SUFISTIC NAHW PEDAGOGY: INTEGRATING ARABIC GRAMMAR AND TASAWWUF IN MORAL EDUCATION IN PESANTREN

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Kata Kunci:	ABSTRAK
Etika; integrasi; nahwu sufistik; pendidikan moral; pesantren	Studi ini meninjau persoalan kesenjangan epistemologis antara pengetahuan eksoteris ('ilm al-lisān) dan esoteris ('ilm al-qalb) dalam pendidikan pesantren, yang sering kali berdampak pada dikotomi antara kompetensi linguistik dan perilaku etis. Penelitian ini menawarkan sebuah model pedagogi baru dengan mengintegrasikan elemen-elemen sufistik ke dalam pengajaran Nahwu (tata bahasa Arab), sehingga berkontribusi pada pembentukan moral dan spiritual santri. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) di Pesantren Babussalam Pagelaran, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif terhadap guru dan santri senior. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pedagogi Nahwu Sufistik mentransformasi Nahwu dari sekadar instrumen linguistik menjadi medium tazkiyat al-nafs. Dengan menghidupkan kembali penafsiran simbolik atas struktur gramatikal dalam tradisi Sufi serta menerapkan kerangka takhallī–taḥallī–tajallī, integrasi ini secara efektif menumbuhkan kesadaran moral, sifat malu (al-ḥayā'), dan pengendalian diri di kalangan santri. Penelitian ini memberikan inovasi pedagogis yang signifikan dengan menempatkan pendidikan linguistik sebagai komponen inti pengembangan spiritual di institusi pendidikan Islam.

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| Ethics; integrative; moral Education; pesantren; sufistic Nahw | This study addresses the epistemological gap between exoteric knowledge ('ilm al-lisān) and esoteric knowledge ('ilm al-qalb) in pesantren education, which often results in a dichotomy between linguistic competence and ethical conduct. The study offers a new pedagogical model by integrating Sufistic elements into Nahw (Arabic grammar) education, thus contributing to the moral and spiritual formation of students. Using a qualitative approach with an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design at Pesantren Babussalam Pagelaran, data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation with teachers and senior students. The findings reveal that Sufistic Nahw pedagogy transforms Nahw from a mere linguistic tool into a medium for tazkiyat al-nafs. By reviving symbolic interpretations of grammatical structures within the Sufi tradition and applying the takhallī–taḥallī–tajallī framework, this integration effectively fosters moral awareness, modesty (al-ḥayā'), and self-control among students. This research provides a significant pedagogical innovation by positioning linguistic education as a core component of spiritual development in Islamic educational institutions. |

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia—particularly pesantren—have faced serious challenges related to moral degradation and the crisis of adaptation to social change and digital transformation. This phenomenon is reflected in the rising cases of bullying, violence, and disciplinary violations among santri (students), which have at times resulted in fatalities and damaged the moral image of pesantren education. Reports of violent incidents within pesantren environments—such as the case in Kediri in February 2024, as well as sexual abuse scandals involving authoritative figures (BBC News 2025) reveal a profound crisis in the social-relational model and the weakening of character education, both of which are no longer effective in addressing students' emotional and behavioral turmoil (Kemenag 2024; Tempo 2024). Furthermore, the lack of digital literacy and weak ethical awareness in media usage have led some santri to misuse mobile devices, opening the way for disciplinary breaches, declining academic productivity, and reduced spiritual consciousness (Azi et al. 2024).

Within this context, senior santri occupy a particularly vulnerable yet crucial position. They bear dual responsibilities as administrators, disciplinary enforcers, and moral exemplars for other students (Ishomuddin and Husni 2025; Kholilurrohman et al. 2025). To support their administrative duties, senior santri are granted greater privileges than regular students—such as permission to use smartphones, broader social access, and engagement in community activities beyond the pesantren. However, this increased autonomy creates potential risks of moral lapses and abuse of authority if not balanced with strong spiritual maturity, wisdom, and self-control. Consequently, moral and spiritual cultivation for senior santri must become a central concern within pesantren education, emphasizing the conscious internalization of ethical and spiritual values so that they may embody the moral integrity of the pesantren community.

In this context, strengthening moral and spiritual values has become an urgent necessity. Pesantren must adopt more creative and integrative approaches to moral and spiritual education. The internalization of these values requires a pedagogical framework that is holistic and interdisciplinary, allowing ethical and spiritual

development to occur across all fields of study. Although moral and spiritual education has long been a central pillar of pesantren learning, its implementation often remains sectoral and disconnected among different disciplines. As a result, fields such as *tasawwuf* (Islamic mysticism) and *akhlaq* (ethics) tend to stand apart from *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and the linguistic sciences (ʿulūm al-ālah), particularly *nahw* (Arabic grammar) and *ṣarf* (morphology). Yet, the study of *nahw* in fact holds significant potential as a medium for cultivating ethical awareness and transforming the moral character of students (Mahfudh 2021; Saleh 2025).

This potential is deeply rooted in the classical intellectual heritage of Islam. Early Sufi scholars regarded language not merely as a linguistic tool but as āyah—a divine sign reflecting the inner order of the human soul. Al-Qushayrī (d. 465 H) in *Nahw al-Qulūb* and Ibn ʿAjībah (d. 1224 H) in *al-Futūḥāt al-Quddūsiyyah* explicitly interpreted Arabic grammatical structures as mirrors of spiritual progression (al-Qushayri 1994; Ibn ʿAjibah 2007). Their view implies that *nahw* has long carried the potential to serve as an instrument for moral cultivation (tahdhīb al-akhlāq) and inner purification (tazkiyat al-qalb), although this dimension has rarely been explored within modern pedagogical contexts.

From an academic standpoint, most existing studies on pesantren education continue to focus on moral formation through normative instruction in *tasawwuf* or akhlaq, rather than through other disciplines such as *nahw*. Conversely, research on *nahw* education in pesantren settings typically centers on teaching methods or students' grammatical competence (Dodi 2013; Toha and Wargadinata 2023; Yahya and Fauzi 2021), without connecting linguistic mastery to the cultivation of spiritual awareness. This gap highlights the need for a new pedagogical approach that integrates Sufi values into the teaching of linguistic sciences. Moreover, there has been almost no research specifically addressing moral formation among senior santri—the group that bears the greatest social responsibility and leadership roles within the pesantren system. Accordingly, this study situates Sufistic *Nahw* as a contextual and practical model of moral education designed to nurture the ethical integrity and spiritual maturity of pesantren students.

The Babussalam Islamic Boarding School (Pesantren Babussalam) in Pagelaran, Malang Regency, represents a distinctive effort to integrate *tasawwuf* (Sufism) into the teaching of *nahw* (Arabic grammar). As a salaf-oriented institution, Babussalam maintains a traditional educational model that emphasizes a balance between mastery of linguistic sciences (ʿulūm al-ālah) and the cultivation of spiritual consciousness (*tarbiyat al-rūḥ*). In classroom practice, *nahw* is not merely taught as a set of grammatical formulas but is accompanied by spiritual reflection. Each lesson begins with wirid (remembrance of God) and collective prayer, and grammatical explanations are frequently linked to moral values such as patience, humility, and sincerity. This pedagogical approach not only develops linguistic competence but also fosters profound ethical awareness—particularly among senior santri, who serve as moral exemplars within the pesantren community. Accordingly, this study seeks to address three central research questions : How can Nahw instruction be integrated with Sufistic values to promote moral education in pesantren? What pedagogical practices can be derived from this integration to address the moral challenges faced by students?

The primary objectives of this research are to (a) explain the epistemological foundation for integrating *tasawwuf* into *nahw* instruction, (b) explore the empirical

pedagogical practices observed at Pesantren Babussalam, and (c) formulate a moral-pedagogical model of Sufistic *Nahw* relevant to the educational dynamics of senior santri. This study aims to strengthen scholarly discourse on the integration of linguistic sciences (ʿulūm al-ālah) and *tasawwuf*, reaffirming the holistic and integrative epistemology of Islamic education. Moreover, it aspires to offer a contextual and applicable pedagogical model for other pesantren. The proposed model transforms *nahw* instruction from a purely linguistic exercise into a means of soul purification (tazkiyat al-nafs), providing senior students with spiritual maturity and self-discipline—qualities that are increasingly vital in navigating the ethical challenges of the digital era.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using an Interpretive Phenomenological design (Interpretive Phenomenology) (Creswell and Poth 2017). This design was selected to explore, in depth, the essence of lived experiences and the structure of moral consciousness (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) embodied within the pedagogical practice of Sufistic *Nahw*. The research was conducted as a single case study at Pondok Pesantren Babussalam Pagelaran, located in Malang Regency, East Java. The site was purposely chosen due to its distinctive salafiyah tradition that integrates ʿilm al-ālah (instrumental sciences) with spiritual cultivation. Key informants were selected purposively and consisted of the Kyai (*spiritual leader*), Ustadz (*Nahw instructor*), and senior santri (*student administrators*). These participants were considered the most relevant for understanding both the pedagogical model and the moral vulnerabilities under study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation, allowing the researcher to capture both the reflective and experiential dimensions of Sufistic *Nahw* pedagogy. All data were analyzed thematically and interpretively, guided by the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework. The analysis progressed through a systematic multi-stage process: (1) initial noting and immersive reading of transcripts to capture linguistic and conceptual nuances, (2) identifying and developing emergent themes from the raw data, and (3) searching for connections across emergent themes to establish overarching master themes. These steps were aimed at formulating a conceptual model of moral pedagogy grounded in the lived experiences of the pesantren community.

To ensure the integrity of the research, ethical approval and informed consent were secured from all participants, with their identities kept confidential. The data analysis followed the systematic stages of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), progressing from initial noting to the development of emergent themes. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the results was maintained through source triangulation—cross-referencing interview data with field observations and documentation—as well as member checking to ensure the validity of the interpretations

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

a) Integration of *Tasawwuf* Values in the Teaching of *Nahw* at Pesantren

Pondok Pesantren Babussalam Pagelaran represents a traditional (salaf) Islamic educational institution that continues to preserve classical scholarly traditions with a

strong emphasis on mastery of the kitab kuning (classical Islamic texts). Within its educational system, the study of *Nahw* (Arabic grammar) occupies a central position as a prerequisite for accessing all other Islamic disciplines. Students are required to study foundational *Nahw* texts such as Al-Ājurrūmiyyah, Imrīṭī, and Alfiyyah Ibn Mālik. These grammatical studies form the epistemic foundation for engaging with a wide range of scholarly works across the pesantren curriculum.

In general, *Nahw* instruction at Babussalam follows the conventional ʿilm al-ālah (instrumental science) pedagogy typical of salafiyah pesantren—namely, an approach focused on grammatical mastery to enable accurate interpretation of Arabic texts. However, for senior students, the pedagogical approach takes a distinct turn. Instruction no longer centers solely on structural comprehension of linguistic rules; it is deliberately infused with deep spiritual reflection. The ustadz (teachers) and kyai (spiritual leaders) consciously cultivate the awareness that grammatical concepts inherently relate to ethical and spiritual values. Consequently, every grammatical rule is not only explained technically but also interpreted through moral and sufistic meanings.

This approach is implemented because senior students are generally regarded as having already mastered the fundamental principles of *Nahw* necessary for understanding the classical texts studied at the pesantren. Therefore, *Nahw* instruction for this group is integrated with moral and spiritual formation. As K.H. Saiful Bahri, the head of Pesantren Babussalam, emphasized, this need arises from the significant responsibilities entrusted to senior students. He explained:

> "These students are, for the most part, caretakers (pengurus). Their duty is to oversee and ensure that other students comply with the pesantren's disciplinary rules. Senior students are like fences and shepherds for their juniors. But then, who acts as the shepherd for these senior students? The answer is—they must guard themselves. Because I, as the teacher, cannot monitor them all the time."

According to Saiful Bahri, the strategic role of senior students as caretakers (pengurus) demands a high level of moral and spiritual maturity. For this reason, Babussalam allocates a greater emphasis on the study of ethics (akhlaq) and *tasawwuf* for them. As he further elaborated:

> "How do we do that? By increasing the proportion of akhlaq and *tasawwuf* instruction. In the mornings, they study Bidayat al-Hidayah and Ihya' Ulum al-Din, and even the teaching of *Nahw* is integrated with *tasawwuf*. All of this aims to strengthen their inner fortitude and self-control, so they are not easily swayed by various temptations."

According to Kiai Saiful Bahri, this integration also serves as a preventive measure against potential abuses of authority, given that senior students enjoy greater freedom than regular students. He explained:

> "Senior students, most of whom also serve as caretakers, have more freedom than ordinary students. For example, they are permitted to use mobile phones, interact with people outside the pesantren, and engage in various external activities. This undoubtedly requires strong moral integrity and spiritual maturity to prevent any misuse of their authority."

In addition to their responsibilities and privileges, senior students are positioned as moral exemplars for others. Their attitudes and behavior serve as a barometer of discipline and a reflection of pesantren values. When they act in ways inconsistent with those values, their credibility as mentors automatically diminishes. Therefore, *Nahw* instruction that incorporates *tasawwuf* values functions as a means to strengthen their moral integrity and spiritual depth as role models.

Furthermore, the teachers and spiritual guides (ustadz) at Babussalam emphasize that moral development through *Nahw* Sufistik holds strategic importance because senior students are future alumni who will soon re-enter society. They are expected to embody the pesantren's moral ideals within their social environment. As the head teacher of Babussalam stated:

> "These students will soon graduate and return to society as alumni. Out there, they carry the name of the pesantren and reflect the quality of education they received here. That is why we strive to ensure they possess emotional intelligence, noble character (akhlāq karīmah), and spiritual maturity—so they may become good examples and a positive reflection of this pesantren."

The epistemological vision of Pesantren Babussalam underscores that the integration of knowledge and morality constitutes a fundamental principle. The kyai and teachers regard knowledge not merely as a rational instrument, but as a means of cultivating inner awareness and self-purification. Thus, the ultimate purpose of learning transcends intellectual competence, centering instead on moral refinement and character formation. This principle is reflected in the pesantren's maxim, "Knowledge is light (ʿilm nūr)"—meaning that knowledge illuminates only a purified heart—and in its guiding axiom, "Morality stands above knowledge." The logical implication of this view is that an increase in knowledge must be accompanied by an increase in adab (ethical conduct). As Ustaz Wafi remarked, "Knowledge that does not transform behavior—or learning that grows without adab—is what we call ʿIlm Lā Yanfaʿ (knowledge that brings no benefit)."

Accordingly, the integration of *tasawwuf* values into *Nahw* instruction functions as both a preventive strategy against moral decline and an embodiment of the pesantren's affective pedagogy. Through the *Nahw* Sufistik approach, learning serves a dual purpose: it fosters linguistic competence (taʿallum) while simultaneously cultivating self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and moral resilience. At Babussalam, this practice reflects the spirit of holistic Islamic education (wahdat al-ʿulūm), in which intellectual intelligence harmonizes with spiritual maturity. In this sense, *Nahw* Sufistik pedagogy affirms that knowledge (ʿilm), practice (ʿamal), and ethical conduct (adab) are inseparable dimensions of one unified educational process—forming students who are both knowledgeable and virtuous.

b) Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions in the Structure of *Nahw* Learning

The integration of Sufi values into *nahw* instruction at Pesantren Babussalam is manifested in both the structure and daily practice of the learning process. The *nahw* class for senior students retains the traditional halaqah and bandongan models, in which the teacher reads the classical text (*kitab*), explains its meaning, and students listen attentively while taking notes.

Before each session begins, students are encouraged to purify their intentions and calm their hearts through short dhikr, recitation of basmalah, ṣalawāt, and

communal prayers. This preparatory stage is understood as a form of murāqabah—cultivating awareness of God's presence and reaffirming that the purpose of seeking knowledge is solely to attain divine pleasure (*riḍā Allāh*).

Within this learning atmosphere, ethical and spiritual dimensions are naturally embedded in every phase of instruction. During the pre-learning stage, teachers emphasize takhallī—self-purification from improper intentions and intellectual arrogance. Learning is thus directed not merely toward mastery of rules but toward seeking God's approval. During the process of taʿallum, the value of taḥallī—adorning oneself with manners, diligence, and patience—is instilled through disciplined listening, orderly note-taking, and refraining from interrupting the teacher. The post-learning stage emphasizes tajallī—reflective contemplation on the moral and spiritual meanings derived from the lesson.

In practice, teachers do not limit their explanations to the grammatical functions of *nahw* but extend them to the ethical meanings underlying each linguistic structure. In Arabic grammar, each iʿrāb sign serves a syntactic function that determines a word's role and meaning within a sentence. *Rafaʿ* typically denotes the subject (*fāʿil*) or an element occupying a high syntactic position; *naṣb* marks the object (*mafʿūl bih*) or complement that receives the action; *jarr* indicates dependency on a preposition (*ḥarf al-jarr*) and thus occupies a lower position; while jazm applies to the imperfect verb (*fiʿl muḍāriʿ*) to signal firmness or certainty, as in conditional or imperative clauses. These four forms are not merely grammatical markers—they also symbolize order, balance, and harmony in thought, speech, and conduct.

At Pesantren Babussalam, these iʿrāb structures are endowed with reflective and spiritual meanings. For instance, *rafaʿ* (رفع) is interpreted as a symbol of spiritual elevation. Height, in this sense, is no longer associated with social status but with the spiritual rank of a servant elevated in God's sight through obedience, sincerity, and companionship with the righteous.

Similarly, *naṣb* (نصب), which linguistically means "to stand upright" or "to raise," grammatically marks the object of an action. In Sufi ethics, naṣb symbolizes perseverance in good deeds and steadfastness in fulfilling moral responsibility. As Kyai Saiful Bahri explains, just as the mansūb word stands upright due to an action, so too must a student stand upright through righteous deeds. This concept is related to the stage of mujāhadah—the rigorous striving to subdue the ego and uphold virtuous action.

Another example is *jarr* (جرّ), which literally means "to pull downward" and is used to mark words governed by a preposition, often signified by the kasrah vowel. In Sufi symbolism, jarr represents humility (tawāḍuʿ). Teachers at Babussalam often emphasize that "the word pulled downward is the one closest to divine mercy," reflecting the virtue of modesty. This stage corresponds to takhallī (self-purification), the process of cleansing oneself from arrogance, vanity, and worldly attachment so that the heart becomes receptive to the light of knowledge.

Meanwhile, *jazm* (جزم), which linguistically means "firmness" or "resolve," is a form of *iʿrāb* applied specifically to the imperfect verb (*fiʿl muḍāriʿ*), usually marked by a sukūn. Spiritually, *jazm* symbolizes istiqāmah—steadfastness in pursuing truth without hesitation. As one teacher explained, "A majzūm verb does not hang in uncertainty, just as a person of istiqāmah does not waver in obedience." This reflects

the stage of tajallī—spiritual illumination, when knowledge is internalized through action, producing moral firmness and clarity of heart.

Sufi reflection on *nahw* structure is also evident in the relationship between mubtadaʾ and khabar. These two grammatical components are interpreted as symbols of balance between intention and action. The *mubtadaʾ* (the subject that initiates the sentence) represents pure intention, while the *khabar* (the predicate that completes the meaning) symbolizes concrete action. According to the teachers at Babussalam, knowledge is incomplete if it stops at intention without being followed by action—just as a sentence is incomplete without its khabar.

This symbolism serves as an effective pedagogical tool for embedding spiritual values within students' cognitive frameworks. The process of understanding grammatical rules is accompanied by moral reflection, transforming each lesson into an exercise in tazkiyat al-nafs (self-purification). Through this approach, *nahw* learning not only cultivates linguistic intelligence but also nurtures ethical awareness. The stages of takhallī–taḥallī–tajallī are internalized throughout the learning process: students purify their intentions before studying (*takhallī*), adorn themselves with manners and diligence during study (*taḥallī*), and attain moral illumination after grasping the deeper meaning of linguistic structures (*tajallī*).

Consequently, the ethical and spiritual dimensions of *nahw* transform grammatical study into a contemplative space that bridges knowledge and virtue. Students are guided not only to read texts correctly but also to "read themselves"—examining their intentions, refining their speech, and translating knowledge into righteous action. Thus, the success of *Nahw* Sufistik learning is not measured solely by grammatical mastery of Arabic texts but by the visible transformation of moral behavior in daily life.

Kyai Saiful Bahri explains that the primary function of moral instruction across all disciplines, including *nahw*, is to serve as mauʿiẓah (ethical reminder or counsel). "The more frequently students receive reminders and moral counsel," he notes, "the more likely they are to remain mindful and disciplined in their conduct." In this context, *Nahw* Sufistik functions as one integrated component within the broader moral formation process of pesantren education—reinforcing the ethical reminders conveyed through various other disciplines.

Wafi, a senior student, described his experience of internalizing these moral lessons as follows:

> "I think the main change is a sense of shame (ḥayāʾ). I often feel ashamed—because after receiving so many reminders and lessons, including through *nahw* class, how could I still act inappropriately? It felt truly shameful"

This student's testimony reflects the empirical success of the *Nahw* Sufistik approach. Although ḥayāʾ (moral shame) is a widely taught virtue, the students explicitly link their ability to internalize this feeling to the conceptual framework and metaphors they learned through *nahw*. This indicates that the approach effectively transforms cognitive awareness (linguistic rules) into affective awareness (moral restraint) by reinforcing ḥayāʾ as a behavioral control mechanism.

Through this internalization process, ethical and spiritual dimensions become inherent in the structure of *nahw* learning at Babussalam. It functions as a formational process that nurtures three core virtues: sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), humility (*tawāḍuʿ*), and

steadfastness (*istiqāmah*)—symbolized respectively by rafʿ, jarr, and jazm. In other words, the structure of *nahw* serves as a vehicle for internalizing a moral order rooted in Sufi values. This approach demonstrates the transformative pedagogical potential of linguistic education within the pesantren tradition, teaching that the study of language is not merely about arranging words but also about cultivating the soul. Hence, *Nahw Sufistik* learning at Babussalam transcends cognitive instruction, becoming a spiritual discipline that harmonizes intellect and conscience within a living model of moral education.

c) The Sufistic *Nahw*-Based Moral Education Model in Pesantren

Empirical findings from the *nahw–tasawwuf* integration at Pesantren Babussalam indicate that the Sufistic approach to *nahw* fosters both moral and spiritual awareness. Students become more reflective about the ethical meanings embedded in linguistic structures, more patient during the learning process, and more cautious in speech and behavior. This transformation marks a pedagogical shift—from the mere transmission of knowledge to the cultivation of values. As the kyai of Babussalam emphasizes, through *nahw* learning, "students learn to arrange words while also arranging their hearts," turning the study of grammar into a spiritual discipline that nurtures adab (ethical conduct) and inner calm.

From this lived experience emerges the Sufistic *Nahw*-Based Moral Education Model, a conceptual framework synthesized from field findings. This model transforms *nahw* from a cognitive linguistic tool into a contemplative space in which every grammatical structure mirrors moral values. Empirically, this transformation manifests in the enhanced self-control, spiritual discipline, and moral modesty (*al-ḥayāʾ*) of senior students. Epistemologically, the model is grounded in the principle of the unity of knowledge (*wahdat al-ʿulūm*), affirming that knowledge devoid of ethics loses its spiritual essence.

This principle is operationalized through the core pedagogical triad of takhallī, taḥallī, and tajallī—a process of spiritual refinement (tazkiyat al-nafs):

- *Takhallī* – cleansing oneself from intellectual arrogance and impure intentions;
- *Taḥallī* – adorning the self with adab, diligence, and reverence for teachers;
- *Tajallī* – attaining inner illumination that produces moral firmness and spiritual awareness.

In classroom practice, the learning process follows a spiral structure—beginning with *niyyah* (intention-setting), continuing through *taʿallum* (learning and disciplined effort), and culminating in *muḥāsabah* (self-reflection). Teachers relate each grammatical rule to its ethical and spiritual symbolism: rafʿ represents sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), naṣb perseverance in action, jarr humility, and jazm steadfastness (istiqāmah). These symbolic reflections guide students to evaluate their own conduct, making linguistic study a mirror for moral and spiritual self-examination.

The model is particularly relevant for senior students who bear social and leadership responsibilities within the pesantren. Through Sufistic *nahw*, they are trained to become moral exemplars capable of maintaining balance between intellect (*ʿaql*), heart (*qalb*), and action (*ʿamal*). Thus, *nahw* is transformed from a mere analytical tool into a means of self-discipline (*riyāḍat al-nafs*) and integrity formation, demonstrating that linguistic sciences can serve as dynamic frameworks for character education.

Conceptually, the Sufistic *Nahw*-Based Moral Education Model represents a reconstruction of pesantren epistemology that integrates *ʿilm al-lisān* (outer linguistic knowledge) *with* *ʿilm al-qalb* (inner spiritual knowledge). Through the *takhallī–taḥallī–tajallī* framework, the learning of *nahw* becomes a holistic spiritual process uniting rationality, morality, and spirituality. The model not only strengthens students' intellectual competence but also cultivates moral character, refined manners (adab), and a transcendental awareness of knowledge.

This model offers two significant contributions. First, at the theoretical level, it enriches the discourse of integrative Islamic pedagogy by linking cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of learning. Second, at the practical level, it provides an applicable framework for moral formation in pesantren by reinterpreting linguistic sciences (*ʿulūm al-ālāt*) as vehicles for character development. The Sufistic *nahw* pedagogy at Babussalam thus exemplifies the ideal vision of Islamic education—learning as a path toward intellectual maturity and moral perfection.

2. Discusion

This discussion presents a critical synthesis between the theoretical foundations of Sufistic *Nahw* and the empirical findings observed at Pesantren Babussalam. The analysis affirms that the pedagogical model identified in this study constitutes a concrete manifestation of an Islamic epistemology grounded in the unity of knowledge (*wahdat al-ʿulūm*). Through the inherent dialogue between *ʿilm al-lisān* (knowledge of language) and *ʿilm al-qalb* (knowledge of the heart), the pedagogical practices of the pesantren demonstrate that knowledge not only structures cognitive and linguistic capacities but also cultivates the moral and spiritual dispositions of the learners. Consequently, the learning of *Nahw* at Babussalam functions as a process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification), which holistically integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions within a unified framework of moral education.

a) Epistemological Integration of *Nahw* and *Tasawwuf*

In the tradition of pesantren education, *Nahw* (Arabic grammar) and *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) occupy equally fundamental positions, although they are conventionally regarded as separate disciplines—the former as technical-linguistic and the latter as spiritual-ethical. In reality, however, both share an intertwined epistemological foundation that collectively shapes the moral and spiritual integrity of the santri (students). *Nahw*, as the study of Arabic grammar, serves as the principal gateway through which santri access the kitab kuning—the corpus of classical Islamic texts written without diacritical marks (van Bruinessen 1994; 1999). Mastery of *Nahw* and Ṣarf is therefore indispensable for accurate interpretation of religious texts, as the primary sources of Islamic law—the Qur'an and the Sunnah—are revealed in Arabic (al-'Alawi 2009). Moreover, Arabic grammar underpins the process of istinbāṭ al-ḥukm (legal derivation), since variations in syntactic structure often produce divergent juristic interpretations among scholars (Sam et al. 2021). Thus, within the pesantren tradition, Arabic is not merely a tool of communication, but an epistemological instrument that structures reasoning and ensures the precision of religious meaning.

In the classical Islamic intellectual tradition, *Nahw* and *Tasawwuf* share a deeply interrelated epistemological orientation. While *Nahw* regulates linguistic order to ensure semantic accuracy, *Tasawwuf* regulates spiritual order to align behavior with inner truth (al-Qushayri 1994; Ibn 'Ajibah 2007). Both operate within the broader

framework of taʾdīb—the moral and intellectual cultivation of the human being through discipline in language and ethics.

Pesantren Babussalam embodies a reconciliation of this long-standing dichotomy through its Sufistic *Nahw* approach—an effort to correlate linguistic structure with spiritual meaning. This model draws on the classical Sufi heritage formulated by al-Qushayrī (1994) in *Nahw* al-Qulūb and by Ibn ʿAjībah (2007) in al-Futūḥāt al-Quddūsiyyah. According to al-Qushayrī, the structure of the Arabic language mirrors the spiritual structure of the human heart; each grammatical rule carries moral and metaphysical significance. Ibn ʿAjībah further explains that while *Nahw* corrects the errors of the tongue, *Tasawwuf* corrects the errors of the heart. From an epistemological perspective, the two disciplines converge as complementary paths toward human perfection—both seeking harmony through the regulation of thought, speech, and conduct (Haq 2019).

Accordingly, Sufistic *Nahw* adds an ethical and spiritual dimension to every grammatical element. Language learning becomes a reflective process that trains santri to discipline the self just as they discipline syntax—to correct errors, maintain balance, and preserve harmony among intention, speech, and action. Through this approach, the pesantren revives the classical notion of knowledge as *nūr* (divine light), a source of moral illumination rather than a mere instrument of textual analysis.

From the standpoint of Islamic educational philosophy, this integrative approach is deeply rooted in the classical intellectual tradition, which conceives education not merely as the transmission of knowledge but as the cultivation of ethical character and spiritual refinement. Al-Fārābī, one of the most prominent philosophers in this tradition, viewed education as a holistic endeavor that unites moral discipline, intellectual development, and spiritual awareness (Baizhuma et al. 2025). In the modern context, this integrative spirit resonates with the thought of Fethullah Gülen, who through the manevi and hizmet movements designed an educational system that fuses Sufi values with modern rationality, thereby producing individuals who are both intellectually competent and morally upright (Nazihah and Maulana 2020). From this perspective, the pursuit of knowledge cannot be divorced from the pursuit of virtue, as both aim toward harmony with the divine order.

Within this framework, Islamic education is understood as a spiritual journey leading the human being closer to God through self-purification and moral cultivation. The integration of divine values into pedagogical practice serves as a key instrument for fostering moral awareness and spiritual maturity. Thus, education in Islam is oriented toward the holistic development of the human person—harmonizing reason, ethics, and spirituality within a unified framework of human perfection. The emphasis on moral conduct and noble character reaffirms the role of education in shaping a compassionate and ethically conscious society (Pallathadka et al. 2023).

b) **Empirical Interpretation of Sufistic *Nahw* Practice at Babussalam Pesantren**

Field findings indicate that the implementation of the Sufistic *Nahw* approach at Babussalam Pesantren has been systematically integrated into the structure of the learning process. The learning session begins with the purification of intention through collective dhikr and supplication—representing the stage of *takhallī* (purification of the self from false intentions and intellectual arrogance). During the learning process

(ta'allum), teachers train the santri to cultivate adab (proper conduct), sincerity, and patience, as part of the *taḥallī* stage. The final stage, tajallī, is realized through moral reflection after class, when teachers guide students to interpret the ethical and spiritual meanings behind grammatical rules.

Symbolic interpretation of grammatical categories becomes a central process of value internalization. For instance, *rafa'* (رفع), which grammatically signifies elevation or nominative position, is interpreted as a symbol of spiritual nobility attainable only through sincerity in deeds. *Naṣb* (نصب), literally meaning "to erect," symbolizes steadfastness and determination in moral practice. *Jarr* (جرّ), which denotes the lowering of case, represents humility (tawāḍu'), while *jazm* (جزم), denoting firmness or certainty, stands for istiqāmah—moral perseverance and constancy in obedience. This symbolic reflection transforms linguistic analysis into an instrument of self-discipline and moral refinement.

This reflective process has a direct behavioral impact. The santri acknowledged that the study of *Nahw* through this integrative approach nurtures al-ḥayāʾ (moral modesty), caution in speech, and ethical mindfulness in action. The learning process thus shifts from a purely cognitive domain to the affective, turning *Nahw* into a medium of self-awareness (riyāḍat al-nafs). From the perspective of modern affective taxonomy, this process reflects the stages of moral internalization—moving from cognitive comprehension to habituation, and ultimately to the integration of values into personal identity. As Lynch et al. (2009) explain, value internalization involves interrelated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, through which intellectual understanding evolves into lived moral dispositions.

The Sufistic *Nahw* approach is particularly relevant for senior santri who hold social and organizational responsibilities as caretakers and moral exemplars. Their broader access to digital media, community interactions, and leadership roles requires strong spiritual maturity. Thus, *Nahw* integrated with *Tasawwuf* serves as a moral safeguard, preventing the misuse of authority and reinforcing the awareness that knowledge must be accompanied by adab. In educational terms, this aligns with the argument that the integration of affective domains into learning is essential for balancing cognitive achievement and moral formation. Empirical studies demonstrate that pedagogical models combining cognitive and affective approaches strengthen learners' moral consciousness and social responsibility (Fahruddin 2025; Ni'mah 2024).

Moreover, these findings highlight the continued relevance of Islamic Sufi ethics as an operational foundation for cultivating virtuous character and internalizing moral values in contemporary pesantren education. Rather than functioning merely as a critique of Western moral paradigms, Sufism offers a comprehensive pedagogical framework encompassing concepts, methods, and embodied practices for *tazkiyat al-nafs* (spiritual purification) (Hasby et al. 2024; Tohari and Faruq 2022). This framework is precisely what is mobilized by the kyai to transform *nahw* from a purely technical grammatical discipline into a spiritual exercise. The use of esoteric metaphors—such as interpreting i'rāb as the symbolic dynamics of the heart—and ritual openings such as wirid and tafakkur are not incidental innovations, but deeply rooted components of a classical Sufi pedagogical tradition refined over centuries. Through this integration, *nahw* becomes not only a tool for linguistic precision, but also an instrument for cultivating ethical sensibility and spiritual discipline.

From the standpoint of Islamic philosophy of education, the Sufistic *Nahw* model is deeply rooted in the intellectual legacy of classical Muslim thinkers who emphasized that education concerns not only the transmission of knowledge but also the cultivation of ethical character and spiritual perfection. Al-Farabi viewed education as a holistic endeavor integrating moral discipline, intellectual growth, and spiritual awareness (Baizhuma et al. 2025). In contemporary terms, this integrative spirit resonates with Fethullah Gülen's concept of manevi and hizmet, which unites Sufi values with modern pedagogical frameworks to produce learners who are intellectually excellent and morally grounded (Nazihah and Maulana 2020). From this perspective, the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of virtue are inseparable; both aim to achieve harmony with the divine order. The integration of theological values into pedagogical practice functions as a central mechanism for nurturing moral awareness and spiritual maturity (Pallathadka et al. 2023).

The dialogical relationship between theory and practice in Babussalam demonstrates that classical Islamic epistemology can be revitalized through educational praxis. The Sufistic *Nahw* paradigm—which treats knowledge as a process of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) through language—finds practical realization in a learning process that unites linguistic logic with moral formation. In this framework, grammatical structures mirror spiritual structures. The model corrects the formalism of modern education, which often overemphasizes cognition while neglecting moral and emotional intelligence. Sufistic *Nahw* restores learning as a spiritual journey (sulūk), where every act of knowing is accompanied by inward transformation. Within the pesantren pedagogical tradition, Sufistic *Nahw* embodies the integration of knowledge and practice (ʿilm wa ʿamal), positioning language as both a means of spiritual purification and a framework for character formation.

Theoretically, Sufistic *Nahw* enriches the corpus of integrative Islamic pedagogy by offering an epistemological framework that unites cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. It affirms that every scientific discipline—including instrumental sciences (ʿulūm al-ālah)—contains moral potential when approached through a Sufi consciousness. This broadens the meaning of moral education within the Islamic context: morality is not merely instilled through instruction but embedded within the very structure of knowledge itself.

Practically, this model is particularly relevant for contemporary pesantren confronting the moral challenges of the digital generation. The integration of Sufi values within *Nahw* instruction requires no curricular overhaul—only a pedagogical reinterpretation of existing subjects. Teachers need merely to embed ethical reflection into every lesson, inviting students to "read themselves" through the language they study. In this way, moral education emerges organically from the learning process rather than through doctrinal imposition.

For senior santri, Sufistic *Nahw* functions as an exercise in moral leadership—training the balance between ʿaql (reason), qalb (heart), and ʿamal (action). By interpreting grammatical rules as mirrors of life, they learn to strengthen self-control and internal discipline while embodying humility, sincerity, and compassion. Through this process, virtues such as steadfastness, wisdom, and moral courage naturally flourish as outcomes of contemplative engagement with knowledge. In this sense, Sufistic *Nahw* represents a uniquely pesantren-based moral formation model—endogenous, reflective, and contextually grounded.

Consequently, the epistemological experience at Babussalam reflects the living realization of the Sufistic *Nahw* framework as outlined in classical theory. It manifests a living epistemology, where linguistic knowledge (ʿilm al-lisān) and spiritual wisdom (ʿilm al-qalb) are no longer dichotomous but mutually reinforcing within educational praxis. This integration not only cultivates linguistic competence but also animates moral and spiritual consciousness—reviving the classical Islamic ideal that true knowledge (ʿilm al-nafiʿ) is not merely known, but lived, embodied, and radiated through ethical behavior.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to formulate the Sufistic *Nahw*-Based Moral Education Model as a conceptual framework that integrates the disciplines of *Nahw* (Arabic grammar) and *Tasawwuf* (Sufism), while addressing the epistemological gap between ʿilm al-lisān (outer linguistic knowledge) and ʿilm al-qalb (inner spiritual knowledge) that has often been fragmented within the pesantren education system. Based on the empirical findings from the case of Pesantren Babussalam Pagelaran, the study concludes that this model represents a significant pedagogical reconstruction that successfully transforms *Nahw* from a purely linguistic instrument into a medium of tazkiyat al-nafs (spiritual purification). The model is validated through three major findings: First, in practical terms, it revives the classical concept of Sufistic *Nahw* as advocated by earlier Sufi scholars. The symbolic interpretation of grammatical rules transforms *Nahw* learning into a spiritual reflection that refines both language and the heart. Second, the application of the takhallī–taḥallī–tajallī framework within the learning process effectively turns grammatical exercises into a cyclical process of self-purification. Empirically, this has been shown to cultivate al-ḥayāʾ (moral modesty), ethical discipline, and strong self-control among senior students, while also addressing the dichotomy between knowledge and morality (ʿilm lā yanfaʿ—knowledge without benefit). Third, the Sufistic *Nahw* Model embodies the principle of wahdat al-ʿulūm (the unity of knowledge), affirming that intellectual disciplines within the pesantren can function as a path of sulūk toward rational maturity and moral perfection. The Sufistic *Nahw*-Based Moral Education Model thus makes two key contributions. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on integrative Islamic pedagogy by connecting cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. Practically, it offers a contextual and applicable approach to moral and character formation in pesantren education without increasing curricular load. Ultimately, this model reaffirms the foundational vision of Islamic education—where knowledge (ʿilm), practice (ʿamal), and ethics (adab) converge in the cultivation of the spiritually enlightened and morally upright individual. Limitations and Future Research Despite its contributions, this study has limitations as it focuses on a single pesantren (Babussalam Pagelaran) with a specific group of senior students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to different educational settings. Future research should explore the implementation of the Sufistic Nahw model in diverse types of pesantren or other Islamic educational institutions. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to measure the

long-term impact of this pedagogical model on students' social and moral behavior in society.

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