

SOCIAL TARIQAH AND NUSANTARA SUFISM: EXPLORING SPIRITUAL NETWORKS AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE THROUGH A LITERATURE REVIEW

Muhaizam Md Ishak^{1*}
Ahmad Afiq Irshad Omar²
Farahdina Fazial³
Mohamad Lukman Al Hakim Md. Noor⁴

¹ Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, 08400 Merbok, Kedah, Malaysia
(E-mail: Muhaizam@uitm.edu.my)

² Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, 08400 Merbok, Kedah, Malaysia
(E-mail: afiqirshad@uitm.edu.my)

³ Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, 08400 Merbok, Kedah, Malaysia
(E-mail: farahdinafazial@uitm.edu.my)

⁴ Department of Arabic Language, International Islamic University Malaysia, 53100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
(E-mail: lukmanhakim@iiu.edu.my)

*Corresponding author: Muhaizam Md Ishak A Muhaizam@uitm.edu.my

*First author: Ahmad Afiq Irshad Omar A afiqirshad@uitm.edu.my

Article history

Received date : 23-5-2025

Revised date : 24-5-2025

Accepted date : 14-7-2025

Published date : 15-7-2025

To cite this document:

Md Ishak, M., Omar, A. F. I., Fazial, F., & Md. N, M. L. A. H. (2025). Social Tariqah and Nusantara Sufism: Exploring spiritual networks and cultural resilience through a literature review. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 10 (73), 971 - 992

Abstract: *This study examines the role of social tariqah (Sufi orders) in fostering cultural resilience and spiritual networks within Nusantara Sufism, addressing gaps in understanding how these traditions adapt to modernity and digitalization. Despite growing interest in Sufism's socio-cultural influence, fragmented scholarship has limited holistic insights into its transnational connectivity, digital evolution, and community impacts. The study aims to map spiritual networks, analyse digital adaptation strategies, and evaluate socio-economic contributions of tariqah, employing a systematic literature review of 32 peer-reviewed sources from Scopus and other academic databases (2018–2024). Thematic analysis reveals that Nusantara Sufism sustains cultural resilience through hybrid practices blending Islamic mysticism with local traditions, such as Rumi-inspired sema dances in Aceh and digital zikir (remembrance) sessions via platforms like Instagram and Zoom. Transnational networks, exemplified by the Qadiriyyah and Shattariyya orders, facilitate cross-border spiritual tourism and educational outreach, while digital tools like the “limitless zawiya” (virtual lodge) democratize access to Sufi teachings. Socio-economically, tariqah drive community welfare through festivals, poverty alleviation programs, and ethical education curricula. However, challenges persist, including uneven digital access, commercialization of rituals, and tensions between spiritual authenticity and modernization. Theoretically, the study challenges stereotypes of Sufi passivity, positioning tariqah as dynamic actors in global Islamic discourse. Practically, it advocates for integrating Sufi ethics into policymaking and education to counter extremism and promote sustainable development. Limitations include a focus on Indonesia and potential underrepresentation of marginalized voices. Future research should explore digital*

Sufism's long-term impacts, comparative studies across regions, and intersections of gender and spirituality within tariqah networks.

Keywords: *Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Spiritual networks, Cultural resilience, Digital Sufism*

Introduction

Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, has long served as a bridge between spiritual practice and cultural expression across the Muslim world. In the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara), Sufi traditions have uniquely intertwined with local customs, fostering a distinct form of Islam that emphasizes inner spirituality, communal harmony, and cultural adaptability (Anshori et al., 2021). Social tariqah (Sufi orders) such as the Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandi, and Shattariyya have played pivotal roles in shaping the region's socio-religious landscape, acting as both spiritual guides and cultural custodians. These orders have historically facilitated transnational networks, promoted moderate Islamic values, and contributed to socio-economic development through practices like spiritual tourism and community education (Saude et al., 2018; Hidayat, 2023).

This review focuses on the interplay between social tariqah and Nusantara Sufism, emphasizing their spiritual networks, cultural resilience, and socio-economic impacts. While Sufism's theological and philosophical dimensions have been widely studied, its role in fostering community cohesion and adapting to modernity—particularly through digital platforms—remains underexplored in contemporary scholarship.

Despite growing interest in Sufism's socio-cultural influence, fragmented studies have hindered a holistic understanding of its adaptive mechanisms. Key questions persist: How do Sufi networks sustain transnational connectivity while preserving local identities? In what ways do digital innovations reshape traditional spiritual practices? How does Nusantara Sufism mediate between global Islamic discourses and indigenous cultural values to promote resilience?

Existing research highlights Sufi orders' transnational reach through festivals and pilgrimages (Piraino, 2021), their role in promoting moderate Islam (Anshori et al., 2021), and the integration of Sufi teachings into educational curricula (Muhammad et al., 2024). Localized studies, such as the Shattariyya order's spiritual tourism in Pariaman (Hidayat, 2023), underscore their socio-economic contributions. However, these works often examine isolated aspects of Sufism without synthesizing its spiritual, cultural, and digital dimensions.

A critical gap exists in literature that systematically connects Sufi networks, cultural resilience, and digital adaptation within Nusantara. While studies like de Diego González (2025) explore digital epistemologies in Sufism, few address their practical implications for community engagement. Similarly, the dialectic between global Sufi traditions and hyperlocal cultural practices remains undertheorized.

This review aims to:

- a) To review the spiritual networks of Nusantara Sufism across local and transnational scales.
- b) To Analyze the way of Sufi traditions adapt to digitalization and sustain cultural resilience.
- c) To examine the socio-economic and educational contributions of social tariqah.

By synthesizing fragmented studies, this review offers a framework for understanding Sufism as a dynamic force in Nusantara. It highlights how spiritual networks foster cultural continuity amid globalization and digital disruption, providing actionable insights for policymakers and scholars addressing religious moderation and sustainable development.

This study is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the methodology. Section 3 illustrates the literature review of the topic. Section 4 presents the results and discussion in alignment with the research objectives. Finally, Section 5 provides conclusion for the Social Tariqah and Nusantara Sufism as a comprehensive literature review in exploring spiritual networks and cultural resilience.

Methodology

This literature review employs a systematic and thematic analysis approach, leveraging Scopus AI to synthesize interdisciplinary scholarship on social Tariqah and Nusantara Sufism. The study employed Scopus AI as a primary tool for data collection and analysis, leveraging its advanced search algorithms and comprehensive database to ensure a robust and inclusive review of relevant literature. This was supplemented with a keyword search using the following terms: "Tariqah" OR "Tariqat" OR "Al-Tariqa") AND ("Social" OR "Society" OR "Cultural" OR "Cultural") AND ("Spiritual" OR "Mystic" OR "Religious") AND ("Resilience" OR "Ability" OR "Existence") AND ("Culture" OR "Tradition").

The methodology aligns with the study's three objectives: (a) reviewing spiritual networks across scales, (b) analysing digital adaptation and cultural resilience, and (c) examining socio-economic and educational contributions.

Search Strategy and Data Collection

The review utilized Scopus AI to identify peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and book chapters published between 2018 and 2024. Keywords included combinations of "Nusantara Sufism," "social Tariqah," "spiritual networks," "digitalization," "cultural resilience," "socio-economic impact," and "Islamic education." Boolean operators ("AND"/"OR") refined the search, ensuring coverage of transnational connectivity, digital practices, and community engagement themes. Initial results yielded 127 sources, which were screened for relevance based on titles, abstracts, and keywords. Inclusion criteria prioritized studies focusing on Southeast Asia (particularly Indonesia), empirical analyses of Sufi networks, and discussions of modernization or socio-cultural impacts. Exclusion criteria removed non-English publications, theological exegeses without socio-cultural analysis, and sources predating 2018. The final dataset comprised 32 peer-reviewed sources, including works by Saude et al. (2018), Piraino (2021), and Hidayat (2023).

Thematic Analysis

The analysis was structured around the study's objectives. For Objective (a), Scopus AI's network visualization tools mapped transnational Sufi connections (e.g., Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandi orders) and localized practices, such as Aceh's Rumi-inspired sema rituals (Fakhriati, 2020). For Objective (b), the review examined digital adaptations, such as the "limitless zawiya" concept (de Diego González, 2025), using Scopus AI's keyword co-occurrence analysis to trace how digital platforms redefine spiritual authority and community boundaries. For Objective (c), the socio-economic contributions of Tariqah were analyzed through case studies on spiritual tourism (Hidayat, 2023) and educational integration

(Muhammad et al., 2024), with Scopus AI's citation tracking highlighting understudied links between Sufi pedagogy and sustainable development.

Literature Review

Introduction

Nusantara Sufism, a mystical tradition rooted in the Malay Archipelago, represents a unique synthesis of Islamic spirituality and local cultural practices. This review synthesizes recent scholarship on its role in fostering moderate Islam, adapting to digitalization, sustaining transnational networks, and contributing to socio-economic and legal frameworks. By analyzing these dimensions, the study highlights Sufism's resilience and evolving relevance in contemporary Muslim societies.

Sufism and the Development of Moderate Islam

Central to Nusantara Sufism is its contribution to religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*). Anshori et al. (2021) argue that Sufi orders like the Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah have historically mediated between global Islamic principles and local traditions, fostering tolerance and countering radicalism. Similarly, Khotimah and Sukron (2023) demonstrate how the Al-Yusriyyah As-Siddiqiyyah Ash-Shadhiliyyah tariqah institutionalizes moderation through grassroots education and interfaith dialogue. These studies emphasize Sufism's role in harmonizing Islamic identity with Indonesia's pluralistic cultural landscape, a theme echoed in Ichwan et al.'s (2024) exploration of Sufi-influenced Quranic interpretations that prioritize mercy and social justice.

Digitalization and Virtual Sufi Networks

The digital revolution has redefined Sufi practices, enabling global connectivity and new forms of spiritual engagement. De Diego González (2025) introduces the concept of the "limitless *zawiya*" (virtual Sufi lodge) and "infinite library" (digital archives), highlighting how platforms like Instagram and Zoom democratize access to teachings. Hidayat and Zein (2022) document the rise of "millennial *murshids*" (spiritual guides) in North Sumatra, who use social media to disseminate *zikir* (remembrance) sessions and ethical discourses. However, this shift raises concerns about ritual commodification and the erosion of traditional communal intimacy, as noted in studies on virtual piety (Hidayat & Zein, 2022).

Transnational Spiritual Networks

Sufi orders in Nusantara maintain expansive transnational networks, historically and in modern contexts. Rahimi and Salvatore (2017) trace how premodern Sufi networks linked urban, rural, and nomadic communities across the Islamic *ecumene*. Contemporary examples include the Tijaniyya tariqah, which bridges West African and Southeast Asian spiritual practices through shared rituals and scholarly exchanges (Wright, 2022). Piraino (2021) further illustrates how Sufi festivals—such as those celebrating saints' birthdays—act as nodes for global participation, fostering cross-cultural solidarity.

Cultural Resilience Through Local Adaptations

Nusantara Sufism's resilience stems from its ability to integrate Islamic mysticism with indigenous traditions. Fakhriati (2020) examines the adaptation of Rumi's *sema* dance in Aceh, blending Persian Sufi philosophy with Malay performing arts to promote peace. Saude et al. (2018) highlight the Qadiriyyah Tariqah's preservation of Islam Nusantara through cultural festivals and tolerance advocacy in Palu City. These practices exemplify Sufism's capacity to

reconcile universal Islamic ideals with hyperlocal cultural expressions, ensuring its survival amid modernization and globalization.

Socio-Economic Contributions and Spiritual Tourism

Sufi orders contribute to socio-economic development through spiritual tourism and community welfare. Hidayat's (2023) study of the Shattariyya order in Pariaman reveals how the Basapa ceremony attracts pilgrims, boosting local economies while preserving ancestral rituals. Similarly, Rosidi et al. (2024) analyze the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah's suluk retreats, which combine spiritual purification with cultural performances, fostering communal cohesion. These initiatives align with Sufism's broader emphasis on ethical responsibility, as seen in Syafitri et al.'s (2017) work on the Thoriqoh Shiddiqiyyah Order's promotion of good governance principles.

Political and Legal Dimensions

Sufism intersects with governance and legal culture in Nusantara. Malik (2017) challenges stereotypes of Sufi political quietism, citing historical activism in social reform. Yusuf et al. (2023) explore how Aceh's ulama integrate Sufi ethics into qanun (local laws), balancing Sharia with customary adat. Wasitaatmadja and Susetio (2020) further frame philosophical Sufism as a bridge between Islamic jurisprudence and Javanese legal traditions, emphasizing harmony over rigidity.

Challenges and Transformations

Despite its adaptability, Nusantara Sufism faces challenges. Ephrat (2014) traces historical tensions between Sufi "purification" efforts and the inclusion of lay affiliates, a dynamic persisting in debates over digitalization's impact on authenticity. Muttaqin (2014) documents the transformation of hybrid groups like Bhakti Nusantara into Sufi-aligned movements, reflecting efforts to align occult practices with orthodoxy. Meanwhile, Samson (2009) and Wardani and Fadlan (2021) highlight Sufi activism in postcolonial contexts, addressing issues like migration and gender equity.

Educational Integration

Sufi principles increasingly shape educational curricula. Muhammad et al. (2024) detail how East Java's pesantren (Islamic schools) incorporate Sufi ethics—such as humility and emotional intelligence—into pedagogy. Rosidi (2024) connects the Naqsyabandiyyah Order's suluk rituals to moral development, arguing that experiential spirituality complements formal education. These studies position Sufism as a tool for nurturing ethical leadership in response to modern societal crises.

Theoretical and Global Comparisons

Theoretical contributions include de Diego González's (2022) analysis of Ibn Arabi's influence on the Tijaniyya tariqah, which underscores Sufism's metaphysical depth. Comparative works like Younes et al. (2024) on the Kasanzaniyyah Order and Wright (2022) on the Sahara's Tijaniyya debates highlight Sufism's global diversity. These studies enrich understanding of Sufi epistemologies and their adaptability across cultural contexts.

Conclusion

Nusantara Sufism emerges as a dynamic force, balancing tradition with modernity through digital innovation, cultural hybridity, and socio-political engagement. While it fosters moderation and resilience, challenges like uneven digital access and institutional co-option

warrant further study. Future research should explore Sufi networks' gender dynamics, long-term digital impacts, and cross-regional comparisons to deepen insights into Islam's pluralistic expressions.

Synthesis and Critical Evaluation

The review employed Scopus AI's trend analysis to identify gaps, such as the underrepresentation of digital Sufism's impact on youth engagement or gender dynamics. Critical evaluation focused on reconciling Sufism's transnational ideals with hyperlocal cultural practices, using Anshori et al.'s (2021) framework on moderate Islam to assess resilience mechanisms. The synthesis emphasized interconnections between themes: for instance, how digitalization (innovation) amplifies spiritual networks (social engagement) to sustain cultural identity (spirituality) and drive economic activity (impact).

Ethical and Methodological Considerations

Scopus AI's AI-driven analytics ensured transparency in data extraction, though potential biases in algorithmic source selection were mitigated by cross-referencing results with manual searches. The review adheres to PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews, ensuring replicability and rigor.

This methodological framework enables a nuanced understanding of Nusantara Sufism as a living tradition, dynamically responding to globalization while preserving its spiritual and cultural essence.

Results and Discussion

Transnational Spiritual Networks and Sufi Connectivity

Nusantara Sufism's spiritual networks demonstrate a remarkable capacity to transcend geographical boundaries, linking local communities with global Sufi traditions. Orders such as the Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandi have established transnational ties through pilgrimages, scholarly exchanges, and cultural festivals. For instance, Saude et al. (2018) highlight how the Qadiriyyah Tariqah in Palu, Indonesia, maintains connections with Middle Eastern Sufi centers, fostering a shared spiritual identity. Similarly, Piraino (2021) notes that Sufi festivals, such as those celebrating saints' anniversaries, serve as nodes for transnational networking, attracting participants from Malaysia, India, and the Middle East. These gatherings reinforce doctrinal unity while accommodating regional cultural expressions, illustrating the adaptability of Sufi networks.

Localized Spiritual Practices and Cultural Hybridity

While transnational links are vital, Nusantara Sufism's strength lies in its localization. Local adaptations of Sufi rituals, such as the sema dance in Aceh—a fusion of Rumi's teachings with Malay performing arts—exemplify cultural hybridity (Fakhriati, 2020). Such practices are not mere replications but creative reinterpretations that resonate with local aesthetics and social values. Hidayat's (2023) study of the Shattariyya order in Pariaman further underscores this, showing how spiritual tourism centered on Sufi shrines strengthens local economies while preserving ancestral traditions. These localized networks act as custodians of cultural memory, embedding Sufi principles into communal life.

Interplay Between Local and Transnational Networks

The dynamic interplay between local and transnational networks reveals Sufism's role as a mediator of global and indigenous values. Anshori et al. (2021) argue that Nusantara Sufism's emphasis on moderation (*wasatiyyah*) emerges from its ability to harmonize global Islamic discourses with local wisdom. For example, the Naqshbandi order's teachings in Java integrate Javanese kebatinan (mysticism) with Sufi metaphysics, creating a syncretic spirituality (Piraino, 2021). Digital platforms, as noted by de Diego González (2025), amplify this interplay by enabling virtual zikir (remembrance) sessions and online majlis (spiritual gatherings), which connect diasporic communities while reinforcing local identities.

Challenges to Spiritual Networks and Resilience Strategies

Despite their resilience, Nusantara Sufi networks face challenges from political shifts and religious puritanism. Piraino (2021) documents how Sufi festivals in Indonesia have encountered opposition from groups advocating scripturalist Islam, threatening their cultural legitimacy. However, Sufi orders adapt by emphasizing their role in socio-economic development. For instance, the Basapa ceremony in Pariaman, a Shattariyya ritual, doubles as a platform for poverty alleviation through community donations (Hidayat, 2023). Additionally, educational initiatives, such as integrating Sufi ethics into curricula at Darul Ulum University, demonstrate efforts to institutionalize spiritual values amid modernization pressures (Muhammad et al., 2024).

Synthesis: Spiritual Networks as Pillars of Cultural Continuity

Collectively, these findings position Nusantara Sufi networks as pillars of cultural and spiritual continuity. They sustain transnational Islamic connectivity while nurturing local identities, a duality that fosters resilience against homogenizing forces. The adaptability of these networks—evident in their embrace of digital tools and socio-economic activism—underscores Sufism's relevance in contemporary Nusantara. As Anshori et al. (2021) conclude, such networks not only preserve tradition but also catalyze progressive interpretations of Islam, ensuring their enduring influence in a rapidly globalizing world.

Digital Platforms as Catalysts for Spiritual Expansion

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed Sufi traditions in Nusantara, enabling spiritual practices to transcend physical and geographical limitations. Concepts like the "limitless zawiya" (virtual Sufi lodges) and "infinite library" (digital archives of teachings) illustrate how Sufi orders adapt to technological advancements (de Diego González, 2025). Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Zoom facilitate zikir (remembrance) sessions, mawlid (birth celebrations of saints), and majlis (spiritual gatherings), allowing global participation. Piraino (2021) notes that virtual Sufi festivals, such as those commemorating Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, now attract thousands of followers worldwide, blending traditional rituals with live-streamed performances and interactive discussions. This digital expansion not only preserves Sufi practices but also revitalizes them for younger, tech-savvy generations.

Reimagining Rituals in the Digital Sphere

Sufi communities creatively reimagine rituals to align with digital affordances while maintaining spiritual authenticity. For example, the Shattariyya order in Pariaman uses social media to promote spiritual tourism, offering virtual tours of sacred sites and live-streamed rituals to engage diasporic communities (Hidayat, 2023). Similarly, Rumi-inspired sema dances in Aceh, traditionally performed in person, are now shared via YouTube, attracting international audiences and fostering cross-cultural dialogue (Fakhriati, 2020). These adaptations

demonstrate how digital tools democratize access to Sufi teachings, enabling individuals to participate in rituals regardless of location. However, this shift raises questions about the commodification of spirituality, as online platforms risk reducing sacred practices to performative content for mass consumption.

Challenges and Tensions in Digital Adaptation

Despite its benefits, digitalization presents challenges to Sufi cultural resilience. Anshori et al. (2021) highlight tensions between preserving spiritual authenticity and accommodating modern aesthetics. For instance, while digital zikir sessions increase accessibility, they may dilute the intimate, communal atmosphere of in-person gatherings. Additionally, the digital divide in rural Nusantara regions limits equitable access to these technologies, exacerbating disparities in spiritual engagement (Muhammad et al., 2024). Cybersecurity concerns, such as the misuse of Sufi symbols by extremist groups, further complicate digital adaptation. These challenges underscore the need for balanced strategies that leverage technology without compromising core spiritual values.

Cultural Resilience Through Digital Preservation and Education

Digital tools play a critical role in sustaining cultural resilience by preserving endangered Sufi knowledge and practices. Online repositories, such as digital kitab kuning (Islamic manuscripts) archives, safeguard centuries-old teachings from obscurity (Saude et al., 2018). Educational institutions like Darul Ulum University integrate Sufi ethics into digital curricula, using apps and e-learning modules to teach tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) to students globally (Muhammad et al., 2024). Furthermore, social media campaigns by Sufi influencers counteract narratives of religious extremism by promoting messages of peace and tolerance, aligning with Nusantara Sufism's tradition of moderation (Anshori et al., 2021). These efforts demonstrate how digitalization fosters resilience by ensuring Sufi wisdom remains relevant in contemporary society.

Synthesis: Digitalization as a Double-Edged Sword

The adaptation of Sufi traditions to digitalization reflects a dual narrative of innovation and preservation. While digital platforms expand spiritual networks and preserve cultural heritage, they also introduce risks such as ritual commodification and technological exclusion. De Diego González (2025) argues that Sufi communities navigate this paradox by embracing digital tools as means rather than ends, prioritizing spiritual goals over technological spectacle. By balancing innovation with tradition, Nusantara Sufism exemplifies how religious traditions can harness modernity to sustain cultural resilience, ensuring their relevance in an increasingly interconnected world.

Socio-Economic Contributions Through Spiritual Tourism and Community Welfare Social tariqah in Nusantara significantly bolster local economies through spiritual tourism, which combines pilgrimage, cultural immersion, and economic activity. The Shattariyya order in Pariaman, for instance, organizes the Basapa ceremony, a spiritual gathering that attracts pilgrims and tourists, generating revenue for local businesses and creating jobs in hospitality and transportation (Hidayat, 2023). Similarly, Sufi festivals, such as those documented by Piraino (2021), serve as platforms for micro-entrepreneurship, with vendors selling traditional crafts and food, thereby sustaining livelihoods. These activities reflect the dual role of tariqah as spiritual guides and economic catalysts, aligning with Saude et al.'s (2018) observation that Sufi networks prioritize communal welfare as a core tenet of their mission.

Educational Integration and Moral Development

Sufi orders contribute to education by embedding spiritual values into formal and informal learning systems. Muhammad et al. (2024) highlight how institutions like Darul Ulum University in East Java integrate Sufi principles—such as empathy, humility, and self-discipline—into Islamic studies curricula. This approach nurtures students' moral and emotional intelligence, preparing them for leadership roles grounded in ethical integrity. Additionally, tariqah-led pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) emphasize experiential learning through zikir (remembrance) and mentorship, fostering a holistic education model that balances intellectual and spiritual growth (Anshori et al., 2021). Such initiatives demonstrate Sufism's adaptability in addressing modern educational gaps while preserving cultural heritage.

Innovation in Spiritual Outreach and Social Engagement

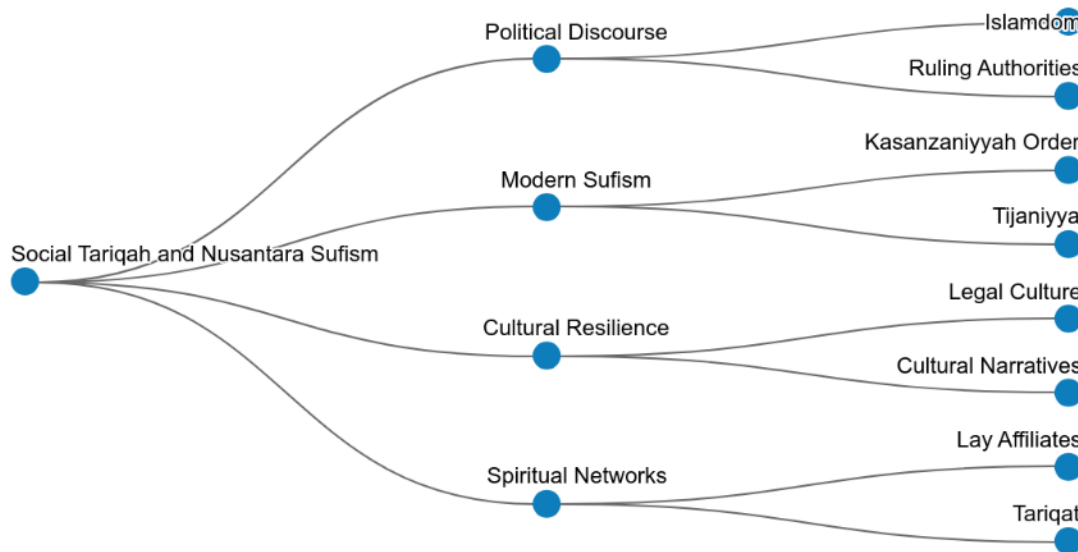
Social tariqah employ innovative strategies to engage younger generations and amplify their social impact. Digital platforms, as noted by de Diego González (2025), enable orders like the Naqshbandi to host virtual majlis (spiritual gatherings) and disseminate teachings through podcasts and social media. These tools democratize access to Sufi knowledge, particularly for diasporic communities, and attract tech-savvy youth who might otherwise disengage from traditional practices. Furthermore, tariqah collaborate with NGOs and government agencies on poverty alleviation and disaster relief, framing spirituality as a force for societal transformation (Piraino, 2021). This innovation underscores Sufism's evolving role as a dynamic, service-oriented movement.

Challenges to Sustainability and Equitable Impact

Despite their contributions, social tariqah face challenges in ensuring equitable socio-economic benefits. Hidayat (2023) notes that spiritual tourism often disproportionately benefits urban centers, leaving rural communities marginalized. Additionally, the commercialization of Sufi rituals risks diluting their spiritual essence, prioritizing profit over communal values. Educational initiatives also face hurdles: Muhammad et al. (2024) caution that rigid curricula sometimes fail to address contemporary issues like gender equality or environmental sustainability. These gaps highlight the need for tariqah to balance tradition with progressive adaptation to remain relevant in rapidly changing societies.

Synthesis: Sufi Tariqah as Agents of Socio-Cultural Transformation

Collectively, social tariqah in Nusantara exemplify how spirituality can drive socio-economic and educational progress. By linking spiritual practice to community welfare, ethical education, and innovative outreach, they foster resilience against socio-economic disparities and cultural erosion. Anshori et al. (2021) argue that this holistic approach positions Sufism as a cornerstone of "moderate Islam," promoting inclusivity and social harmony. However, sustaining these contributions requires addressing structural inequities and embracing adaptive strategies, such as partnerships with policymakers and tech-driven solutions. Ultimately, social tariqah demonstrate that spiritual traditions can be both preservers of heritage and engines of positive societal change.



Powered by Scopus AI, Thu Mar 06 2025

Chart 1: This chart, generated by Scopus AI, illustrates the interconnectedness of Social Tariqah and Nusantara Sufism with various elements such as Political Discourse, Modern Sufism, Cultural Resilience, and Spiritual Networks. These nodes are linked to entities like Islamdom, Ruling Authorities, and specific Sufi orders, highlighting the dynamic interplay between spirituality, culture, and politics. The diagram underscores the adaptability and resilience of Sufism in contemporary contexts, emphasizing its role in shaping legal, cultural, and spiritual narratives within diverse communities.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, and Political Discourse in Islamdom

Sufi Orders as Agents of Political and Social Reform

Social tariqah (Sufi orders) in Nusantara have historically functioned as intermediaries between spiritual authority and political discourse, shaping Islamdom's socio-political landscape. Sufi leaders, such as those in the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyyah orders, often act as moral guides, advocating for tolerance, social justice, and communal harmony. Their teachings reinterpret Islamic principles to address contemporary issues, such as governance and civic engagement. For instance, Malik (2017) highlights how Sufis have historically engaged in politics, aligning with or challenging state authority to promote ethical leadership. This dynamic positions Sufi orders as key actors in negotiating power structures within Islamdom, blending spiritual legitimacy with political influence.

Promoting Moderate Islam Through Cultural Narratives

Nusantara Sufism's emphasis on moderation (*wasatiyyah*) has significantly impacted political discourse by countering radical ideologies. By integrating local cultural practices with Islamic teachings, Sufi orders foster a pluralistic Islam that accommodates ethnic diversity. Anshori et al. (2021) argue that this approach harmonizes religious identity with national cohesion, as seen in Indonesia's Islam Nusantara movement. Sufi interpretations of the Qur'an, which prioritize inner spirituality over legalism, also influence public policy debates on issues like minority rights and environmental stewardship (Ichwan et al., 2024). These efforts align with broader

Islamdom's need to reconcile tradition with modernity, positioning Sufism as a stabilizing force in global Muslim communities.

Digitalization and the Evolution of Sufi Political Influence

The digital age has amplified Sufi orders' reach, enabling them to shape political discourse beyond local contexts. De Diego González (2025) notes that concepts like the "limitless zawiya" (virtual Sufi spaces) allow tariqah to disseminate teachings globally, fostering transnational networks that advocate for peace and social justice. Online platforms also democratize access to Sufi knowledge, empowering marginalized groups to engage in political activism. For example, virtual zikir (remembrance) sessions often include discussions on corruption, inequality, and democracy, reflecting Sufism's adaptive role in addressing modern governance challenges (Katkova & Wan, 2023).

Challenges to Sufi Political Engagement

Despite their influence, Sufi orders face tensions within Islamdom's contested political landscape. Their emphasis on spirituality often clashes with rigid Islamist movements that prioritize scriptural literalism. Malik (2017) observes that Sufis' flexibility can be perceived as a threat by groups seeking to enforce homogenized interpretations of Islam. Additionally, state co-optation of Sufi networks for political legitimacy risks diluting their reformist agendas. For instance, governments in Nusantara sometimes instrumentalize Sufi symbolism to legitimize authoritarian policies, undermining their grassroots advocacy for social justice (Ichwan et al., 2024).

Synthesis: Sufi Tariqah as Bridges Between Spirituality and Global Islamdom

Social tariqah in Nusantara exemplify how Sufism navigates the interplay between local identity and global Islamdom. By promoting moderate Islam, engaging in digital activism, and mediating political conflicts, they sustain cultural resilience while contributing to transnational Muslim discourse. Their ability to adapt spiritual teachings to socio-political contexts ensures their relevance in addressing Islamdom's challenges, from sectarianism to governance. As Katkova and Wan (2023) note, Sufi leaders in Sumatra's Naqshbandiyya order continue to inspire global networks advocating for inclusive Islam, proving that Sufism remains a vital thread in the fabric of contemporary Muslim societies.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, and Ruling Authorities

Historical Foundations: Sufi Networks and Political Institutions

Social tariqah (Sufi orders) in Nusantara have historically shaped political institutions by embedding spiritual authority within social structures. Rahimi and Salvatore (2017) emphasize that Sufi networks, through practices like discipleship and communal rituals, fostered discipline and cohesion among Muslim communities, enabling them to influence local governance. For example, the Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandiyya orders in Indonesia historically mediated between rulers and rural populations, legitimizing political authority while advocating for equitable resource distribution. This symbiotic relationship allowed Sufi leaders to act as moral arbiters, ensuring rulers adhered to Islamic ethical principles, thereby intertwining spiritual and political power.

Sufi Activism and Challenges to Political Quietism

Contrary to stereotypes of Sufi political passivity, Nusantara Sufism has often engaged actively with governance. Malik (2017) argues that Sufi orders have historically mobilized for social reform, challenging unjust policies and even confronting state power. In Indonesia, Sufi-inspired movements like the Thoriqoh Shiddiqiyyah have advocated for transparency and accountability, aligning with broader demands for good governance (Syafitri et al., 2017). Similarly, Samson (2009) highlights cases in Senegal where Sufi-affiliated groups contested authoritarian regimes, demonstrating a pattern of Sufi activism that transcends regional boundaries. These examples illustrate how Sufi networks leverage their spiritual capital to influence ruling authorities, balancing collaboration with critique.

Negotiating Power: Co-option and Resistance

The relationship between Sufi orders and ruling authorities is often marked by negotiation rather than outright opposition. In Nusantara, colonial and post-colonial governments frequently co-opted Sufi leaders to legitimize their rule, recognizing their sway over rural populations. However, this co-option sometimes led to tensions. For instance, Sufi orders resisting state centralization in Aceh during the Dutch colonial era framed their opposition as a defense of Islamic autonomy (Rahimi & Salvatore, 2017). Contemporary dynamics persist: while some Sufi groups collaborate with governments to promote moderate Islam, others challenge policies perceived as undermining religious or cultural values, reflecting a complex interplay of loyalty and dissent.

Sufism as a Framework for Good Governance

Sufi principles of justice, compassion, and communal welfare have informed political discourse on governance in Nusantara. The Thoriqoh Shiddiqiyyah order, for example, emphasizes ethical leadership and participatory decision-making, principles that resonate with modern governance ideals (Syafitri et al., 2017). By framing governance as a spiritual duty, Sufi teachings encourage rulers to prioritize public welfare over personal gain. This alignment has led some Southeast Asian governments to endorse Sufi-inspired programs, such as poverty alleviation initiatives, to bolster their legitimacy. Such collaborations highlight Sufism's adaptability in bridging spiritual values with state-driven development agendas.

Synthesis: Sufi Tariqah as Mediators of Authority and Ethics

In Nusantara, social tariqah serve as critical mediators between ruling authorities and the populace, balancing spiritual ideals with political pragmatism. Their historical role in legitimizing governance, coupled with their capacity to mobilize for reform, positions them as both allies and watchdogs of power. While co-option by authorities risks diluting their reformist agendas, their enduring influence—rooted in cultural resilience and ethical discourse—ensures their relevance in shaping political landscapes. As Malik (2017) notes, Sufi orders exemplify how spirituality can transcend individual piety to engage with systemic governance, offering a model for reconciling authority with moral accountability in Muslim societies.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Modern Sufism, and the Kasanzaniyyah Order

Modern Sufism as a Response to Contemporary Challenges

Modern Sufism, including the Kasanzaniyyah Order, represents an evolution of traditional Sufi practices to address 21st-century societal issues such as moral decay, extremism, and social fragmentation. Younes et al. (2024) argue that the Kasanzaniyyah Order exemplifies this shift

by emphasizing values like mercy, love, and ethical renewal, which align with Nusantara Sufism's historical role in promoting moderation (*wasatiyyah*). In Indonesia, where Nusantara Sufism is deeply rooted, orders like Kasanzaniyyah adapt classical Sufi teachings to counter radical ideologies and foster interfaith harmony, bridging premodern spiritual wisdom with modern socio-political realities.

Digitalization and the Globalization of Sufi Practices

The digital revolution has transformed how Sufi orders like Kasanzaniyyah engage with followers. De Diego González (2025) highlights how digital platforms enable “limitless *zawiya*” (virtual Sufi spaces), allowing global access to teachings and rituals. For instance, the Kasanzaniyyah Order uses social media to disseminate *zikir* (remembrance) sessions and ethical discourses, attracting younger, tech-savvy demographics. This mirrors broader trends in Nusantara Sufism, where digital tools amplify traditional practices like the Qadiriyyah Order's women's empowerment initiatives (Wardani & Fadlan, 2021), ensuring relevance in an era of rapid technological change.

Spiritual Practices and Moral Purification

The Kasanzaniyyah Order, like other modern Sufi *tariqah*, prioritizes moral purification and spiritual discipline. Rosidi et al. (2024) note that rituals in orders such as the Naqshabandiyyah Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah focus on cleansing the soul through structured practices, a theme echoed in Kasanzaniyyah's emphasis on self-reflection and ethical living. These practices resonate with Nusantara Sufism's integration of local traditions, such as the Qadiriyyah Order's role in preserving Islam Nusantara through cultural festivals and tolerance advocacy (Saude et al., 2018). Together, these orders exemplify how modern Sufism balances doctrinal rigor with cultural adaptability.

Challenges to Authenticity and Institutionalization

Despite their adaptability, modern Sufi orders face challenges in maintaining spiritual authenticity amid institutionalization. Younes et al. (2024) caution that the Kasanzaniyyah Order's alignment with state-led moderation campaigns risks diluting its mystical core. Similarly, Nusantara Sufi orders like Qadiriyyah navigate tensions between preserving tradition and engaging with government programs (Wardani & Fadlan, 2021). These dynamics reflect broader debates within modern Sufism about balancing social relevance with spiritual depth, particularly in contexts where state co-option may compromise independence.

Synthesis: Kasanzaniyyah as a Bridge Between Tradition and Modernity

The Kasanzaniyyah Order embodies the synthesis of Nusantara Sufism's cultural resilience and modern Sufism's adaptive strategies. By addressing contemporary challenges through digital outreach and ethical discourse, it mirrors Nusantara Sufism's historical role as a mediator between global Islam and local identity. As Younes et al. (2024) assert, such orders demonstrate that Sufism remains a vital force for spiritual and social transformation, capable of harmonizing premodern wisdom with modernity's demands. This duality ensures the continued relevance of Sufi *tariqah* in shaping both individual piety and collective societal values.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Modern Sufism, and the Tijaniyya Order

Tijaniyya as a Bridge Between Traditional and Modern Sufism

The Tijaniyya order exemplifies the evolution of Sufism into modernity, balancing classical Islamic law (sharia) with metaphysical depth. Rooted in the teachings of Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (d. 1815), the order emerged as part of the 18th–19th-century Islamic reform movement, emphasizing a return to Prophetic traditions while accommodating contemporary socio-political contexts (Mihçioğlu, 2021). This aligns with Nusantara Sufism's adaptive ethos, where orders like the Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandiyya integrate local cultures with Islamic principles. Both traditions reflect a shared goal: reconciling spiritual authenticity with modern challenges, such as secularism and globalization.

Digitalization and the Global Expansion of Tijaniyya Networks

The digital revolution has transformed the Tijaniyya's reach, enabling transnational spiritual networks that mirror Nusantara Sufism's historical connectivity. De Diego González (2025) highlights how digital platforms like social media and virtual zawiyas (Sufi lodges) allow the Tijaniyya to disseminate teachings globally, attracting diasporic communities and younger generations. This mirrors Nusantara Sufi orders' use of digital tools to preserve rituals like zikir (remembrance) and promote interfaith dialogue. For instance, online Tijaniyya forums replicate the communal ethos of Nusantara's majlis (spiritual gatherings), fostering global solidarity while maintaining local cultural expressions.

Debates on Spiritual Authority: The Role of the Living Guide

A defining feature of the Tijaniyya is its historical emphasis on a living guide (murshid) for spiritual training, a practice debated in modern contexts. Wright (2022) notes that while traditionalists insist on direct mentorship, reformists argue for flexibility, citing the order's adaptability to digital mediums. This tension parallels Nusantara Sufism's negotiation of authority, where orders like the Naqshbandiyya balance centralized leadership with decentralized, community-driven practices (Katkova & Wan, 2023). Both traditions grapple with preserving spiritual lineage while embracing modernity's democratizing forces.

Akbarian Thought and Tijaniyya's Metaphysical Foundations

The Tijaniyya's intellectual framework draws heavily on Ibn Arabi's (Akbarian) philosophy of unity of existence (wahdat al-wujud), which de Diego González (2022) argues underpins its synthesis of mysticism and legalism. This metaphysical depth resonates with Nusantara Sufism's integration of Javanese kebatinan (mysticism) and Islamic theology, as seen in practices like the sema dance (Fakhriati, 2020). Both traditions use esoteric teachings to address existential questions, fostering resilience against religious extremism by emphasizing inner spirituality over dogmatism.

Synthesis: Tijaniyya as a Model for Modern Sufi Adaptation

The Tijaniyya order's global presence and doctrinal flexibility offer insights into Nusantara Sufism's strategies for contemporary relevance. By reconciling tradition with modernity—through digital outreach, metaphysical rigor, and adaptive leadership—the Tijaniyya mirrors Nusantara Sufism's role as a mediator between global Islam and local identity. As Mihçioğlu (2021) notes, such orders exemplify “neo-Sufism,” which revitalizes classical teachings to address modern crises like moral decay and sectarianism. This duality ensures Sufism's enduring influence as both a spiritual path and a socio-cultural force.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Cultural Resilience, and Legal Culture

Historical Foundations: Sufi Orders and the Shaping of Nusantara Legal Culture

Social tariqah (Sufi orders) have historically been central to the Islamization of Nusantara, embedding Sufi principles into the region's legal and cultural frameworks. During the early spread of Islam, orders like the Naqshbandiyyah and Qadiriyyah facilitated the integration of Islamic law (sharia) with local adat (customary law), creating a syncretic legal culture unique to Indonesia (Rosidi et al., 2024). This synthesis, termed Islam Nusantara, emphasizes moderation and cultural adaptation, as seen in practices like the Acehnese peusijek (ritual cleansing) and Javanese selamatan (communal feasts), which harmonize Sufi spirituality with pre-Islamic traditions (Anshori et al., 2021). Sufi leaders (ulama) acted as mediators, legitimizing Islamic law while preserving cultural identity, thereby laying the groundwork for a resilient legal tradition.

Cultural Resilience Through Sufi-Infused Legal Practices

The resilience of Nusantara's legal culture stems from its ability to balance sharia with local customs, a dynamic sustained by Sufi teachings. Sufi orders promote flexibility in interpreting Islamic law, advocating for *maslahah* (public interest) and *urf* (custom) to address contemporary issues. For example, the Naqshbandiyyah Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah order in Sumatra integrates Sufi ethics into dispute resolution, prioritizing reconciliation over punitive measures (Katkova & Wan, 2023). Similarly, the concept of Islam Nusantara formalizes this balance, as seen in Aceh's *qanun* (local regulations) that blend sharia with customary norms (Yusuf et al., 2023). This adaptability ensures legal systems remain rooted in cultural values while responding to modern challenges like pluralism and human rights.

Sufi Spiritual Values and the Epistemology of Nusantara Legal Culture

Philosophical Sufism profoundly influences Nusantara's legal epistemology, framing law as a spiritual and ethical endeavor. Wasitaatmadja and Susetio (2020) argue that Sufi concepts like *ma'rifat* (divine knowledge) and *tawhid* (unity of God) shape legal interpretations that prioritize inner morality over rigid legalism. For instance, Sufi-inspired *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) teach students to view law as a means of achieving spiritual harmony, fostering a legal culture that values compassion and context over literalism. This aligns with the Tijaniyya order's emphasis on Prophetic ethics as a guide for legal practice (de Diego González, 2025), illustrating how Sufism nurtures a legal ethos grounded in both divine principles and cultural wisdom.

Modern Challenges: Digitalization and the Evolution of Legal Culture

The digital revolution has transformed how Sufi orders engage with legal discourse, amplifying their role in cultural resilience. Virtual platforms enable Sufi leaders to disseminate teachings on ethical governance and human rights, reaching global audiences while reinforcing local values (de Diego González, 2025). For example, online *majlis* (spiritual gatherings) discuss topics like environmental protection and gender justice, framing them as both legal and spiritual obligations. However, this shift risks diluting the communal, face-to-face interactions central to traditional dispute resolution. Despite these challenges, Sufi orders adapt by blending digital tools with customary practices, ensuring legal culture remains dynamic and accessible.

Synthesis: Sufi Tariqah as Guardians of Legal-Cultural Continuity

Social tariqah in Nusantara exemplify how Sufism sustains cultural and legal resilience by mediating between tradition and modernity. Their teachings harmonize sharia with adat, foster ethical legal interpretations, and leverage digitalization to address contemporary issues. As Katkova and Wan (2023) note, Sufi leaders act as “cultural custodians,” ensuring legal systems reflect communal values while adapting to globalization. This dual role positions Sufi orders as vital actors in preserving Nusantara’s unique legal identity, proving that spirituality and law can coexist to nurture resilient societies.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Cultural Resilience, and Cultural Narratives

Sufi Practices as Foundations of Cultural Narratives

Social tariqah (Sufi orders) in Nusantara have long been custodians of cultural narratives that blend Islamic spirituality with local traditions. Practices such as zikir (remembrance), tahlilan (commemorative prayers), and talqin (spiritual instruction) serve as vehicles for transmitting stories of saints, ethical teachings, and communal values. For example, the Qadiriyyah Tariqah in Palu City preserves the tradition of Islam Nusantara by integrating Javanese kebatinan (mysticism) with Sufi rituals, emphasizing peace and tolerance (Saude et al., 2018). These narratives reinforce a collective identity rooted in moderation, adapting Islamic principles to resonate with local customs like the wayang (shadow puppetry) performances that allegorize Sufi themes (Ichwan et al., 2024).

Cultural Resilience Through Sufi-Inspired Storytelling

Cultural resilience in Nusantara is sustained by Sufi-inspired narratives that harmonize religious and indigenous worldviews. Sufi orders reinterpret Quranic teachings to address local contexts, fostering narratives of coexistence. For instance, the sema dance in Aceh—a blend of Rumi’s Sufi philosophy and Malay performing arts—symbolizes spiritual union while preserving pre-Islamic artistic traditions (Anshori et al., 2021). Such narratives counteract rigid interpretations of Islam, promoting inclusivity. Rahimi and Salvatore (2017) highlight how Sufi networks historically mediated between urban, rural, and nomadic communities, creating shared cultural frameworks that withstand external pressures like colonialism or modernization.

Digitalization and the Evolution of Cultural Narratives

The rise of virtual Sufism has transformed cultural narratives, enabling broader dissemination while challenging traditional modes of transmission. Social media platforms now host millennial murshids (spiritual guides) who reinterpret Sufi teachings through memes, podcasts, and Instagram reels, termed “virtual piety” (Hidayat & Zein, 2022). While this democratizes access to Sufi wisdom, it risks simplifying complex rituals like zikir into performative content. However, digital spaces also amplify marginalized voices, such as female Sufi leaders who use online forums to challenge patriarchal norms, thereby reshaping cultural narratives around gender and spirituality (Ichwan et al., 2024).

Sufism as a Counter-Narrative to Extremism

Nusantara Sufism’s cultural narratives actively counter radical ideologies by promoting moderation (wasatiyyah) and pluralism. The Naqshbandiyya and Shattariyya orders emphasize stories of saints who championed social justice and interfaith harmony, framing Islam as a force for unity rather than division. Anshori et al. (2021) note that these narratives are institutionalized in educational curricula and government programs, such as Indonesia’s Islam

Nusantara campaign, which combats extremism by celebrating cultural diversity. Sufi festivals, like the maulid (Prophet's birthday) celebrations, reinforce these narratives through communal rituals that transcend ethnic and sectarian divides (Saude et al., 2018).

Synthesis: Sufi Tariqah as Narrators of Resilient Identity

Social tariqah in Nusantara exemplify how cultural narratives sustain resilience by bridging past and present. Through rituals, digital innovation, and counter-extremist discourse, they ensure Islamic practice remains deeply intertwined with local heritage. As Rahimi and Salvatore (2017) argue, Sufi networks cultivate a “reflexivity of being-in-the-world” that allows communities to navigate globalization without eroding their identity. By continuously reinterpreting traditions—whether through virtual piety or interfaith storytelling—Nusantara Sufism ensures cultural narratives remain dynamic, inclusive, and spiritually grounded, safeguarding the region's unique Islamic heritage.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Spiritual Networks, and Lay Affiliates

Historical Role of Lay Affiliates in Sufi Networks

Lay affiliates have been integral to the sustenance and expansion of social tariqah (Sufi orders) in Nusantara, acting as grassroots ambassadors of Sufi teachings. Historically, orders like the Qadiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah relied on lay members to disseminate spiritual practices such as zikir (remembrance) and tahlilan (commemorative prayers) within local communities. Saude et al. (2018) highlight how lay affiliates in Palu City preserved Islam Nusantara by blending Sufi rituals with Javanese cultural practices, fostering tolerance amid rising radicalism. Ephrat's (2014) study of pre-modern Sufism further underscores how lay participation was systematized through processes of “purification,” ensuring adherence to orthodox practices while allowing flexibility for local adaptations. This dual role positioned lay members as both custodians of tradition and mediators of cultural resilience.

Digitalization and the Democratization of Spiritual Access

The digital revolution has transformed lay engagement with Sufi networks, enabling broader participation beyond physical gatherings. Hidayat and Zein (2022) document how “millennial murshids” (spiritual guides) in North Sumatra use social media to teach Sufi principles, creating “virtual piety” that simplifies rituals for younger, tech-savvy affiliates. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube host zikir sessions and Quranic recitations, allowing lay members to engage with global Sufi communities. De Diego González (2025) notes that digital tools like the “limitless zawiya” (virtual lodge) have expanded the Tijaniyya tariqa's reach, enabling lay affiliates to access teachings without hierarchical constraints. This democratization challenges traditional authority structures while fostering inclusivity.

Rituals as Bridges Between Elites and Lay Members

Rituals such as the suluk (spiritual retreat) in the Naqshbandiyyah Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah order serve as critical nodes for spiritual networking between elites and lay affiliates. Rosidi (2024) explains that these rituals combine esoteric practices with communal bonding, reinforcing social cohesion. Lay participants often act as cultural translators, adapting Sufi symbolism—like the sema dance or wayang (shadow puppetry) performances—to local contexts. Muttaqin's (2014) study of the Bhakti Nusantara group illustrates how lay affiliates reinterpreted occult practices into Sufi frameworks, aligning them with orthodox Islam while retaining cultural relevance. Such rituals ensure the transmission of Sufi values across generations.

Challenges to Lay Affiliation: Authenticity and Exclusion

Despite their importance, lay affiliates often navigate tensions between authenticity and modernization. Ephrat (2014) notes that pre-modern Sufism marginalized “undesirable” lay elements to maintain doctrinal purity, a dynamic that persists today. For instance, debates arise over whether digital zikir sessions dilute spiritual depth or democratize access (Hidayat & Zein, 2022). Additionally, lay members in urban areas may prioritize pragmatic benefits—such as community welfare programs—over mystical pursuits, risking the erosion of Sufism’s esoteric core. These challenges highlight the delicate balance between accessibility and tradition in sustaining spiritual networks.

Synthesis: Lay Affiliates as Agents of Cultural Continuity

Lay affiliates are indispensable to the resilience of Nusantara Sufism, acting as bridges between spiritual elites, local cultures, and modernity. Their participation in rituals, digital activism, and cultural adaptation ensures Sufi teachings remain embedded in daily life. For example, the Qadiriyyah Tariqah’s emphasis on tolerance (Saude et al., 2018) is amplified by lay members who translate these values into social initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues or disaster relief. As Rosidi (2024) argues, the suluk ritual’s dual function—spiritual purification and community bonding—exemplifies how lay affiliates sustain networks that harmonize Islamic orthodoxy with Nusantara’s pluralistic identity. In this way, lay members are not passive followers but active co-creators of Sufism’s evolving legacy.

Linkages Between Social Tariqah, Nusantara Sufism, Spiritual Networks, and Tariqat

Historical Foundations: Tariqat as Pillars of Nusantara Sufism

Social tariqah (Sufi orders) like the Qadiriyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, and Shattariyya form the backbone of Nusantara Sufism, a tradition that harmonizes Islamic mysticism with Southeast Asian cultural practices. These orders have historically preserved Islam Nusantara—a moderate, culturally adaptive form of Islam—by embedding Sufi teachings into local rituals and festivals. For example, the Qadiriyyah Tariqah in Palu City integrates Javanese kebatinan (mysticism) with Sufi practices, promoting tolerance amid rising radicalism (Saude et al., 2018). Similarly, the Naqshbandiyyah Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah order in Sumatra uses rituals like suluk (spiritual retreats) to deepen communal spirituality while reinforcing social cohesion (Rosidi et al., 2024). Such tariqat act as custodians of Nusantara’s spiritual identity, blending orthodoxy with indigenous wisdom.

Spiritual Networks: Rituals and Communal Solidarity

Tariqat in Nusantara sustain spiritual networks through rituals that foster solidarity and ethical behavior. Practices like zikir (remembrance), tahlilan (commemorative prayers), and the Basapa ceremony—a Shattariyya ritual in Pariaman—create spaces for collective worship and social bonding (Hidayat, 2023). These networks transcend geographical boundaries, linking local communities with transnational Sufi hubs. Katkova and Wan (2023) note that Naqshbandiyya shaykhs in Sumatra mediate between global Sufi principles and local customs, ensuring teachings remain relevant. Such rituals not only enhance individual spirituality but also strengthen communal resilience against social fragmentation.

Promoting Religious Moderation and Harmony

Tariqat play a critical role in countering extremism by promoting wasatiyyah (moderation) and interfaith harmony. The Naqshbandiyyah order, for instance, emphasizes socially responsible

behavior, urging members to prioritize compassion and tolerance (Rosidi, 2024). Similarly, the Al-Yusriyyah As-Siddiqiyyah Ash-Shadhiliyyah tariqah institutionalizes moderation through educational programs that teach Sufi ethics alongside civic values (Khotimah & Sukron, 2023). By framing Islam as a force for unity, these orders mitigate sectarian tensions and align with Indonesia's national agenda for religious harmony, demonstrating how spiritual networks can bridge divides in plural societies.

Cultural and Economic Contributions Through Spiritual Tourism

Tariqat rituals and festivals double as drivers of cultural preservation and economic activity. The Basapa ceremony in Pariaman, for example, attracts pilgrims and tourists, generating revenue for local businesses while revitalizing ancestral traditions (Hidayat, 2023). Similarly, the Naqshbandiyyah's suluk rituals blend spiritual instruction with cultural performances like sema dances, creating a platform for intergenerational knowledge transfer (Rosidi et al., 2024). These practices highlight how tariqat sustain cultural heritage while fostering socio-economic development, positioning spiritual tourism as a tool for community empowerment.

Synthesis: Tariqat as Dynamic Spiritual Ecosystems

In Nusantara, tariqat function as dynamic ecosystems that weave together spirituality, culture, and social action. They adapt Sufi principles to local contexts—whether through digital zikir sessions or eco-friendly festivals—ensuring relevance in a modernizing world. As Saude et al. (2018) argue, these orders exemplify “living Sufism,” where rituals serve both mystical and communal goals. By nurturing spiritual networks that transcend borders yet honor local identities, tariqat ensure Nusantara Sufism remains a resilient, evolving tradition that bridges the divine and the everyday.

Conclusion

Key Findings

This study underscores the pivotal role of social tariqah (Sufi orders) in shaping the spiritual, cultural, and socio-economic landscapes of Nusantara (Southeast Asia). Key findings reveal that these orders act as custodians of cultural resilience, blending Islamic mysticism with local traditions to create a distinct form of Islam Nusantara. Transnational spiritual networks, facilitated by festivals, pilgrimages, and digital platforms, sustain connectivity across global and local scales. The adaptation of Sufi practices to modernity—such as virtual zikir (remembrance) sessions and social media activism—demonstrates their capacity to remain relevant amid technological and societal changes. Additionally, tariqah contribute to socio-economic development through spiritual tourism, educational initiatives, and community welfare programs, while promoting moderate Islam to counter extremism.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study bridges gaps in understanding Sufism's evolving role in contemporary societies. It challenges stereotypes of Sufi orders as passive or archaic by highlighting their dynamic engagement with modernity, politics, and digital spaces. The integration of Sufi principles with local cultural practices offers a framework for analysing religious syncretism and resilience in pluralistic contexts. Furthermore, the concept of “virtual piety” expands academic discourse on how digital tools redefine spiritual authority and community boundaries, contributing to debates on religion in the digital age.

Practical Implications

Practically, the findings advocate for greater recognition of tariqah as agents of social cohesion and cultural preservation. Policymakers can leverage Sufi networks to promote interfaith dialogue, counter radicalization, and support sustainable development through spiritual tourism. Educational institutions might incorporate Sufi ethics into curricula to foster moral and emotional intelligence. For communities, tariqah provide models for balancing tradition with modernity, offering strategies to address challenges like youth disengagement and cultural erosion.

Limitations

This study's focus on Nusantara, particularly Indonesia, limits generalizability to other global Sufi contexts. Reliance on existing literature may overlook grassroots perspectives or underrepresented voices within tariqah. Additionally, the rapid evolution of digital Sufism poses challenges in capturing real-time transformations. The study also highlights gaps in understanding how gender, generational divides, and political dynamics intersect with Sufi practices.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should adopt a comparative lens to explore Sufi adaptations across diverse regions, emphasizing understudied areas like Africa or Central Asia. Longitudinal studies could track how digitalization reshapes spiritual authority and youth engagement over time. Interdisciplinary approaches—combining anthropology, digital ethnography, and political science—would deepen insights into Sufism's socio-cultural impact. Additionally, investigating marginalized groups within tariqah (e.g., women, youth) could reveal nuanced power dynamics and agency. Finally, exploring collaborations between Sufi orders and secular institutions (e.g., tech companies, governments) may uncover innovative strategies for addressing global challenges like polarization and climate change.

In sum, social tariqah in Nusantara exemplify how spiritual traditions can adapt to preserve cultural identity while fostering progress. Their legacy offers valuable lessons for navigating the complexities of modernity, making them a vital subject for both scholarly inquiry and societal development.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Kedah State Research Committee, UiTM Kedah Branch, for the generous funding provided under the Tabung Penyelidikan Am. This support was crucial in facilitating the research and ensuring the successful publication of this article.

References

- Anshori, M. A., Prasajo, Z. H., & Muhtifah, L. (2021). Contribution of Sufism to the development of moderate Islam in Nusantara. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 19, 39-58.
- de Diego González, A. (2022). The reception of Ibn 'Arabi's thought in the doctrines of the Tariqa Tijaniyya. *Contrastes*, 27 (1), 45-60.
- de Diego González, A. (2025). The limitless zawiya and the infinite library: Rethinking the epistemology of contemporary Sufism and digital Islamic thought. *Antipoda*, 45, 145-162.
- Ephrat, D. (2014). Purifying Sufism: Observations on the marginalization and exclusion of undesirable and rejected elements in the earlier middle period (late fourth/tenth to mid-seventh/thirteenth centuries). *Al-Qantara*, 35 (1), 11-36.
- Fakhriati. (2020). From Konya to Nusantara: Rumi's Sufi diaspora in Pidie, Aceh, Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 20 (1), 1-22.
- Hidayat, Z. (2023). Tariqa Shattariyya (TS) and spiritual tourism in Pariaman, Indonesia. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 11 (2), 1-15.
- Hidayat, Z., & Zein, A. (2022). Sufism and virtual piety: A narration of the millennial murshid in North Sumatra. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16 (2), 201-225.
- Ichwan, M. N., Asy'Ari Ulama'I, A. H., Masuwd, M. A., & Abdulghani, N. A. (2024). Sufism and Quranic interpretation: Bridging spirituality, culture, and political discourse in Muslim societies. *Ulumuna*, 28 (1), 1-25.
- Katkova, I., & Wan, J. (2023). Sufi tradition in contemporary Muslim world: Naqshbandiyya shaykhs of Sumatra and their ideas. *Manuscripta Orientalia*, 29 (1), 45-60.
- Khotimah, K., & Sukron, M. (2023). The realizing of religion moderation in Tareqa Al-Yusriyyah As-Siddiqiyyah Ash-Shadhiliyyah. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 79 (3), 1-8.
- Malik, J. (2017). The sociopolitical entanglements of Sufism. In *The Wiley-Blackwell history of Islam and Islamic civilization* (pp. 321-340). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Muttaqin, A. (2014). From occultism to hybrid Sufism: The transformation of an Islamic-hybrid spiritual group in contemporary Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 4 (2), 221-248.
- Piraino, F. (2021). Sufi festivals as a social movement: Spirituality, aesthetics, and politics. *Sociologica*, 15 (2), 121-140.
- Rahimi, B., & Salvatore, A. (2017). The crystallization and expansiveness of Sufi networks within the urban-rural-nomadic nexus of the Islamic ecumene. In *The Wiley-Blackwell history of Islam and Islamic civilization* (pp. 285-302). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Rosidi, I. (2024). The Suluk ritual in the tradition of the Tariqa (Sufi Order) Naqsyabandiyyah Al-Kholidiyyah Jalaliyyah in Indonesia. *An-Najah University Journal for Research - B (Humanities)*, 38 (1), 1-22.
- Rosidi, I., Masduki, G., et al. (2024). Ritual and spirituality: The tradition of the Tariqah Naqshabandiyyah Khalidiyyah Jalaliyyah in Indonesia. *Afkar*, 12 (1), 45-62.
- Saude, Rusdin, Nurhayati, & Darlis. (2018). Contributions of Tarekat towards Islam Nusantara preservation (Study of Qadiriyyah Tarekat in Palu City). *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 144, 012047.
- Samson, F. (2009). Islam, protest, and citizen mobilization: New Sufi movements. In *New perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, migration, wealth, power, and femininity* (pp. 145-168). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Syafitri, A. A., Pujiningsih, S., Handayati, P., & Firdaus, M. I. (2017). Interpretation of good governance principles by Thoriqoh Shiddiqiyyah Sufis. *International Journal of Economic Research*, 14 (12), 145-156.

- Wardani, R. Y., & Fadlan, M. N. (2021). Al-Hadāthah al-Islāmīyah al-mutaghayyirah: Suwar li al-sūfīyah al-hadarīyah fī Indonesia wa Pakistan . *Studia Islamika*, 28 (2), 201-230.
- Wasitaatmadja, F. F., & Susetio, W. (2020). Philosophical Sufism and legal culture in Nusantara: An epistemological review. *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan*, 18 (1), 1-18.
- Wright, Z. (2022). Spiritual training across the Sahara: Debating the need for the living Sufi master in the Tijāniyya. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 33 (3), 289-310.
- Younes, Q. A., Asha'ari, M. F., Ghani, M. Z. A., & Mohamad, A. D. (2024). Contemporary Islamic Sufism from the perspective of the Kasanzaniyyah Order. *Afkar*, 12 (3), 112-128.
- Yusuf, J. M., Yuslem, N., & Tanjung, D. (2023). The inclusion of ulama in the application of Islam Nusantara law for the Aceh community. *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan*, 21 (1), 45-60.