

Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education



Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education

Volume 3 (3) 1-13 September 2026

ISSN: In Process

The article is published with open Access at: <https://journal.maalahliyah.sch.id/index.php/ijie/index>

The Role of the Implementation of the Suluk Tradition in Improving the Spiritual Quality of Students at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

The tradition of suluk practice is one of the spiritual practices in the tarekat world that aims to get closer to Allah SWT. through dhikr, wirid, and riyadhah under the guidance of a mursyid. This study aims to describe the process of implementing the suluk practice tradition and analyze its role in improving the spiritual quality of male and female students at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School, Batang Lubu Sutam District, Padang Lawas Regency, North Sumatra. This study uses a field research method with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation of the mursyid, educators, alumni, and male and female students who carry out the suluk tradition. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of suluk in this Islamic boarding school takes place in three stages, namely tarekah, tawajjuh, and suluk for ten consecutive days, which has been part of the compulsory curriculum for seventh-grade students since five years after the boarding school was established. The implementation of this tradition has proven to play a significant role in improving the spiritual quality of students, as reflected in increased discipline in performing obligatory and voluntary prayers, consistent remembrance of God (dhikr), peace of mind, patience, and improved morals through distancing themselves from despicable traits. Thus, the suluk tradition serves as a medium for fostering worship and preserving local Islamic heritage within the Islamic boarding school environment.

Keywords: Suluk Tradition; Spiritual Quality; Students; Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School.

Abstrak

Tradisi amalan suluk merupakan salah satu praktik spiritual dalam dunia tarekat yang bertujuan mendekatkan diri kepada Allah SWT. melalui zikir, wirid, dan riyadhah di bawah bimbingan seorang mursyid. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan proses pelaksanaan tradisi amalan suluk serta menganalisis perannya terhadap peningkatan kualitas spiritual terhadap santri dan santriwati di Pondok Pesantren Babul Hasanah, Kecamatan Batang Lubu Sutam, Kabupaten Padang Lawas, Sumatera Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian lapangan dengan pendekatan

kualitatif deskriptif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi terhadap mursyid, tenaga pendidik, alumni, serta santri dan santriwati yang menjalankan tradisi suluk. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan suluk di pesantren ini berlangsung dalam tiga tahapan, yaitu tarekah, tawajuh, dan suluk selama sepuluh hari berturut-turut, yang telah menjadi bagian dari kurikulum wajib bagi santri kelas tujuh sejak lima tahun setelah pesantren berdiri. Pelaksanaan tradisi ini terbukti berperan signifikan dalam meningkatkan kualitas spiritual santri, tercermin dari meningkatnya kedisiplinan salat wajib dan sunnah, konsistensi berzikir, ketenangan hati, kesabaran, serta perbaikan akhlak melalui penjarahan diri dari sifat-sifat tercela. Dengan demikian, tradisi suluk berperan sebagai media pembinaan ibadah sekaligus pelestarian warisan keislaman lokal di lingkungan pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Tradisi Suluk; Kualitas Spiritual; Santri; Pondok Pesantren Babul Hasanah.

Introduction

Suluk is a spiritual journey to draw closer to Allah SWT, a series of activities designed to strengthen a worshipper's relationship with the Creator. Suluk is also known as khalwat, the practice of isolating oneself in a quiet place to worship with complete devotion.(Salim et al., 2022)In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, suluk is defined as a path to inner perfection, and people who practice it are called salik.(Editorial staff et al., 2009)Before undergoing suluk, a believer is first required to understand and believe in the essence of Allah as a Being who must exist, is the Most Beginning, the Most Eternal, the Most Perfect, and does not need anything other than himself.(BA'ATHIYAH, 2021)In the practice of suluk, one must cultivate the quality of contemplation, a state of mind that constantly remembers God. This enables individuals to position themselves within the vast universe, recognizing both good and bad circumstances, relying solely on the power of common sense and strong faith.

This will help them receive goodness that will bring peace of mind. Suluk is a practical method to guide a Muslim towards a more complete personality, as well as a vital element in the life of the tarekat (Islamic order) and the spirituality of the Muslim community. By consistently practicing suluk, one can increase awareness of obligatory and recommended acts of worship, while also cultivating noble character in both relationships with God and fellow human beings. (Razak & Adnir, 2025) This is in line with the word of Allah SWT. in QS. Al-Hadid verse 16 commands believers to be diligent in remembering Allah so that their hearts do not harden and are not negligent. In the language of the Koran, a clean heart is known as qalbun salim. A clean heart is what can equip a

strong body and intelligent brain to become a noble human being. With a clean heart, someone who has physical deficiencies and someone whose mind is not very intelligent can become a person with noble character. (Salim et al., 2022)

The tradition of suluk (miraculous meditation) is still preserved in various circles, including at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School, where suluk has been part of the curriculum since its founding five years ago. It lasts for ten consecutive days and is mandatory for seventh-grade male and female students. This tradition is based on the teachings of the Naqsyabandiyah Order, which defines suluk as a form of complete obedience to the rules of the order, including sunnah practices before and after obligatory prayers, as well as self-control as a means of riyadhah (religious meditation). (Razak & Adnir, 2025)

This phenomenon prompted the author to further examine how the process of implementing the suluk tradition takes place at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School and to what extent its implementation plays a role in improving the spiritual quality of the male and female students at the boarding school. This study aims to: (1) describe the process of implementing the suluk practice tradition at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School; and (2) analyze the role or contribution of the suluk practice to improving the spiritual quality of the male and female students at this boarding school.

Research methods

This research uses a field research method with a descriptive qualitative approach, namely research conducted by observing phenomena directly and analyzing them using scientific logic to describe a situation comprehensively and in depth. (Arikunto, 1998) The research was conducted at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School, Jalan Lintas Pinarik Papaso Km. 14, Manggis Village, Batang Lubu Sutam District, Padang Lawas Regency, North Sumatra, from October 12 to December 10, 2025. The research subjects were male and female students who practice the suluk practice tradition, with supporting informants including the head of the Islamic boarding school who is also the mursyid, educators, and alumni. Data sources consist of primary data, obtained directly from informants through interviews, and secondary data, sourced from literature

references relevant to the research topic.(undari eldest and mohamad muspawi, 2024)

Data collection techniques were conducted in three ways. First, in-depth interviews, which involved face-to-face question-and-answer sessions with Islamic boarding school leaders, teaching staff, and students to obtain information related to the research objectives.(Ahmad Nizar Rangkuti, 2016)Second, direct observation of the implementation of the suluk tradition in the field.(Zanariyah, 2024)Third, documentation in the form of notes, photos, and other supporting data relevant to the research object.(Hasan et al., 2022)The collected data is then analyzed through several stages, namely selecting and grouping data according to the discussion topic, compiling data editorially systematically, describing data according to the topic discussed, and drawing conclusions from the overall discussion that has been carried out.(Effendi, 1989)

Results and Discussion

History of the Naqshbandiyah Order

The history of the formation of the tarekat (suluk) began during the time of Rasulullah SAW., which at that time was known as asroriyah or divine knowledge, then changed its name to sidiqiyah during the time of Abu Bakar As-Siddiq. The name Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah itself is taken from the name of its founder, Sheikh Muhammad Bahauddin Naqsyabandi, who was known to always remember Allah SWT. This order has two prominent characteristics, namely strict adherence to the Shari'a and the Sunnah of the Prophet, as well as efforts to bring the lives of society and the authorities closer to religious values.

The spread of the Naqsyabandiyah Order in Indonesia took place widely in the 19th century, brought by Indonesian students and pilgrims studying in Mecca, especially through the center of the order under the leadership of Sulaiman Effendi. In the Southern Tapanuli region, this order developed through the path of Sheikh Ismail al-Khalidi al-Minangkabawi (Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah), which spread through students from Minangkabau and from Langkat, until it finally developed in the Padang Lawas area and its

surroundings, including the environment that later sheltered the establishment of the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School.(Rahima et al., 2023)

The general description of Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School was founded in 1997 by KH. Mardin Hasibuan Asshiddiqy together with a number of local community leaders, on a one hectare waqf land from Haji Patuan Sakti Mulia Tandang Hasibuan. This Islamic boarding school developed from three study rooms and one mosque with 30 students at its inception, until now it is known as one of the largest salafiyah Islamic boarding schools in Padang Lawas Regency with around 1,000 male and 1,500 female students and 100 teaching staff. This Islamic boarding school carries the vision of "Exemplary in faith and piety, superior in achievement, leading in mastery of yellow books", with education that is still thick with the tradition of yellow books, while also completing facilities in the form of dormitories, mosques, prayer rooms, classrooms, libraries, computer laboratories, and job training centers to support the educational process.

Concept of Tradition, Practice, and Suluk

Etymologically, tradition comes from the word traditum which means everything that is passed down from the past to the present.(Rodin, 2013)Traditions include works, beliefs, values and norms that are passed down from generation to generation, but are dynamic and can change along with the development of human life patterns.(Najma Salamah et al., 2023)Etymologically, charity means deeds, whether good or bad; in Islamic teachings, charity is generally directed at good deeds that bring rewards, which is distinguished from other terms such as fi'il, sa'yu, and kasab which have different focuses of meaning.(Zainuddin, 2020)

Suluk is etymologically derived from the word salaka, which means to enter or follow a path. Terminologically, suluk is the path a seeker takes to interact with a spiritual teacher through rabithah, talqin, and bay'at, which later evolved into a form of regular spiritual learning and practice over a specific period.(Yusuf, 2020)Suluk is also understood as a method of going through various stages (maqam) of inner life with full awareness under the guidance of a

spiritual teacher, with the aim of perfecting morals, purifying deeds, and deepening knowledge.(Febriani, 2021)The aim of suluk, among other things, is to make oneself an abdun and khalifah on earth, as well as to instill good morals both in vertical relationships with Allah and horizontal relationships with fellow human beings.(Rofiq & Riyadi, nd)In the process, a seeker is required to perform deeds sincerely and be constantly accompanied by a spiritual guide, as controlling one's desires independently requires more time and effort. A seeker also typically engages in tafakkur, a deep reflection to discover an awareness of God's existence and power.(Desri Ari Enghariano Faculty et al., 2019)

In its implementation, there are a number of etiquettes that a salik must adhere to, including repenting from physical and spiritual sins accompanied by bathing and performing sunnah prayers of repentance; ask for the sheikh's permission and guidance before performing the ritual; maintaining wudu throughout the implementation of suluk; perpetuating the dhikr talqinkan by the sheikh; maintaining wuquf qalbi by concentrating one's heart only on Allah; and cleanse oneself of all worldly and spiritual aspirations that can divert the focus of worship.

In addition, the seeker is required to maintain spiritual discipline, such as always maintaining rabithah to the teacher, being the first to attend and the last to leave the dhikr assembly, guarding the tongue from excessive talking, maintaining a diet so as not to overdo it, not leaving the place of suluk except for excuses, and always being wary of the four main enemies, namely the devil, the world, desires, and desires. The seeker is also advised to increase charity, maintain the five daily congregational prayers and Friday prayers, and avoid bloody foods during the suluk period as part of an effort to weaken the urge of desires so that the heart is easier to cleanse.(Kamarzaman, 2001)

The process of implementing the suluk tradition began five years after the establishment of the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School, implementing the suluk tradition as a religious characteristic as well as a means of habituating worship for students, referring to the teachings of the Naqsyabandiyah Order. This tradition is inseparable from the role of the pesantren leader who also acts

as the order's mursyid, with the aim of ensuring that students will not underestimate the importance of this spiritual practice. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, the implementation of this tradition takes place through three main stages, namely tarekah, tawajuh, and suluk.

The first stage, tarekah, begins when students reach grade 5 (the second year of Aliyah). It is held in the mosque for male students and in the prayer room for female students. The series of activities includes a communal bath of repentance, a prayer of repentance, and a two-rakaat prayer of need, followed by a self-reflection ritual that resembles the atmosphere of the realm of barzakh, namely lying in a dark room while reciting dhikr as a means of self-introspection, which is carried out after the Isha prayer.

The second stage, tawajuh, is performed after the Isha prayer with intensive recitation of the dhikr "Allah Allah." For students who have not yet entered the suluk stage, tawajuh is performed every Tuesday night, while for students who have entered the suluk stage, tawajuh is performed every night. The third stage, suluk, is the culmination of this series of spiritual development, carried out for ten consecutive days. The series begins with the mutual cooperation of preparing the suluk place, performing a bath of repentance, performing the repentance prayer, and performing the Asr prayer in congregation. It is followed by devotion to the mursyid through a bai'at procession that includes a commitment to maintaining good manners, consistent dhikr, and practicing certain wirid.

The daily activities for the ten days were then filled sequentially with eating together, congregational Maghrib prayers along with its sunnah prayers, lectures on suluk adab, congregational Isha prayers along with a series of sunnah prayers, tawajuh, dhikr under a mosquito net, night prayers (hajat, taubat, tahajud), continued dhikr with limited sleep time, wudu sunnah prayers, congregational Subuh prayers, morning dhikr, breakfast together, duha prayer, until a series of prayers and dhikr before and after Zuhur time. These activities were carried out every day, except for female students who were prevented, who

during that period only performed dhikr without following other series of worship.

While undergoing suluk, a salik is required to always observe wudu, wear a head covering to protect one's view, limit communication with outsiders except for urgent matters, reduce eating and sleeping, and avoid consuming bloody food, so that more time can be devoted to worship and muraqabah. On the tenth day, the suluk series closed with thanksgiving with the murshid, buya, and ummi, ending with a closing prayer, spiritual advice to maintain the practice of the postsuluk, as well as a procession of greetings between participants. (Hasibuan, October 18, 2025) *The Role of the Implementation of the Suluk Tradition in Improving the Spiritual Quality of Students* The results of the interviews show that the implementation of the suluk tradition makes a real contribution to improving the spiritual quality of male and female students at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School.

According to KH. Mardin Hasibuan Asshiddiqy, the mursyid, suluk accustoms students to constantly remember God, whether they are active or silent, and this habit is expected to remain ingrained into their adulthood. (Hasibuan, October 18, 2025) Ummi Timasiah Lubis, one of the teaching staff, explained that the contribution of suluk is visible from the increasing diligence of students in carrying out sunnah prayers, such as duha, taubat, and tahajud, accompanied by an increase in the intensity of dhikr which has an impact on peace of mind and improvement of morals. (Lubis, November 24, 2025) In line with this, Ummi Khoiriyah Lubis said that suluk encourages consistency in congregational prayer, improves the habit of maintaining gaze, and improves the eating patterns of students to be more regular. (Lubis wd, November 24, 2025) From the alumni side, Andra Yani Lubis said that suluk contributes significantly to the quality of worship, both obligatory and sunnah (rawatib, duha, witir, tahajud, tahiyatul mosque, to sunnah wudu), as well as forming morals by distancing oneself from despicable traits (mazmumah) and cultivating praiseworthy traits (mahmudah), one of which is through uzlah for reflection and self-improvement. (Lubis wd, November 13, 2025) Sazkia

Nasution added that suluk improves the quality of obligatory and sunnah worship while also fostering awareness of the essence of oneself as a servant of Allah.(with) (Nasutiaon, November 10, 2025) Nahda Lubis revealed that suluk increases the discipline of praying on time and the consistency of dhikr, which brings peace of mind and patience in daily activities, both in the dormitory and in the classroom. (Placeholder3) (Lubis wd, November 10, 2025).

Meanwhile, Hulaimi Lubis stated that suluk strengthens spiritual relationships with Allah SWT, increases piety, peace of mind, patience, the ability to forgive, a humble attitude, and fosters new meaning in living life. (Placeholder4) (Lubis wd, December 9, 2025)These findings indicate that the implementation of the suluk tradition at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School plays an important role as a comprehensive spiritual development medium, encompassing the dimensions of worship (improving the discipline of obligatory and sunnah prayers and consistent dhikr), the psychological dimension (peace of mind, patience, and control of lust), and the moral dimension (distance from reprehensible traits and strengthening noble morals). Thus, this tradition functions not only as a religious ritual, but also as an instrument of ongoing character education for male and female students.

Conclusion

Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the suluk tradition carried out at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School has an important role in the development of spirituality for the students of the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School. Suluk is understood as a process that strengthens the internal or spiritual aspect as well as an effort to get closer to Allah SWT. through the implementation of various forms of certain practices, which include dhikr, wirid, and riyadhah, which are carried out under the supervision of a mursyid or spiritual teacher. The suluk practice tradition at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School not only functions as individual worship, but also as a tool for moral and character education for the students of the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School.

Through the implementation of suluk which is organized and based on the principles of Sufism, important values such as patience, discipline, sincerity, and obedience to Allah SWT. are deeply instilled. In addition, this tradition also plays a role in preserving classical Islamic teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation within the Islamic boarding school community. Thus, the tradition of suluk practices at the Babul Hasanah Islamic Boarding School remains important and contributes significantly to shaping the religious character of its students with admirable morals. The continued existence of this tradition demonstrates that Islamic boarding schools function not only as formal religious educational institutions but also as centers for spiritual development and protectors of the legacy of Islamic traditions within the community.

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