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## Characteristics and Dynamics of Sunni Sufism at the As'adiyah Sengkang Wajo Islamic Boarding School

Mustamin Giling<sup>1</sup>, Muhyiddin Tahir<sup>2</sup>, Muhdi Alhadar<sup>3</sup>, Zainuddin Arifin<sup>4</sup>, Khaerul Asy'ari Ulama'i<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>34</sup>Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

Corresponding Author : mustamingiling@iain-ternate.ac.id

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### Keywords

Sunni Sufism, As'adiyah  
Islamic Boarding School,  
Islamic Education, Social  
Harmony, Scholarly  
Tradition

### Abstract

*This study examines the historical development and contemporary practices of Sufism at the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School in Wajo, South Sulawesi, from the early 20th century to the present. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observations, interviews with the boarding school's leadership, teaching staff, alumni, and students, as well as a review of the institution's historical documents. The findings indicate that As'adiyah practices a form of Sunni Sufism, reflected in the tradition of halaqah-based learning, the use of yellow books, and the cultivation of moderate religious attitudes. This Sufi orientation significantly shapes the students' personal ethics—manifested in humility, respect for teachers (barakka'na Gurutta'), and ritual discipline—and contributes to fostering social harmony within the surrounding community. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of local Sufism by demonstrating that the internalization of Sunni Sufism in the Islamic boarding school education system functions not only as a spiritual discipline but also as a socio-cultural mechanism that promotes religious moderation and social resilience within the Muslim community. These findings confirm the role of Sufism as a transformative force in Islamic education and as a foundational element for strengthening religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia.*

### Kata Kunci

Tasawuf Sunni, Pondok  
Pesantren As'adiyah,

### Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji perkembangan historis dan praktik-praktik kontemporer tasawuf di Pondok Pesantren As'adiyah

*Pendidikan Islam, Harmoni  
Sosial, Tradisi Keilmuan*

Sengkang, Wajo, Sulawesi Selatan, sejak awal abad ke-20 hingga saat ini. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan pimpinan pondok, staf pengajar, alumni, dan santri, serta telaah dokumen-dokumen sejarah lembaga. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa As'adiyah mengamalkan salah satu bentuk tasawuf Sunni, yang tercermin dalam tradisi pembelajaran berbasis halaqah, pemanfaatan kitab kuning, dan pembinaan sikap keagamaan moderat. Orientasi tasawuf ini secara signifikan membentuk etika pribadi para santri—yang diwujudkan dalam kerendahan hati, rasa hormat kepada guru (barakka'na Gurutta'), dan disiplin ritual—serta berkontribusi pada terciptanya keharmonisan sosial di masyarakat sekitar. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada bidang tasawuf lokal dengan menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi tasawuf Sunni dalam sistem pendidikan pesantren berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai disiplin spiritual tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme sosial budaya yang menumbuhkan moderasi beragama dan ketahanan sosial dalam komunitas Muslim. Temuan ini menegaskan peran tasawuf sebagai kekuatan transformatif dalam pendidikan Islam dan sebagai elemen fondasi penguatan moderasi beragama di Indonesia kontemporer.

## Introduction

Sufism, as a branch of knowledge within the Islamic scientific tradition, has long played a significant role in shaping the spiritual character of Muslims, particularly within the Islamic boarding school system in Indonesia<sup>1</sup>. Sufism, a religious approach that emphasizes the inner dimension, morality, and closeness to God, not only establishes a vertical relationship between humans and God but also influences social life through ethical values, tolerance, and compassion<sup>2</sup>. In Indonesian Muslim society, according to Rosyidah, Islamic boarding schools serve as the primary centers for the transmission of Sufi traditions, both through the teaching of classical texts (turats) and practical spiritual exercises<sup>3</sup>.

Amid the challenges of modernity and the forces of globalization that often erode traditional values, the continued existence of Islamic boarding schools that consistently teach Sunni Sufism remains highly relevant. One such institution is the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. This school is not only recognized as the oldest and largest center of Islamic education in Eastern Indonesia but also as an active institution shaping a society grounded in moral and religious culture through the teachings of Sufism. Founded by Anre Gurutta

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<sup>1</sup> Bambang Irawan, "Islamic Boarding Schools (Pesantren), Sufism and Environmental Conservation Practices in Indonesia," *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V78I4.7073>.

<sup>2</sup> Abhi Rizki Fadilah, "The Implications of Sufi Values in Islamic Religious Education in the Modern," *Ulu-muddin: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 12–21, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.62824/se74mg86>.

<sup>3</sup> Irma Rosyidah et al., "Liberation Hermeneutics in Religious Text Studies: A Phenomenological Analysis of Hasan Hanafi's Thought at Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School," *Fikroh: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 2 (2025): 232–43.

KH Muhammad As'ad in 1930, As'adiyah has evolved into a Sufism-based educational institution that integrates traditional and modern values and now has more than 500 branches throughout Indonesia<sup>4</sup>.

Previous studies on Sufism in Islamic boarding schools have generally focused on the influence of specific orders<sup>5</sup>, The Role of Sufism in the Moral Formation of Students<sup>6</sup>, For the integration of Sufism into the curriculum<sup>7</sup> However, previous studies have largely overlooked the role of Sufism in the historical development and institutionalization of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Eastern Indonesia, particularly in As'adiyah, which has exerted significant scientific and social influence throughout Southeast Asia. Additionally, most studies on Sufism have failed to comprehensively examine how Sunni Sufism is practiced in the daily lives of students and the surrounding community, both from sociological and historical perspectives.

This study introduces a new discourse that expands on the historical genealogy approach, institutional studies of Islamic boarding schools, and socio-religious observations to demonstrate how the characteristics of Sunni Sufism at the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School are not only consistently preserved but also transformed over time. Additionally, this study provides theoretical contributions that enrich the understanding of local (indigenous) Sufism and its role in fostering social harmony and character education within a multicultural society.

Therefore, this study is important for understanding the dynamics of moderate Islamic religiosity and for establishing the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School as an ideal model of integration among spirituality, education, and the advancement of contemporary Islamic civilization.

## Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing a case study design<sup>8</sup>. The selection of this approach aims to comprehensively describe the patterns of Sufism that have developed at the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School, as well as how these Sufi values are internalized in the lives of the students and the surrounding community. In this context, the symbolic interactionism approach serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding the social and symbolic meanings inherent in the religious practices at the Islamic boarding school. This approach is based on the assumption that humans assign meaning to reality through the process of symbolic interaction; therefore, the religiosity of the research subjects is understood through the interpretation of their symbols, practices, and social relationships.

The As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School was selected as the research site because it is one of the oldest and largest Islamic boarding schools in eastern Indonesia, with deep roots in

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<sup>4</sup> Hamzah Harun Al-Rasyid and Husnul Fahima Ilyas, "Islamic Scholars' Network In South Sulawesi At The 20th Century: A Note in Wajo and Soppeng," *Al-Qalam* 28, no. 1 (2022): 1, doi:10.31969/alq.v28i1.1025.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2700107>; Aji Muhammad Iqbal et al., "Sufistic Curriculum Development Management at the Islamic Boarding School," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research* 2, no. 2 (2025): 9–18.

<sup>6</sup> Ulugov Jasur, "Spiritual Development In Sufism : The Path To Personal Perfection And Moral Growth," *Modern American Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 01, no. 03 (2025): 52–59; Lailatul Mubarakah, "The Self-Concept Formation Based On Sufism In Overcoming Moral Deviance Among Santri : A Case Study At Al-Inaroh Islamic Boarding School," *International Journal Of Graduate Of Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (2025): 306–14; Syukri Indri Apriliani, "Actualizing Sufi Values For The Moral Formation Of Qur'an Memorizing Students: A Case Study At Al-Huffaazh, Simalungun," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 1 (2025): 45–55, doi:10.22373/jpi.v5i1.31574.

<sup>7</sup> (Abitolkha & Mas'ud, 2021)

<sup>8</sup> Christine Bradway, "Characteristics of Qualitative Descriptive Studies : A Systematic Review," *Res Nurs Health* 40, no. 1 (2018): 23–42, <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21768>. Characteristics.

Sufism. This institution also plays a strategic role in the development of Islamic education and the character formation of its students through a Sunni spiritual approach. Founded in 1930 by Anre Gurutta KH Muhammad As'ad, the school serves as a significant indicator of the continuity and transformation of Sufism within the Islamic boarding school community in South Sulawesi.

Research data were obtained from three types of sources: people (informants), places, and documents. Informants were purposively selected based on their authority and involvement in Islamic boarding school activities, including the boarding school leaders, the kiyai (religious teachers), teaching staff, alumni, and the surrounding community. A total of nine informants participated in this study, comprising pesantren leadership, local community members, alumni, and teachers (ustadz). The criteria for informant selection included: (1) direct involvement in As'adiyah's religious or educational activities; (2) possessing knowledge or experience regarding the practice of Sufism within the pesantren; (3) willingness to participate and openly articulate their understanding; and (4) representing different social roles within the pesantren ecosystem. Places served as data sources through observations of the physical conditions, daily routines of the Islamic boarding school, and the spiritual atmosphere cultivated within. Meanwhile, documents included archives, books, yellow books, and institutional records directly related to the research focus.

Data collection techniques included participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were employed to understand daily activities and patterns of spiritual interaction within Islamic boarding schools. Interviews were conducted in an open yet guided manner to explore informants' understanding and experiences of Sufi teachings and practices. Document analysis supplemented and validated field data through a review of official documents, historical records, and reading materials from the Islamic boarding schools.

Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as well as extended researcher presence in the field. Triangulation enabled researchers to cross-check information obtained from various sources and contexts, ensuring the credibility of the collected data. Furthermore, data validity was reinforced by maintaining an audit trail of the collection and analysis processes, alongside direct researcher involvement in capturing the meanings emerging from socio-religious interactions in the field. Data analysis was conducted in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting relevant information and focusing on the primary issues under study. The reduced data were systematically organized into a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding and analysis. During this analytical process, coding techniques were employed, beginning with open coding to identify recurring themes, followed by axial coding to categorize these themes into broader conceptual groups—such as the Sufi pedagogical tradition, symbolic respect for teachers, ritual discipline, and community harmony—and finally, selective coding to integrate these categories into a coherent explanation of the internalization of Sunni Sufism at As'adiyah. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn inductively to uncover the patterns and meanings of Sufism within Islamic boarding schools.

This research was conducted from March 3, 2024, to July 16, 2024, at the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. The research process was hindered by extreme weather conditions and flooding, which disrupted access to the site. Nevertheless, the researchers continued their fieldwork enthusiastically, motivated by the hope that this study would make a significant contribution to the development of Sufism studies and Islamic boarding school-based education.

## Results and Discussion

### Result

As'adiyah Sengkang Wajo Islamic Boarding School is one of the oldest and largest Islamic educational institutions in Eastern Indonesia, significantly contributing to the development of intellectual, spiritual, and social piety<sup>9</sup>. Established in 1930, As'adiyah has grown to encompass more than 500 branches across various regions of Indonesia. It is renowned not only as a center for the development of Islamic knowledge but also as an institution that consistently produces influential Muslim scholars and intellectuals.<sup>10</sup> The name "As'adiyah" is derived from its founder, KH. M. As'ad, a Bugis-Wajo cleric who memorized the Quran at a young age and studied in the holy city of Mecca. After returning to Bugis land at the age of 22, he began religious study activities from his residence, which later developed into a formal institution involving thousands of male and female students<sup>11</sup>.

The institutional transformation of As'adiyah has been dynamic. Originating as a home-based religious study group, it has evolved into a formal educational institution encompassing various levels, from kindergarten to university (IAIA). As'adiyah exemplifies a pesantren institution characterized by historical, cultural, and spiritual resilience. The central role of the halaqah (Islamic boarding school) is a defining feature of this pesantren. The halaqah model is not only a traditional teaching method but also embodies a holistic approach to integrating knowledge, ethics, and spirituality into the lives of students<sup>12</sup>.

The books studied, such as Tafsir Jalalain, Tanwirul Qulub, Irsyadul Ibad, Mau'izatul Mu'minin, and Syarhul Hikam, demonstrate that religious education at As'adiyah is firmly rooted in classical scholarly traditions. However, the teaching does not stop at textual or literal interpretation; it also involves a process of contextual analysis relevant to everyday life. The kiai (Islamic scholars) or Anre Gurutta provide in-depth explanations using analytical and applied methods, enabling students not only to understand the content of the books cognitively but also to internalize it affectively and spiritually<sup>13</sup>.

The halaqah study group serves as a platform for developing students' character, fostering intellectual excellence, noble morals, and a high level of social sensitivity. This is evident in the success of As'adiyah alumni, who have excelled in various strategic professions—from preachers and lecturers to judges and professors at leading Islamic universities. The tradition of the blessing of knowledge (barakah) forms the philosophical foundation of the teacher-student relationship, where knowledge is believed to bring spiritual and social benefits when imparted sincerely and received with respect and courtesy<sup>14</sup>.

Interviews with community leaders (YM) near the Islamic boarding school revealed that the presence and activities of Sufism at As'adiyah have had a genuinely positive impact on the social environment. He stated:

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<sup>9</sup> (As'ad, 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Alwi HS, Iin Parninsih, and M. Riyan Hidayat, "The Dakwah Movement of Kiai Muda in Eastern Indonesia: Study of Islamic Application and Islamization Models of As'adiyah," *Dialog* 44, no. 2 (2021): 139–51, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v44i2.491>.

<sup>11</sup> (As'ad, 2009)

<sup>12</sup> (Saddam & Eki, 2021)

<sup>13</sup> Syamsul Bahri, "The Embodiment of Islamic Boarding School-Based School Management in Improving The Quality of Graduates," *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review* 3, no. 1 (2023): 89–102, <https://doi.org/10.51574/ijrer.v3i1.1340>.

<sup>14</sup> Wahyuddin Halim, "Young Islamic Preachers on Facebook: Pesantren As'adiyah and Its Engagement with Social Media," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 44–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2018.1416796>.

*"The impact of dhikr (religious prayer), religious study, and student etiquette activities outside of school hours is truly evident. The children have become more polite, respectful toward their parents, and less likely to cause trouble. We, as residents, feel comfortable and supported"*<sup>15</sup>

One housewife who regularly attends public religious studies at the Islamic boarding school said:

*Every Friday night, we usually attend the dhikr assembly held by the Islamic boarding school. It calms our hearts, and we gain a deeper understanding of religious teachings—not just in theory but also in practice. I feel closer to God"*<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, a trader at the local market said:

*As'adiyah students are polite when shopping. They always greet each other and conduct their transactions honestly. I believe this is because they are taught the etiquette of Sufism"*<sup>17</sup>

These findings demonstrate that the internalization of Sufi values at As'adiyah contributes not only to the cultivation of personal piety but also to the strengthening of social piety within the community. More importantly, the interview data reveal a clear resonance with the classical doctrinal foundations of Sunni Sufism, particularly as articulated by al-Ghazali and al-Junayd al-Baghdadi—two authoritative figures whose teachings define the normative framework of mainstream Sufism.

First, the influence of dhikr, adab, and spiritual discipline on students' moral development aligns with al-Ghazali's formulation in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, where he positions *tahdzib al-nafs* (purification and refinement of the soul) as the central objective of Sufism<sup>18</sup>. For al-Ghazali, inner purification must manifest in outward ethical conduct, a principle empirically confirmed by field observations demonstrating increased politeness, honesty, and social responsibility among As'adiyah students.

Second, As'adiyah's emphasis on the integration of sharia and spiritual realization reflects the doctrinal orientation of al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, who conceptualizes Sufism as "self-discipline in complete conformity with the sharia." This doctrinal position marks a distinctive Sunni paradigm: spiritual depth is achieved not through ecstatic experiences or esoteric symbolism, but through disciplined worship, self-control, humility, and ethical steadfastness<sup>19</sup>. As'adiyah's pedagogical model—grounded in structured learning, disciplined devotional practice, and moral cultivation—demonstrates a clear alignment with Junaydi Sufism.

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<sup>15</sup> Community leader (YM), interview by author, June 3, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Housewife (HTM), interview by author, June 3, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> Merchant (IM), interview by author, June 3, 2025.

<sup>18</sup> Paisol Burlan, "KONSEP AL-NAFS DALAM KAJIAN TASAWUF AL-GHAZĀLĪ," *Teologia* 24, no. 24 (2013): 2.

<sup>19</sup> Carool Kersten, "Al-Jabri in Indonesia : The Critique of Arab Reason Travels to the Lands Below the Winds," 2018, 149–67, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59760-1>.

Third, the active participation of the surrounding community in As'adiyah's dhikr gatherings aligns with the concept of "social Sufism" as proposed by al-Ghazali and further developed by al-Qusyairi. Both scholars describe communal spiritual practices as mechanisms for strengthening social cohesion, maintaining psychological balance, and fostering collective virtue<sup>20</sup>. The empirical evidence—residents reporting increased comfort, calm, and ethical influence—demonstrates that As'adiyah's Sufism functions not only as a form of personal spirituality but also as a social ethic that fosters communal harmony.

Through these doctrinal linkages, the analysis clarifies that As'adiyah embodies a distinctive form of Sunni Sufism grounded in the synthesis of al-Ghazali's ethical-spiritual framework and al-Junayd's disciplined, Sharia-oriented Sufi paradigm. This positions As'adiyah not merely as a transmitter of classical texts but as an institution that operationalizes mainstream Sufi doctrines into tangible moral and social transformation.

The spiritual aspects cultivated in this Islamic boarding school are strongly influenced by Sunni Sufism. Sufi texts such as *Tanwir al-Qulub* and *Sharh al-Hikam* serve not only as references but also as tools for reinforcing inner values. Sufism is understood and taught not as a formal order, but as a spiritual ethos that promotes the purification of the soul, closeness to God, and the strengthening of moral character. In the current context, marked by moral crisis and spiritual disorientation, reinforcing these Sufi values is highly relevant<sup>21</sup>.

One of the significant contributions of this Islamic boarding school is its success in integrating the three main dimensions of students' intelligence: intellectual, spiritual, and social. The As'adiyah educational model not only produces academically capable individuals but also nurtures spiritually and socially pious individuals. Social piety is reflected in the students' inclusive, caring, and environmentally conscious attitudes. Meanwhile, spiritual piety is cultivated through the study of knowledge derived from the yellow books, with sincerity, etiquette, and blessings as core values.

Based on an interview with Ustadz H. RD, a senior teacher at the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School with over 20 years of teaching experience, he stated:

*"At As'adiyah, we consistently emphasize the importance of balancing intelligence, heart, and action. Therefore, our students are not only academically proficient but also possess pure souls and sensitivity toward others. We firmly believe that knowledge not applied in practice, or practiced without manners and sincerity, will wither away. Consequently, the books taught here are always accompanied by messages of morality and spirituality."*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Zen Amrullah et al., "INTEGRATING MULTI-MADHHAB SUFISM IN PESANTREN EDUCATION," *Scaffolding Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 7, no. 3 (2025): 238–59, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i3.7798>.

<sup>21</sup> (Abidin, 2025)

<sup>22</sup> Ustadz H. RD, interview by author, January 5, 2025.

In line with this, Mrs. Hj. SM, an alumna and current social activist in Wajo, said:

*"I am very grateful to have studied at As'adiyah. There, I was taught not only fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and tafsir (Islamic interpretation) but also how to be a useful human being. We were trained to care for our surroundings and to help the community, even while we were still in the Islamic boarding school. Values such as baraka' (respect for God) from our teachers, sincerity in learning, and humility all shaped our character."*<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, one of the final-year students, AF (19 years old), added:

*At the Islamic boarding school, we regularly attend religious studies focused on Islamic texts such as Ta'lim Muta'allim and Ihya' Ulumuddin. We are taught the importance of showing good manners toward teachers, maintaining the right intentions in seeking knowledge, and cultivating the heart to avoid arrogance. This is not merely theoretical; we genuinely experience these principles in our daily lives at the boarding school."*<sup>24</sup>

These interview findings demonstrate that the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School is an Islamic educational institution that has successfully preserved classical Islamic scholarly traditions while addressing modern challenges through a contextual and grounded spiritual approach. The halaqah tradition, the cultivation of Sufi ethics as a moral-transformative force, and the instillation of barakah (seeking blessings through teachers and knowledge) serve as key pillars in shaping students who excel intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

Based on these findings, the author argues that Sufism at As'adiyah is not limited to theoretical instruction or the study of classical texts but is embodied in the daily practices of the students and the broader community. The students' consistent display of proper etiquette toward their teachers, their sincerity and discipline in the pursuit of knowledge, and their active participation in social service reflect a lived form of Sufi ethics. These practices closely correspond with Qur'anic teachings on moral and spiritual refinement. The emphasis on tazkiyat al-nafs echoes the Qur'anic call for the purification of the soul (Q.S. al-Shams [91]: 9–10); their perseverance in spiritual discipline resonates with the principle of mujahadah, as implied in commands toward steadfastness (Q.S. al-Ankabut [29]: 69); and their sincerity aligns with the Qur'anic injunction to act solely for God's sake (Q.S. al-Bayyinah [98]: 5). Thus, the embodiment of Sufi values within As'adiyah demonstrates that the pesantren's practice of Sunni Sufism is deeply rooted not only in classical scholarship but also in the normative ethical framework of the Qur'an.

In a theoretical context, the author notes that although the Sufism practiced at As'adiyah is influenced by classical Sufi traditions, it is not directly affiliated with formal Sufi orders such as the Qadiriyyah or the Naqshbandiyyah, which maintain spiritual lineages, initiate disciples through bai'at, and prescribe specific litanies (awrad). As'adiyah integrates Sufi ethics into its broader educational system without adopting ritual structures tied to any particular spiritual lineage. This distinction highlights the unique character of As'adiyah's Sufism: a non-tarekat Sunni spiritual framework that emphasizes ethics, purification of the heart, and social piety, while remaining firmly rooted in classical Islamic scholarship.

Furthermore, the broadcasting of religious studies at the halaqah (Islamic study group) through Suara As'adiyah Radio and online streaming provides concrete evidence that the teachings of Sufism at As'adiyah are not exclusive but inclusive and adaptable to contemporary developments. This media expands the reach of As'adiyah's Sufism mission to various regions,

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<sup>23</sup> Hj. SM, interview by author, March 19, 2025.

<sup>24</sup> AF, interview by author, May 8, 2025.



including alumni and supporters abroad. It demonstrates a transformation in the method of disseminating knowledge while preserving the originality and authenticity of the teachings.

One of the administrators of Radio Suara As'adiyah RDW stated that the halaqah religious study groups, which were initially limited to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), have now expanded to reach the wider community through radio broadcasts and digital platforms. He said:

*We broadcast live halaqah religious studies every day on Suara As'adiyah Radio and through online streaming on social media. This is our way of preserving tradition while adapting to the challenges of modern times.*"<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, a senior teacher at the Islamic boarding school added:

*"What we teach remains based on the yellow books, following a clear chain of knowledge. However, the method of delivery can adapt to technological developments, provided the scientific content remains unchanged."*<sup>26</sup>

An alumnus who now lives in Malaysia also testified:

*"I feel connected to the Islamic boarding school, even though we are far away. I can attend religious studies every day via streaming. This is not just nostalgia but also a way to maintain the spirit of our learning."*<sup>27</sup>

The statements above demonstrate how the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School effectively manages the transformation of Sufism's da'wah media while preserving traditional values. The use of information technology also reflects the principle of tajdid (renewal) in Islamic education, aligning with the spirit of al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadim as-shalih wa al-akhdzu bi al-jadid al-ashlah (preserving good old traditions and adopting new, more beneficial ones).<sup>28</sup> This is where the superiority of the As'adiyah educational model becomes evident: it combines classical traditions, such as halaqah, with modern technology as a means of disseminating knowledge.<sup>29</sup> The success of As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School in preserving the character of Sunni Sufism and disseminating it through its teaching system and media demonstrates that Sufism is neither a foreign nor a static doctrine. Instead, it serves as a vital means of reinforcing applicable spiritual values to address the moral challenges of the modern era. This underscores that Sufism at As'adiyah represents a practical embodiment of Sufism, viewing knowledge not merely as information but as a force for shaping the character of an ideal human being—one who is mabbarakka' (blessed), namalise' (rich in meaning), and beneficial to the broader community.

### **The Tradition of Studying at As'adiyah Sengkang**

As'adiyah Sengkang represents a tangible continuation of the Islamic scholarly tradition, preserved and passed down through generations since the time of the pesantren's founder, AG. KH Muhammad As'ad. This tradition is not merely symbolic; it is actively maintained through regular religious study sessions held at various As'adiyah centers, including Macanang, the al-Munir Mosque, and the Ummul Qurra Grand Mosque.

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<sup>25</sup> RDW, Suara As'adiyah Radio administrator, interview by author, February 3, 2025.

<sup>26</sup> YA, senior teacher at the pesantren, interview by author, February 5, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> MAR, alumnus now residing in Malaysia, interview by author, April 3, 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Hasnia Imroatis Syarifah, Muhammad Fadil Romadhoni, and Mahdy Haidar Taufik, "Exploring the Islamic World with Technology: Integrating Technology in the Islamic Education Curriculum," *At-Ta'lim : Jurnal Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (2024): 260–71, <https://ejournal.unzah.ac.id/index.php/attalim> This is an open access article under the CC-BY license. <https://doi.org/10.55210/attalim.v10i2.1742>.

<sup>29</sup> Fathur Baldan Haramain Ibnu Azka, Siti Nurhalisa, "Developing Strategy for Young Da'i: Da'wah Education at the Nadhatul Ulum Islamic Boarding School," *International Journal of Islamic Boarding School* 2, no. 1 (2024): 21–38.

One concrete example of the continuity of the halaqah tradition can be seen in the weekly schedule of classical religious studies. The following schedule provides clear evidence of the preservation of Sufism and Islamic values at As'adiyah:

**a. Halaqah Macanang Study Schedule**

TIME	TEACHER NAME	NAME OF THE BOOK
Saturday Night/Dawn	Mjnasyiruddin, SHI	Jalalain's Interpretation
Sunday Night/Dawn	KM. Ayyubkan, S.Pd.I	Jalalain's Interpretation
Monday Night/Dawn	KH Abdul Latif, S.Pd.I	Riyadus Shalihin
Tuesday Night/Dawn	KH. Nurdin Marratang, S.Ag.	Fathul Mu'in / Tanwirul Qulub
Wednesday Night/Dawn	H. Hasan Basri, Lc.	Kasyifatussaja
Thursday Night/Dawn	Drs. H. Idris Malik	Mauidzatul Mu'minin

Data Analysis, 2025

**b. Al-Munir Mosque Halaqah Study Schedule**

TIME	TEACHER NAME	NAME OF THE BOOK
Saturday/Maghrib	AG. Drs. H. Syuaeb Nawang	Muhadzab – Syarhul Hikam
Sunday/Maghrib	KH. Nurdin Marratang, S.Ag.; Drs. H. Idris Malik	Fathul Mu'in; Mauidzatul Mu'minin
Monday/Dawn	Drs. H. Idris Malik; Dr. KH. Muhyiddin Tahir, M.Th.I	Jalalain's Tafsir; Tafsir al-Munir
Tuesday/Maghrib/Dawn	KH. Ahmad Agus, S.Pd.I; Dr. KH. Muhyiddin Tahir, M.Th.I	Tanwirul Qulub; Sunan Abu Daud
Wednesday/Maghrib/Dawn	AG. Drs. H. Syuaeb Nawang; Drs. KH. M. Idman Salewe, M.Th.I	Irsyadul Ibad; Riyadhus Shalihin
Thursday/Maghrib/Dawn	Drs. KH. Riyadhhi Hamdah, MHI; KH. Hamulyadi, M.Pd.I	Jalalain's Tafsir; Sahih Bukhari

Data Analysis, 2025

**c. Halaqah Recitation Schedule for the Great Ummul Qurra Mosque**

TIME	TEACHER NAME	NAME OF THE BOOK
Friday Night	KH. Abdul Waris Ahmad, MHI	Sunan Abu Dawud
Saturday Morning	Dr. KH. Muhyiddin Tahir, M.Th.I	Riyadhus Shalihin
Saturday night	Dr. KH. Muhyiddin Tahir, M.Th.I	Al-Munir's Interpretation
Sunday Morning	Drs. HM Yusuf Razaq, M.Pd.	Mauidzatul Mu'minin
Sunday Night	KH. Riyadhhi Hamdah, MHI	Sahih Bukhari
Monday Morning	KM. Suyuti Gaffar, M.Ag.	Syarhul Hikam
Monday Night	Dr. KM. H. Abdul Waris Ahmad, M.Pd.	Bulughul Maram
Tuesday Morning	Drs. KH. Muhammad Sagena, MA	Tanwirul Qulub
Tuesday Night	Drs. KH. Muhammad Sagena, MA; Dr. KH. Muhyiddin Tahir, M.Th.I	Jalalain's Interpretation
Wednesday Morning	AG. Drs. H. Syuaeb Nawang	Irsyadul Ibad
Wednesday Night	KH. Nurdin Marratang, S.Ag.	Fathul Mu'in
Thursday Morning	AG. Drs. H. Syuaeb Nawang	Muhadzab

Data Analysis, 2025

This halaqah study group serves as the primary vehicle for transmitting Islamic knowledge, focusing on strengthening the spiritual character and morals of its students. The use of Sufi texts

such as Tanwir al-Qulub, Sharh al-Hikam, and Irshad al-Ibad highlights the significant role that the esoteric dimension of Islam, or Sufism, plays within the Islamic boarding school teaching system. Notably, this tradition extends beyond in-person activities. Over time, halaqah study groups have also embraced the digital realm. For example, a special online study group is held every Sunday morning via Zoom, led directly by the Chairman of the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School. This study group focuses on Islamic Theosophy and represents a meaningful innovation in preserving the continuity of knowledge while adapting to contemporary needs. The author personally participated in this study group, except when teaching obligations at the Postgraduate School of IAIN Ternate prevented attendance.

This practice demonstrates that the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School not only endures as a traditional institution but also actively embraces technology and addresses the needs of modern spiritual education. This context underscores that As'adiyah's approach to Sufism is not one of isolation from reality but rather one that is inclusive, reflective, and transformative. Through consistent halaqah (Islamic study groups), As'adiyah imparts not only religious texts but also noble Islamic values that enhance the morals, knowledge, and religiosity of its students and the broader community.

## Discussions

The main findings of this study indicate that the practice of Sufism at the As'adiyah Sengkang Islamic Boarding School is rooted in Sunni Sufism, which draws deeply from classical Islamic scholarly traditions while remaining relevant to contemporary spiritual needs. The consistently practiced halaqah tradition serves as the primary medium for transmitting Sufi values such as sincerity, humility, self-reflection, and the blessings of knowledge. The use of classical texts, including Tanwir al-Qulub, Sharh al-Hikam, Irshad al-Ibad, and Riyad as-Salihin, underscores As'adiyah's adherence to Sunni Sufism, which aligns with Islamic law and forms the foundation for the moral development of its students.

Theoretically, the practice of Sufism in As'adiyah aligns with the concept presented by al-Ghazali in *'Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*\*, which asserts that Sufism is not merely a personal spiritual experience but a path of ethical formation and spiritual development grounded in a solid foundation of sharia. According to al-Ghazali, as cited in the study by Sari et al., the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) is the essence of knowledge and deeds and can only be achieved by habituating external actions derived from sharia, followed by intentional inner purification.<sup>30</sup> In this case, the As'adiyah halaqah reflects the Ghazalian approach because it integrates the dimensions of ta'lim, riyadah, and mujahadah.

In addition, the practice of As'adiyah Sufism aligns with the teachings of al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, who is known for his motto, "at-tasawuf huwa al-'amal bi al-kitabi wa al-sunnah" (Sufism is the practice of the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet).<sup>31</sup> In the As'adiyah halaqah study, this value is clearly evident in the emphasis on the sanad of the Yellow Book, which traces back to the great scholars of Ahlussunnah, as well as the sincere commitment to using the Qur'an and hadith as references for morals and behavior.

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<sup>30</sup> Maula Sari and Marhaban Marhaban, "The Self Purification Through Dhikr in the Perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali," *Tasfiah: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (2023): 339–59, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiah.v7i2.10581>.

<sup>31</sup> Cucu Setiawan, Maulani Maulani, and Busro Busro, "Sufism as The Core of Islam: A Review of Imam Junayd Al-Baghdadi's Concept of Tasawwuf," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 9, no. 2 (2020): 171–92, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v9i2.6170>.

The findings of this study are consistent with the results of previous research<sup>32</sup> In his study entitled "Sufism Education in the Formation of Moderate Islamic Attitudes of Youth in Urban Muslims," he demonstrated that studying classical Sufi texts in halaqah (Islamic boarding schools) plays a significant role in shaping students' character and fostering a blessed atmosphere within the Islamic boarding school environment. Similarly, a study by Arifin.<sup>33</sup> Regarding "The Traditionalism of the Islamic Boarding School Education System in the Era of Modernization, found that Sufism is practiced not in the form of pure tariqah but more as ethical values integrated into the life of Islamic boarding schools.

However, what sets As'adiyah apart is its openness to information technology as a means of preaching and transmitting Sufism. Through Radio Suara As'adiyah and streaming platforms such as [www.asadiyahsuara.net](http://www.asadiyahsuara.net), the messages of Sufism—previously accessible only in person at halaqah (Islamic gatherings)—have now reached As'adiyah branches in various regions, as well as alumni and the general public worldwide. This demonstrates that As'adiyah Sufism is inclusive and dynamic, not elitist, and does not restrict the blessings of knowledge to exclusive spaces.

The transformation of Sufism at the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School aligns with Fazlur Rahman's concepts of Neo-Sufism, post-traditional Islamic boarding schools, and the phenomenon of hybrid piety. These three frameworks illustrate how classical spiritual practices have adapted to institutional modernization and the advancement of digital technology. From a Neo-Sufi perspective, As'adiyah Sufism emphasizes ethics, purification of the heart, and a Qur'anic foundation without adherence to formal tarekat structures. This approach corresponds with As'adiyah's orientation, which highlights tazkiyah (spiritual purification), adab (ethical conduct), and the ethical and rational integration of sharia and spirituality<sup>34</sup>. Meanwhile, its classification as a post-traditional Islamic boarding school is evident in its ability to preserve Salafiyah educational practices—such as halaqah (Islamic study circles), the use of yellow books, and an emphasis on sanad (chain of transmission)—while simultaneously adopting digital information systems, distance learning, and expanding da'wah through online media<sup>35</sup>. The result is a hybrid form of piety in which students and the community blend traditional practices—such as congregational dhikr and the recitation of holy books—with modern methods, including attending religious studies through radio, YouTube, or Zoom.

Technology has also influenced the dynamics of sanad (chain of transmission), adab (ethics), and spiritual authority. The sanad, once exclusive and reliant on in-person meetings, has become more accessible through recorded studies and digital archives, creating a broader network for knowledge transmission. Adab, traditionally cultivated through intensive mentoring in physical settings, is now also learned through new ethical practices in virtual spaces. However, subtle aspects such as humility (tawadhu') and gestural politeness remain more challenging to instill

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<sup>32</sup> Ali Mustofa and Arif Rahman Hakim, "Sufism Education in the Formation of Moderate Islamic Attitudes of Youth in Urban Muslims," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 29, no. 1 (2024): 117, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v29i1.9059>.

<sup>33</sup> M. Zainal Arifin, "The Traditionalism of the Islamic Boarding School Education System in the Era of Modernization," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 4, no. 1 (2022): 286–396, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v4i1.1367>.

<sup>34</sup> Baiq Rida Kartini Encung, "Urgensi Pembaharuan Sufisme Islam (Neo-Sufisme) Perspektif Fazlur Rahman Dalam Wacana Modernitas," *AL-IKHSAN: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2023): 31–47.

<sup>35</sup> Nur Izzah Islamy, Ibnu Azka, and Fathur Baldan Haramain, "Religious Music as a Medium of Da'wah Hadith Perspective: Case Study of Alma Voice at Al-Mawaddah Islamic Boarding School," *IJIBS: International Journal of Islamic Boarding School* 3, no. 1 (2025): 13–24.

online<sup>36</sup>. Spiritual authority has also become more networked: the charisma of the kyai (Islamic cleric) remains important, but his influence is now complemented by the presence of other ulama through digital channels, creating a more pluralistic authority structure. Overall, these changes indicate that As'adiyah Sufism is shifting from traditional patterns based on physical proximity to a digitally distributed model of spirituality. This transformation opens new opportunities for the expansion of da'wah (preaching) and the preservation of tradition, but it also presents challenges related to the authenticity of sanad (chain of transmission), the formation of adab (ethics), and the stability of religious authority.

From the author's perspective, this represents a form of functional Sufism that promotes not only personal but also collective piety grounded in society. This type of Sufism responds to the challenges of the modern era, which is rife with moral decay and a lack of spirituality. As'adiyah's success in preserving the essence of Sunni Sufism while expanding access to it through digital media serves as a model worthy of further study in contemporary Islamic education and character formation.

Thus, it can be concluded that the pattern of Sufism at the As'adiyah Islamic Boarding School represents a harmonious balance between knowledge, good deeds, and blessings; between tradition and innovation; and between Islamic values and contemporary needs. This research not only reconstructs Sufi practices within the Islamic boarding school but also offers an alternative educational approach to Sufism that is relevant to the moral development of today's Muslims.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion above, this study concludes that the form of Sufi practice developed and implemented at Pondok Pesantren As'adiyah Sengkang Wajo represents Sunni Sufism, oriented toward cultivating noble character (akhlakul karimah) in both students and the broader community. The Sufi practice at As'adiyah avoids falling into formalistic or purely symbolic rituals; instead, it is expressed through traditions such as halaqah gatherings, the study of classical Sufi texts aligned with the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah tradition, and the cultivation of spiritual values including sincerity (ikhlas), humility (tawadhu'), and the blessing of knowledge (barakah al-'ilm).

Theoretically, the Sufi practices at As'adiyah align with al-Ghazali's concept of purifying the soul through harmony between shari'a and haqiqa. They also reflect al-Junayd's principle emphasizing the importance of Sufism grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Sufism is not presented as an alternative spiritual path detached from the shari'a but rather as a means to perfect moral conduct and guide the soul through life. The integration of Sufi values into the pesantren's educational system affirms that Sufism at As'adiyah is constructive and inclusive.

Practically, the halaqah approach as a method of Sufi education has proven effective in shaping students with refined manners, a strong sense of responsibility, and a deep inner awareness of religious values. The innovative dissemination of halaqah through Radio Suara As'adiyah and online streaming has expanded the reach of spiritual teachings beyond the pesantren's immediate community. This reflects As'adiyah's success in responding to contemporary developments without abandoning its traditional foundations. Consequently, the Sufi practices at As'adiyah serve as a contextual, inclusive, and applicable model of Sufi education.

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<sup>36</sup> Mahmud Yunus Mustofa, Abdurrahman Mas, and Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth, "Hybrid Pesantren in Indonesia ; Analyzing the Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Age," *Al-Tadzkiyyah : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 1 (2023): 79–104.

Nonetheless, this study has several limitations. First, the research scope is limited to the central campus of Pesantren As'adiyah in Sengkang and does not encompass the dynamics of Sufi practice in its numerous branches. Second, the descriptive qualitative approach employed did not thoroughly examine the psychological and transformational impact of Sufi practices on students' personality development. Third, constraints related to time and resources affected the depth of observation and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as alumni living outside the region or laypeople who engage with the halaqah through online platforms.

Therefore, future research should adopt a more interdisciplinary approach, including studies in Sufi psychology, pesantren ethnography, and analyses of Sufi da'wah media. This approach would not only enrich the body of contemporary research on Sufism and pesantren education but also provide fresh perspectives on how spiritual values can be actualized within social and technological domains without losing their Sufi essence. In the context of As'adiyah, Sufism emerges as a transformative force that remains vibrant and relevant in shaping morally upright individuals amid the currents of globalization.

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