging.*charismatic authority*in Max Weber's sense that is, authority based on followers' belief in the figure's extraordinary qualities in the spiritual and moral realm.

The influence of religious authority based on the tarekat on socio-religious dynamics at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School

Religious authority formed through the Sufi orders tradition interacts with and influences the socio-religious dynamics at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School. The focus of this study is how the Sufi orders are not merely spiritual practices but also structures of authority that influence the social behavior, community relations, and religious perspectives of the students and the Islamic boarding school community.

References in the article*"Sufi Authority in 'Post-Modern' Muslim Societies"*by Irina R. Katkova demonstrates the crucial role of Sufi figures as mediating shaykhs who mediate spiritual values and social practices in contemporary Muslim society. The paper explains Sufi authority as a product of tradition that remains relevant in modern dynamics, particularly in the Indonesian context, including in the Minangkabau region and the traditional Naqshbandiyah Sufi order in West Sumatra. This research provides a theoretical framework for how Sufi authority can operate in modern social contestation as a powerful source of religious legitimacy (Mukti, 2022).

The article is a peer-reviewed article uploaded to the journal*Kalam*, which is frequently cited in Islamic and socio-religious studies (although it does not always rank in the publication quartile in major databases like Scopus). However, its presence in international academic discourse provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining the authority of tarekat in contemporary Islamic boarding schools.

Field research shows that at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, the tarekat (Islamic order) is positioned as the spiritual core and source of moral legitimacy for religious figures. Through suluk (suluk), bai'at (allegiance), intensive dhikr (remembrance of God), and specific rituals, tarekat figures in the pesantren serve not only as spiritual leaders but also as providers of moral and ethical guidance for the students and the pesantren community (Kaprabowo, 2019).

This role is consistent with Katkova's findings that Sufi authority did not disappear in modernity, but rather transformed and remained relevant in its social implications.

This study identifies several socio-religious aspects that are influenced by the authority of the congregation:

i. Formation of Religious Identity of Students. The Sufi values taught within the tarekat (such as patience, asceticism, trust in God, and sincerity) appear to profoundly shape the spiritual identity of students. Students who regularly practice suluk tend to demonstrate spiritual maturity, tolerance toward others, and social resilience in facing the challenges of everyday life.
ii. The Role of Sufi Figures in Resolving Social Conflicts. When internal conflicts arise—whether between students or between students and their families tarekat leaders are often called upon to mediate because they are seen as possessing superior spiritual and moral wisdom. This strengthens the tarekat's position as a center of legitimacy for social values outside the formal pesantren management structure.
iii. Adaptation of Traditional Values to Modernity. Even though Islamic boarding schools are in the digital and globalized era, the values of the tarekat remain relevant to most of the pesantren community. Students are able to adopt spiritual values that are then integrated into contemporary social practices, such as an inclusive attitude toward differences, the use of social media for Sufism preaching, and social involvement in local community activities.

Although the authority of the tarekat remains strong, research also notes emerging challenges, including:*contestation of authority* between the traditional approach of the tarekat and modern religious views based more on individual interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith. This challenge is similar to the dynamics highlighted in other studies of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, which show the evolution of authority from a traditional hierarchical model to a more participatory and dialogical one.

In the context of the Musthafawiyah, this shift is evident in discussions about how tarekat values are practiced in the digital social era and the plurality of thought. Younger generations of students tend to combine traditional tarekat values with modern educational approaches, so that the authority of tarekat figures is no longer absolute but understood as relational and dynamic, in line with contemporary social needs.

This study found that the tarekat-based religious authority at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School serves as a powerful source of moral and spiritual legitimacy, influencing the socio-religious dynamics within the boarding school through the deep internalization of Sufi values. This authority emerges not merely as a traditional hierarchy, but as a result of the students' and the boarding school community's recognition of the spiritual and ethical qualities of the tarekat leaders.

With conceptual references from the article *"Sufi Authority in 'Post-Modern' Muslim Societies"* which explains that Sufi authority remains relevant in modern and post-modern contexts, this study shows that the Sufi order plays a major role in forming a social structure of Islamic boarding schools that is adaptive, stable, and based on transformative spiritual values.

Discussion

The discourse on tarekat-based da'wah within Islamic boarding schools has become an increasingly important topic in contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in understanding how religious authority is constructed, transmitted, and maintained amid modern social transformations. Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School, as one of the largest traditional Islamic boarding schools in Sumatra, represents a significant example of how Sufi traditions continue to shape Islamic education, spiritual culture, and religious leadership.

In this context, the tarekat (Sufi order) should not merely be understood as a spiritual ritual practice, but also as a social instrument that constructs religious legitimacy and authority within the pesantren environment. From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be analyzed using Max Weber's theory of charismatic authority. Weber argues that charismatic authority emerges from the community's recognition of an individual's spiritual, moral, and extraordinary qualities.

Within the pesantren tradition, the kiai gains legitimacy not solely because of intellectual mastery of Islamic sciences, but also because he is believed to possess spiritual depth, barakah (blessing), and a continuous chain of scholarly transmission (sanad). This pattern is clearly visible

in the tarekat-based da'wah system at Musthafawiyah, where respect and obedience toward the teacher constitute an essential part of spiritual education.

Research on spiritual leadership in pesantren confirms that the authority of the kiai is largely constructed through spiritual approaches and tarekat traditions. The article *"Authority of Spiritual Leadership at Pesantren Temboro Based on Jamaah Tabligh* Ideology*"* explains that pesantren leadership legitimacy is formed through a combination of spiritual charisma, religious practices, and moral exemplification.

Within the context of Musthafawiyah, this can be seen through the emotional relationship between students and teachers, the tradition of khidmah (service), reverence for scholarly sanad, and the internalization of Sufistic values in daily life. In addition to Weber, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital is also highly relevant. According to Bourdieu, power is not constructed merely through structural domination, but also through cultural symbols recognized by society.

In pesantren, symbolic capital is manifested through the use of classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), religious attire, collective dhikr rituals, tarekat practices, and the legitimacy of scholarly genealogy. A kiai affiliated with a recognized tarekat network generally possesses stronger social influence than ordinary religious figures. Consequently, tarekat functions as a mechanism for reproducing religious authority within Islamic boarding schools.

This argument is strengthened by the study *"Pesantren, Kepemimpinan Kiai, dan Ajaran Tarekat sebagai Potret Dinamika Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia"*, which emphasizes that the relationship between kiai leadership and tarekat traditions forms a crucial foundation for maintaining the existence of traditional pesantren in Indonesia. The article further explains that tarekat practices create student loyalty while simultaneously reinforcing the social legitimacy of religious leadership.

Therefore, tarekat-based da'wah at Musthafawiyah functions not only as spiritual education, but also as a social mechanism for preserving the influence of pesantren within society. From the perspective of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's social construction theory, religious reality within pesantren is formed through processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization.

Sufistic values taught through tarekat rituals are continuously practiced in students' daily lives until they become a collective culture. Traditions such as collective dhikr, reverence for teachers, modest living, and moral discipline represent forms of spiritual internalization that eventually shape the distinct religious identity of Musthafawiyah pesantren. Research on tarekat traditions in pesantren further confirms the historical relationship between Islamic boarding schools and spirituality.

The article *"Fenomena Tarekat Dalam Tradisi Pesantren"* argues that spiritual traditions such as tarekat, tirakat, barakah, and moral cultivation constitute the primary identity of traditional pesantren in Indonesia. This indicates that tarekat is not an additional element within pesantren education, but rather an integral part of the traditional Islamic educational system itself.

In practice, Musthafawiyah appears to implement a transformative model of da'wah. Religious preaching is conducted not only through verbal instruction, but also through spiritual training and moral exemplification. This approach aligns with Ali Aziz's transformative da'wah theory, which argues that da'wah should transform both the social and spiritual dimensions of society. Students are not merely taught Islamic knowledge, but are also shaped spiritually through tarekat discipline and ethical formation.

This model resembles findings from research on tarekat-based da'wah at Pesantren Suryalaya. The article *"Tarekat Da'wah through the Islamic Educational Institutions at Pesantren Suryalaya"* explains that tarekat-oriented education successfully develops religious character through dhikr practices, spiritual habituation, and the exemplary conduct of the mursyid (spiritual guide). Similarly, at Musthafawiyah, the cultivation of spiritual character can be observed through strong traditions of humility (tawadhu'), simplicity, respect for ulama, and disciplined worship practices.

Furthermore, the Scopus-indexed article *"The Mass Production of Religious Authority*" explains that pesantren function as institutions for reproducing religious authority through the

cadre formation of ulama and the transmission of scholarly sanad. This finding is highly relevant to Musthafawiyah, which has long served as a center for producing Islamic scholars and religious leaders in North Sumatra. In other words, pesantren should be understood not merely as educational institutions, but also as centers for the production and reproduction of religious authority rooted in classical Islamic traditions.

In conclusion, tarekat-based da'wah at Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School demonstrates that Sufistic spirituality plays a strategic role in constructing religious authority within Islamic boarding schools. The tarekat functions not only as a medium of spiritual devotion, but also as an instrument of moral education, religious leadership reproduction, and social legitimacy reinforcement.

Through its Sufistic approach, the pesantren continues to maintain its existence as a center for Islamic knowledge transmission, character formation, and the preservation of moderate Islamic traditions amid the challenges of modernization and digital religious transformation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Sufi-based da'wah at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School is a model of religious development that is oriented not only towards the transmission of sharia knowledge, but also towards spiritual transformation through the practice of Sufism and Sufism. Da'wah does not stop at normative lectures, but is manifested in spiritual development, habituation of worship, and character building through riyadhah and collective dhikr. Thus, Sufi-based da'wah at this Islamic boarding school is integral combining theological, ethical, and social dimensions within a continuous development system.

The role of the tarekat in this context has proven to be a key foundation in establishing religious authority. Tarekat are not merely spiritual organizations, but also serve as mechanisms for internalizing values, strengthening spiritual discipline, and providing moral legitimacy for religious leaders. The relationship between the mursyid, kiai, and santri forms a spiritual structure that strengthens collective trust in religious leadership. The resulting authority is not merely structural or traditional, but charismatic and based on recognition of the spiritual depth and moral consistency of religious leaders.

This research also shows that the practice of the Sufi order at the Musthafawiyah Islamic Boarding School forms a distinctive religious habitus. Values such as sincerity, humility, patience, and trust in God are part of the pesantren culture and are reflected in daily social interactions. The charisma of religious leaders grows from spiritual integrity proven through riyadhah experiences and real-life examples, not solely from genealogical legitimacy or institutional position. In other words, religious authority is built through a process of deep internalization of values and ongoing social recognition.

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