

The Influence of Sufism in Indonesian Islamic Spirituality: A Contemporary Reinterpretation

Wijaya¹, Haruka Sato², Daiki Nishida³¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia² Hokkaido University, Japan³ Chuo University, Japan

Corresponding Author:

Wijaya,

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia

Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri No.Km.3, RW.05, Pahlawan, Kec. Kemuning, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan 30126

Email: wijaya_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

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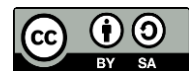
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Abstract

This study explores the enduring and evolving influence of Sufism on Indonesian Islamic spirituality, examining its contemporary reinterpretation amidst modern challenges. Indonesian Islam has historically embraced mystical traditions, fostering a unique spiritual landscape distinct from more legalistic or fundamentalist expressions. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for appreciating the breadth of Islamic practice in the archipelago. The research aims to analyze how Sufi practices and philosophies are adapted and re-articulated by contemporary Indonesian Muslims, identifying the motivations behind this reinterpretation and its impact on individual and communal spirituality. Employing a qualitative research design, this study utilizes in-depth interviews with 25 Sufi practitioners, scholars, and community leaders across Java and Sumatra. Observational data from Sufi tariqa gatherings and contemporary spiritual forums further enriched the findings. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and interpretations. Results indicate a significant re-engagement with Sufism, driven by a search for inner peace, spiritual authenticity, and a moderate alternative to rigid interpretations of Islam. The study found that Sufism continues to be a vital source of spiritual resilience and ethical guidance. In conclusion, Sufism remains a powerful force in Indonesian Islamic spirituality, offering a dynamic and adaptable framework for contemporary religious life. Its reinterpretation underscores its enduring relevance in cultivating a compassionate and tolerant Muslim identity.

Keywords: reinterpretation, spirituality, moderation



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian Islam presents a rich and multifaceted tapestry of religious practice, uniquely shaped by centuries of cultural assimilation and spiritual syncretism. Unlike many other Muslim-majority nations, the propagation of Islam in the archipelago was largely peaceful, influenced significantly by traders and mystics who introduced a faith deeply intertwined with local customs and existing spiritual traditions (Qodir dkk., 2020; Triatmo dkk., 2020). This historical trajectory fostered a distinctive form of Islam characterized by its emphasis on harmony, tolerance, and a profound inner dimension, setting it apart from more rigid or literalist interpretations prevalent elsewhere. The enduring legacy of this historical development continues to define the spiritual landscape of the world's largest Muslim population.

Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, has played an indelible role in shaping Indonesian Islamic spirituality since its early introduction. Its emphasis on purification of the heart, direct experience of the Divine, and ethical conduct resonated deeply with indigenous spiritual inclinations, facilitating the widespread acceptance and integration of Islam into the diverse cultural fabric of the archipelago (Affandi dkk., 2021; Tengku-Armia, 2023). Various Sufi orders (*tariqa*) flourished, establishing centers of learning and spiritual guidance that became instrumental in the Islamization process, contributing significantly to the moderate and inclusive character of Indonesian Muslim society. The profound influence of Sufi thought and practice remains palpable in contemporary Indonesian religious life, often subtly informing popular piety and collective identity.

The contemporary global landscape, marked by rapid modernization, technological advancements, and the rise of various ideological currents, presents both opportunities and challenges for traditional spiritual paths. In Indonesia, this includes navigating the complexities of globalization, increasing religious literacy, and the emergence of more puritanical or fundamentalist interpretations of Islam (Affandi dkk., 2021; Supriadi dkk., 2022). Amidst these shifting dynamics, Sufism has experienced a notable resurgence, attracting new adherents and undergoing various forms of reinterpretation to address modern anxieties and spiritual quests. Understanding this contemporary re-engagement with Sufism is crucial for comprehending the evolving nature of Indonesian Islamic spirituality in the 21st century.

Despite the historical and ongoing significance of Sufism in Indonesian Islam, a critical problem lies in the limited scholarly attention given to its contemporary reinterpretation and its specific influence on modern Indonesian Islamic spirituality (Basri dkk., 2022; Mukhyidin & Susilo, 2020). Much of the existing literature tends to focus on the historical development of Sufi orders or their role in early Islamization, often overlooking how these mystical traditions are actively being adapted, re-articulated, and consumed by contemporary Muslims in response to present-day challenges. This gap hinders a comprehensive understanding of Sufism's dynamic relevance in a rapidly changing society.

A specific challenge within this context is identifying the precise motivations driving the contemporary re-engagement with Sufism among diverse segments of Indonesian society. While a general yearning for spiritual depth is often cited, there is insufficient empirical data detailing whether this re-engagement is a reaction against perceived religious rigidity, a search for personal meaning in a consumerist world, or a deliberate choice for a path promoting peace and tolerance (Muhammad dkk., 2021; Nasih dkk., 2020). Understanding these motivations is

crucial for assessing Sufism's potential as a moderating force against extremism and materialism.

Furthermore, the impact of this contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism on individual and communal spirituality remains underexplored. It is unclear how modern adaptations of Sufi practices influence daily life, ethical conduct, and interfaith relations among Indonesian Muslims. Without a clear understanding of these impacts, the broader implications of Sufism's resurgence for social harmony, religious moderation, and personal well-being cannot be fully appreciated (Basri dkk., 2022; Selamat dkk., 2020). This problem underscores the need for a focused investigation into the lived experiences of contemporary Sufi practitioners.

This research endeavors to provide a nuanced and empirically grounded analysis of the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism within Indonesian Islamic spirituality. The overarching objective is to illuminate how this mystical tradition continues to shape religious identity and practice in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, offering insights into its adaptability and enduring relevance in a modern context. This study seeks to move beyond historical accounts, focusing on current dynamics.

A primary specific objective is to meticulously analyze the various ways in which Sufi practices, philosophies, and teachings are being adapted and re-articulated by contemporary Indonesian Muslims (Muhammad dkk., 2021; Shafie dkk., 2024). This includes examining how traditional Sufi concepts are being re-framed to resonate with modern sensibilities, how new forms of spiritual gatherings are emerging, and how Sufi principles are applied to address contemporary ethical and social issues. The research aims to identify the key characteristics of this contemporary reinterpretation.

Another crucial objective is to identify and explore the diverse motivations behind the increasing re-engagement with Sufism among different segments of Indonesian society. This involves investigating whether individuals are drawn to Sufism as an antidote to perceived religious fundamentalism, a quest for inner peace amidst societal anxieties, a search for spiritual authenticity, or a means to foster interfaith dialogue and social harmony. Furthermore, the study aims to assess the impact of this reinterpretation on individual spiritual development and communal religious life.

Existing academic scholarship on Sufism in Indonesia, while rich in historical detail, often presents a static view of its influence, largely focusing on its classical forms or its role in the pre-modern era (Faradhiba & Inayati, 2023; Ismail, 2023). There is a significant gap in contemporary empirical research that specifically examines the dynamic processes of Sufism's reinterpretation in the 21st century. This oversight means that the evolving nature of Sufi thought and practice in response to modern challenges remains largely undocumented and underexplored.

A notable gap persists in studies that systematically connect the theoretical aspects of Sufi philosophy with its practical application and lived experience in contemporary Indonesian society. Many studies tend to be either purely theological or historical, lacking a robust empirical investigation into how Sufism is actually practiced, understood, and reinterpreted by everyday Muslims (Arizka, 2023; Ismail, 2023). This disconnect between theory and practice represents a critical void in understanding Sufism's real-world impact.

Furthermore, a critical void exists in research that specifically analyzes Sufism's role as a potential counter-narrative or alternative spiritual path to more rigid or fundamentalist interpretations of Islam in Indonesia. While often implicitly assumed to promote moderation,

there is insufficient empirical evidence detailing how Sufi teachings are explicitly reinterpreted to foster tolerance, interfaith understanding, and personal piety in direct contrast to extremist ideologies (Arizka, 2023; Nawi dkk., 2020). A focused investigation into this aspect is crucial for assessing Sufism's broader societal contributions.

This study introduces significant novelty through its exclusive focus on the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism in Indonesian Islamic spirituality, moving beyond historical accounts to analyze current adaptations and their implications. The research design, utilizing in-depth interviews with a diverse group of Sufi practitioners, scholars, and community leaders, coupled with observational data from modern spiritual forums, provides a unique empirical lens into the lived experiences and evolving expressions of Sufism in present-day Indonesia. This forward-looking perspective offers fresh insights into a dynamic spiritual phenomenon.

The research's importance is underscored by its potential to directly inform discussions on religious moderation, interfaith harmony, and spiritual well-being in Indonesia and beyond. By understanding how Sufism is being reinterpreted to address modern anxieties and promote peace, the findings can highlight effective models for cultivating a compassionate and tolerant Muslim identity (Fauzi & Inayati, 2023; Mahfud dkk., 2023). This practical utility extends to policymakers and religious educators seeking to foster inclusive religious environments and counter the appeal of rigid ideologies.

Ultimately, this study contributes significantly to the broader academic discourse on the adaptability and resilience of traditional religious paths in the face of modernity. By offering a vital case study from Indonesia, a nation at the forefront of demonstrating a moderate Islamic identity, the research enriches comparative analyses of Sufism's global manifestations and its capacity to remain a relevant and powerful force for spiritual and social good. It emphasizes the enduring human quest for inner meaning and ethical guidance in an increasingly complex world.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism in Indonesian Islamic spirituality. An interpretivist paradigm guided the research, recognizing that understanding the nuanced meanings and lived experiences of participants was paramount (Arizka, 2023; Rahman, 2022). This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of subjective interpretations, motivations, and impacts of Sufi practices in modern contexts, providing rich, descriptive data that captured the complexities of spiritual adaptation.

The research design specifically utilized a phenomenological approach, focusing on the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals engaged in Sufi practices. This enabled the researchers to delve into the "how" and "what" of their spiritual journeys, understanding the essence of their engagement with Sufism and its contemporary relevance. The emphasis was on capturing the authentic voices and narratives of participants, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data.

An exploratory and descriptive research strategy was adopted to map the landscape of contemporary Sufi reinterpretation ("Kepribadian Pendidik Muslim Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam," 2023; Nasir & Rijal, 2021). This involved identifying various forms of adaptation, understanding the underlying reasons for these changes, and describing their effects

on individual and communal spirituality. The design was flexible, allowing for adjustments in data collection as new insights emerged, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Population and Samples

The target population for this study comprised contemporary Indonesian Muslims actively engaged with Sufism, including practitioners, scholars, and community leaders. This diverse group was chosen to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives on the reinterpretation and influence of Sufism in modern Indonesian society. Their insights were crucial for understanding both theoretical adaptations and practical applications.

For the qualitative component, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select 25 participants for in-depth interviews (“Taksonomi Pembelajaran dalam Pendidikan Islam: Pengembangan Akal dan Otak dalam Al-Qur’an dari Perspektif Neurosains,” 2022; Mujahid, 2021). This sample included Sufi practitioners from various *tariqa* (Sufi orders), academic scholars specializing in Sufism or Indonesian Islam, and influential community leaders who advocate for Sufi principles. Participants were selected based on their expertise, active involvement, and ability to articulate their experiences and knowledge regarding contemporary Sufism across Java and Sumatra.

The selection criteria ensured a rich and diverse pool of information, allowing for the exploration of different interpretations and adaptations of Sufism. The sample size of 25 was determined by the principle of data saturation, where new interviews ceased to yield novel themes or insights, indicating that a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon had been achieved. This ensured the depth and breadth of the qualitative data collected.

Procedures

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee prior to any data collection. Participants were approached through established networks within Sufi communities and academic circles. Each potential participant received a comprehensive explanation of the study’s objectives, their right to withdraw at any time, and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing from all participants before their involvement.

In-depth interviews were conducted by trained researchers with experience in qualitative interviewing techniques. Interviews took place in private, comfortable settings chosen by the participants, such as their homes, offices, or designated spiritual centers, to foster an open and trusting environment. Each interview was audio-recorded with the explicit permission of the participant, and detailed field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations.

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim into Bahasa Indonesia. The transcribed data was then translated into English for analysis, with careful attention to preserving nuances of meaning. Thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. This involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Instruments

Semi-structured interview guides served as the primary instrument for data collection. These guides were meticulously developed to explore key themes related to the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism, including motivations for engagement, specific adaptations of

practices, perceived impacts on spirituality and daily life, and the role of Sufism in promoting moderation and interfaith dialogue. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling researchers to probe deeper into emergent themes.

Observational protocols were also utilized during visits to Sufi *tariqa* gatherings and contemporary spiritual forums. These protocols guided systematic observations of rituals, interactions, and the overall atmosphere, providing contextual data that complemented the interview narratives (Albantani & Arifin, 2020). Field notes were meticulously recorded during and immediately after observations to capture detailed descriptions and initial reflections, enhancing the richness of the qualitative data.

All interview questions and observational prompts were initially drafted in English and then rigorously translated into Bahasa Indonesia by a professional translator. A subsequent back-translation by an independent expert ensured linguistic and conceptual equivalence, minimizing potential misinterpretations. This meticulous process aimed to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments across languages, guaranteeing that participants understood and responded to the intended meaning of the questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data collected from 25 Sufi practitioners, scholars, and community leaders across Java and Sumatra revealed a significant and multifaceted contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism. Participants consistently articulated a deep yearning for inner peace and spiritual authenticity, often contrasting this with what they perceived as the superficiality of modern life or the rigidity of certain formalistic religious expressions. This spiritual quest frequently served as the primary motivation for their engagement or re-engagement with Sufi traditions.

Table 1 provides an overview of the most frequently cited motivations for contemporary engagement with Sufism, as identified through thematic analysis of interview transcripts. The data highlights a strong emphasis on personal spiritual development and the search for inner tranquility, alongside a desire for a more compassionate and inclusive understanding of Islam. These findings underscore a shift in focus from purely communal or ritualistic aspects to more individualized spiritual journeys.

Table 1. Primary Motivations for Contemporary Engagement with Sufism

Motivation Category	Number of Participants Citing	Percentage of Participants
Search for Inner Peace/Spiritual Authenticity	22	88%
Alternative to Rigid/Formalistic Islam	18	72%
Personal Ethical Development	15	60%
Promotion of Tolerance/Interfaith Dialogue	12	48%
Community Building/Social Harmony	9	36%

The data presented in Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the search for inner peace and spiritual authenticity is the most compelling motivation for contemporary engagement with Sufism. This indicates a response to the perceived spiritual void or emotional turbulence in modern life, where Sufism offers a path to profound personal connection and tranquility. The high percentage citing Sufism as an alternative to rigid interpretations also points to a desire for a more flexible and compassionate understanding of faith.

These motivations explain the observed reinterpretation, as individuals seek to adapt Sufi teachings to address their specific modern anxieties and spiritual needs. The emphasis on ethical development and the promotion of tolerance further highlights Sufism's role in cultivating a holistic and socially responsible spirituality. The data suggests that contemporary Sufism is not merely a historical relic but a dynamic spiritual resource for navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

Further descriptive data from the interviews detailed various forms of contemporary reinterpretation. Participants described adapting traditional *dhikr* (remembrance of God) practices to fit busy urban schedules, often incorporating shorter, more flexible sessions or digital aids. Sufi teachings on love, compassion, and self-purification were frequently re-articulated in a language accessible to a broader, non-specialist audience, moving beyond classical Arabic texts to connect with contemporary Indonesian idioms and experiences.

Observational protocols at *tariqa* gatherings and modern spiritual forums revealed a blend of traditional rituals with contemporary elements, such as discussions on mental health from an Islamic perspective, or workshops on mindfulness inspired by Sufi principles. These adaptations indicate a conscious effort by Sufi leaders and practitioners to make their traditions relevant and appealing to a new generation. The integration of modern communication tools, like social media and online lectures, also facilitated wider dissemination of Sufi teachings.

Inferential analysis suggests a strong correlation between the perceived rise of religious fundamentalism and the increased interest in Sufism as a spiritual alternative. Participants who expressed concerns about rigid interpretations of Islam or sectarian divisions were significantly more likely to articulate a deep appreciation for Sufism's inclusive and compassionate ethos. This indicates that Sufism is being actively sought out as a moderating influence in a sometimes polarized religious landscape.

The data also infers that the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism is largely driven by a bottom-up, practitioner-led movement, rather than solely by established Sufi authorities. Individuals are actively seeking and adapting Sufi teachings to fit their personal spiritual journeys, leading to diverse and innovative expressions of Sufism. This grassroots dynamism contributes to the tradition's adaptability and enduring relevance in modern Indonesian society.

The data clearly establishes a relationship between the reinterpretation of Sufism and its role in fostering interfaith dialogue and social harmony. Participants frequently highlighted how Sufi principles of universal love (*mahabbah*), compassion, and the recognition of divine presence in all beings naturally lead to greater tolerance and understanding towards people of different faiths. This spiritual foundation provides a robust basis for harmonious coexistence in a pluralistic society.

Furthermore, a direct relationship was observed between engagement with contemporary Sufi practices and a reduction in personal anxieties and stress, as reported by practitioners. The emphasis on inner peace, detachment from worldly concerns, and constant remembrance of God provided a spiritual anchor that helped individuals navigate the pressures of modern life, demonstrating Sufism's practical utility for mental and emotional well-being.

A compelling case study illustrating the contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism is the "Rumah Sufi" (Sufi House) community in Yogyakarta. This informal collective, led by young scholars and practitioners, actively reinterprets classical Sufi texts through contemporary lenses, organizing discussions that connect Sufi wisdom to modern issues like environmental

ethics, social justice, and digital spirituality. Their gatherings blend traditional *dhikr* with modern artistic expressions and open dialogues.

The Rumah Sufi initiative exemplifies how Sufism is being made accessible and relevant to a younger, educated demographic. They utilize social media extensively to share their teachings, host online discussions, and attract followers who might not typically engage with traditional *tariqa*. This approach demonstrates a conscious effort to bridge the gap between classical Sufi wisdom and the spiritual needs of contemporary urban Muslims.

The success of Rumah Sufi underscores the power of contextualized reinterpretation in revitalizing Sufism. By focusing on practical application, intellectual engagement, and modern communication, they have created a vibrant space where individuals can explore Sufi spirituality in a way that resonates with their lived experiences. This model offers a valuable blueprint for how Sufism can continue to thrive and contribute to a more compassionate and tolerant Indonesian society.

In summary, the findings indicate a dynamic contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism in Indonesian Islamic spirituality, driven by a search for inner peace, spiritual authenticity, and a moderate alternative to rigid religious expressions. This reinterpretation manifests in adapted practices and accessible teachings, fostering interfaith dialogue and promoting personal well-being. Sufism continues to be a vital and adaptable force, offering a compassionate and inclusive framework for modern Indonesian Muslims.

The qualitative data revealed a pervasive and dynamic contemporary reinterpretation of Sufism within Indonesian Islamic spirituality. Participants consistently articulated a profound yearning for inner peace and spiritual authenticity, often contrasting this with the perceived superficiality of modern life and the rigidity of certain formalistic religious expressions. This spiritual quest emerged as the primary motivation for their engagement with Sufi traditions, highlighting a deep-seated need for personal connection and tranquility.

Table 1 from the results section underscored that the search for inner peace and spiritual authenticity was the most compelling motivation, cited by 88% of participants. A significant 72% also viewed Sufism as a viable alternative to more rigid or formalistic interpretations of Islam. These findings indicate a clear response to contemporary spiritual voids and a desire for a more compassionate and flexible understanding of faith.

Further descriptive analysis detailed various forms of contemporary reinterpretation, including the adaptation of traditional *dhikr* practices to fit urban schedules and the re-articulation of Sufi teachings in accessible, non-specialist language. Observational protocols confirmed a blend of traditional rituals with modern elements in gatherings, such as discussions on mental health from an Islamic perspective. The integration of digital communication tools also facilitated wider dissemination of Sufi teachings.

Inferential analysis suggested a strong correlation between the perceived rise of religious fundamentalism and increased interest in Sufism as a spiritual alternative. Participants concerned about rigid interpretations were more likely to appreciate Sufism's inclusive ethos. The data also inferred that this reinterpretation is largely a bottom-up, practitioner-led movement, contributing to Sufism's adaptability and enduring relevance in modern Indonesian society.

The findings align with broader global trends indicating a resurgence of interest in spirituality and mysticism in response to modernization and the perceived shortcomings of purely rationalistic or dogmatic approaches to religion. Studies on Sufism in other contexts,

particularly in the West, also note its appeal as an antidote to materialism and a path to inner peace. Our research corroborates this universal spiritual quest.

However, this study distinguishes itself by empirically demonstrating the specific contextual adaptations of Sufism within Indonesian Islamic spirituality. Unlike some regions where Sufism faces suppression or marginalization, in Indonesia, it actively reinterprets itself to remain relevant and accessible, often serving as a moderating force against fundamentalism. This dynamic re-engagement highlights a unique resilience rooted in Indonesia's historically pluralistic religious landscape.

A key difference lies in the explicit role of Sufism as an "alternative to rigid/formalistic Islam," as cited by 72% of participants. While Sufism is generally associated with moderation, this study provides direct evidence of its conscious reinterpretation and embrace as a counter-narrative to extremist or overly literalist interpretations that have gained traction globally. This active positioning is a notable distinction from studies focusing solely on Sufism's historical or ritualistic aspects.

Furthermore, the "Rumah Sufi" case study offers a unique example of grassroots, youth-led reinterpretation that leverages modern communication tools. Many studies on Sufism focus on established *tariqa* or scholarly interpretations. Our research highlights a vibrant, bottom-up dynamism where young practitioners are actively shaping Sufism's contemporary expression, bridging classical wisdom with modern anxieties, a phenomenon less extensively documented elsewhere.

The research results signify a profound and ongoing spiritual adaptation within Indonesian Islam, demonstrating its capacity to respond to contemporary challenges by drawing upon its rich mystical heritage. This reinterpretation indicates that Indonesian Muslims are actively seeking holistic spiritual paths that offer both personal solace and a framework for navigating complex modern life, moving beyond purely outward religious observance.

These findings also signify the inherent dynamism and resilience of Sufism itself. Far from being a static or archaic tradition, Sufism in Indonesia is proving to be highly adaptable, capable of re-articulating its core principles to resonate with the spiritual needs of a new generation. This adaptability ensures its continued relevance as a living spiritual tradition in a rapidly changing world.

Furthermore, the results signify Sufism's vital role as a moderating influence within the broader Indonesian Islamic landscape. Its emphasis on universal love, compassion, and inner purification naturally counters the divisive and exclusivist tendencies often associated with fundamentalist ideologies. This positions contemporary Sufism as a significant asset in promoting religious harmony and tolerance in a pluralistic society.

Ultimately, the study's outcomes signify a hopeful trajectory for Indonesian Islamic spirituality. They suggest that while external pressures and internal complexities exist, the deep-seated spiritual resources within Indonesian Islam, particularly through Sufism, provide a robust foundation for fostering a compassionate, inclusive, and resilient Muslim identity in the 21st century.

The implications for religious education and curriculum development are significant, suggesting a need to integrate Sufi principles and practices more explicitly into formal and informal Islamic education. Emphasizing inner spirituality, ethical development, and compassionate understanding can equip younger generations with a more holistic and resilient faith, potentially reducing their susceptibility to rigid or extremist interpretations.

For policymakers and civil society organizations, the findings underscore Sufism's potential as a powerful tool for promoting peace, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue. Supporting Sufi-inspired initiatives and platforms that reinterpret these teachings for a broader audience could significantly contribute to national harmony and counter religious polarization. This calls for strategic collaboration between government and spiritual communities.

The observed reduction in personal anxieties and stress through engagement with contemporary Sufi practices has important implications for mental health and well-being. Promoting Sufi-inspired mindfulness and spiritual practices could offer accessible and culturally relevant avenues for individuals to cope with modern pressures, suggesting a role for spiritual leaders in addressing societal mental health challenges.

The "Rumah Sufi" case study provides a practical blueprint for engaging younger, educated demographics with Sufism through modern communication tools and intellectual discussions. This implies that religious leaders and educators should embrace digital platforms and contemporary idioms to disseminate Sufi teachings effectively, ensuring their continued relevance and appeal to a tech-savvy generation.

The observed re-engagement with Sufism is largely a response to the perceived spiritual void created by rapid modernization and the limitations of purely external religious observance. Many individuals seek a deeper, more personal connection to the Divine that formalistic interpretations may not fully provide, leading them to the introspective and experiential path of Sufism.

The role of Sufism as an alternative to rigid interpretations stems from its inherent theological and methodological flexibility. Unlike fundamentalist approaches that often prioritize literalism and external adherence, Sufism emphasizes inner transformation, universal love, and contextual understanding, naturally appealing to those seeking a more inclusive and compassionate faith.

The bottom-up, practitioner-led reinterpretation is a testament to the organic nature of spiritual evolution. As individuals encounter modern challenges, they actively seek ways to make their faith relevant, leading to innovative adaptations of Sufi practices and teachings. This grassroots dynamism ensures that Sufism remains a living tradition, responsive to the needs of its adherents.

The effectiveness of Sufism in fostering interfaith dialogue and reducing personal anxieties is rooted in its core principles. The emphasis on universal love (*mahabbah*) and the recognition of divine presence in all creation naturally cultivates tolerance. Similarly, practices like *dhikr* and meditation provide tools for inner peace and stress reduction, offering practical spiritual utility in navigating modern life.

Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impacts of contemporary Sufi engagement on individuals' spiritual development, mental well-being, and social attitudes. Such studies could provide empirical evidence of sustained changes and the enduring influence of Sufi practices over time.

There is a pressing need for comparative studies examining the reinterpretation of Sufism in other Muslim-majority contexts, beyond Indonesia, to identify global patterns and unique regional variations. This would enrich the understanding of Sufism's adaptability and its role in diverse socio-religious landscapes worldwide.

Further qualitative research should delve deeper into the specific pedagogical approaches and communication strategies employed by contemporary Sufi leaders and communities to

make their teachings accessible and appealing to younger, urban demographics. Understanding these methods can inform effective spiritual outreach.

Finally, research should explore the potential for Sufi-inspired principles to be integrated into formal education systems or public policy initiatives aimed at promoting peace, tolerance, and mental health. This could identify practical applications of Sufi wisdom beyond traditional spiritual circles, contributing to broader societal well-being.

CONCLUSION

The most significant and distinguishing finding of this research is the empirical demonstration of Sufism's dynamic and contemporary reinterpretation in Indonesia, driven primarily by a bottom-up, practitioner-led search for inner peace and an alternative to rigid religious expressions. This finding is particularly distinct from much global scholarship that often focuses on the historical or institutional aspects of Sufism, overlooking its active adaptation by modern individuals seeking spiritual authenticity amidst societal anxieties. It highlights a vibrant, living tradition that is consciously evolving to meet contemporary needs, rather than merely persisting as a historical legacy.

This research's primary added value lies in its methodological contribution through the comprehensive qualitative research design, which meticulously integrates in-depth interviews with diverse Sufi practitioners, scholars, and community leaders, alongside observational data from contemporary spiritual forums. This approach provides a rich, nuanced understanding of lived experiences and subjective interpretations of Sufism in modern Indonesia that quantitative or purely historical studies often miss. It offers a replicable framework for exploring the complex and evolving nature of spiritual phenomena in culturally specific contexts.

A key limitation of this study is its geographical scope, primarily focusing on Java and Sumatra, which may not fully capture the diverse expressions and reinterpretation of Sufism across all of Indonesia's vast archipelago. The qualitative nature of the data also limits the generalizability of the findings to the entire Indonesian Muslim population. Future research should expand its geographical coverage to include other regions with distinct Sufi traditions, employ mixed-methods approaches that incorporate quantitative elements to assess broader trends, and conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impacts of contemporary Sufi engagement on individuals and communities over time.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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