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The implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students at pondok pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using field research methods. Data were collected through participatory observation, in depth interviews with ustadz and students, and institutional document analysis. The study aims to explore the institutional configuration, implementation mechanism, and transformative impact of dhikr taskiyatun nafs on students' spiritual development. The findings reveal that dhikr taskiyatun nafs has been systematically institutionalized since the establishment of the pesantren and functions as a central instrument of spiritual formation. Its implementation follows a structured pedagogical process, including the internalization of dhikr recitations, routine repetition in guided assemblies, deepening of theological meaning, and integration into daily life practices. The practice is supported by continuous supervision and spiritual mentoring by the kiai and ustadz. The results indicate significant transformation in students' spiritual intelligence, reflected in increased reflective self awareness, strengthened transcendental relationship with Allah, improved emotional stability, and enhanced moral behavior. Students reported experiencing greater inner peace, patience, and consistency in worship practices. In conclusion, dhikr taskiyatun nafs serves not merely as a ritual activity but as a systematic spiritual mentoring model that contributes to the holistic development of students' spiritual intelligence within the pesantren educational context.

Keywords: dhikr taskiyatun nafs; spiritual intelligence; pesantren education; spiritual development; character formation

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools, known as pesantren, occupy a strategic position in the historical and socio-religious development of Indonesian Muslim society. Since the colonial period until the contemporary era, pesantren have functioned not only as institutions for the transmission of Islamic sciences but also as spaces for moral formation and spiritual cultivation. The classical structure of pesantren, which includes the dormitory, mosque, santri, kiai, and the teaching of classical Islamic texts, reflects an educational system grounded in the integration of intellectual and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, the educational orientation of pesantren is not limited to cognitive achievement but extends to the formation of ethical character and spiritual depth. The rapid advancement of science and technology in the modern era has significantly influenced the religious orientation of younger generations. Instrumental rationality and material achievement often dominate life perspectives, while transcendental awareness tends to be marginalized. This condition contributes to what scholars describe as a crisis of meaning, in which individuals experience existential anxiety and value disorientation despite material progress. From the perspective of developmental psychology, the age range of 17 to 30 years represents a critical period for identity formation, value integration, and the consolidation of life orientation (Hurlock, 1993). Without adequate internalization of spiritual values during this phase, individuals are vulnerable to moral instability and existential emptiness.

In contemporary discourse, spiritual intelligence is recognized as a dimension of intelligence that provides meaning, direction, and ethical grounding for human action. Zohar and Marshall (2001) conceptualize spiritual intelligence as the capacity to address fundamental questions concerning purpose and values. This form of intelligence serves as an integrative foundation for intellectual and emotional intelligence. Covey (2005) further argues that spiritual intelligence constitutes the core of all intelligences because it encompasses the value system that guides human behavior. Within the Islamic framework, spiritual intelligence transcends reflective capacity alone; it embodies consciousness of tawhid, awareness of divine presence, and the ability to interpret life experiences as acts of devotion. The Islamic concept of tazkiyatun nafs, or purification of the soul, provides both a normative and practical framework for the development of spiritual intelligence. Tazkiyatun nafs involves the purification of inner tendencies through self-discipline, strengthening of faith, and consistent engagement in righteous actions. One of the primary instruments in this process is dhikr. The Quran explicitly commands believers to remember Allah consistently, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 152 and Surah Al-Jumu'ah verse 10. In this context, dhikr is not confined to verbal repetition but encompasses continuous inner awareness of the Divine. Al-Jauziyah (2002) describes dhikr as nourishment for the heart that sustains spiritual vitality. Thus, dhikr taskiyatun nafs can be understood as a systematic spiritual practice aimed at cultivating reflective awareness and inner tranquility.

Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of dhikr to psychological well-being and spiritual development. Syafrudin (2017) found that structured dhikr practiced under proper guidance contributes to increased inner calmness and cognitive clarity. Riyadi (2013) emphasized that the concept of dhikr in the Quran can be integrated into Islamic counseling services with preventive and curative functions. Research by Rahman et al (2017) indicated that tazkiyatun nafs education in pesantren fosters a sense of muraqabah, or awareness of being constantly observed by Allah, which strengthens self-control and spiritual composure. Maesaroh (2019) also identified a strong relationship between the intensity of dhikr practice and the level of students' spiritual intelligence. However, most previous studies have focused on correlational findings or normative conceptual analysis. There remains limited exploration of how dhikr taskiyatun nafs is implemented within specific pedagogical settings and how it functions as an educational strategy for spiritual transformation. The effectiveness of spiritual cultivation is closely related to implementation design, the role of the kiai as a spiritual authority, patterns of habituation, and mechanisms of supervision and evaluation. In the context of special classes known as takhasus classes, which typically involve more intensive guidance, dhikr practices may serve not merely as ritual routines but as structured character formation strategies rooted in spirituality.

Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo consistently implements dhikr taskiyatun nafs in the form of tawasulan every Thursday night after the Isha prayer, particularly for students in the takhasus class. This practice is positioned as a medium for soul purification and the enhancement of students' spiritual intelligence. Nevertheless, the extent to which this implementation contributes to the development of spiritual awareness, the role of the kiai in providing direction and supervision, and the supporting and inhibiting factors involved require systematic and critical scholarly examination. Based on this urgency, the present study aims to analyze the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process, the dynamics of value internalization, and its implications for students' spiritual development. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the discourse on Islamic education, particularly concerning the integration of Sufistic practices into pesantren based character formation. Practically, the findings may contribute to the development of a structured and reflective spiritual cultivation model that fosters intellectually capable, emotionally balanced, and spiritually grounded Muslim individuals.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Tazkiyatun Nafs

Tazkiyatun nafs linguistically derives from two Arabic terms, tazkiyah and nafs. The word tazkiyah originates from the root zaka, which conveys meanings such as purification, growth, goodness, and development. This semantic range indicates that purification in Islam is not limited to removing spiritual impurities but also involves nurturing and expanding the inherent goodness within the human being. The term nafs refers to the soul, self, or inner dimension of the human person that constitutes the center of consciousness, desire, and moral inclination. Terminologically, therefore, tazkiyatun nafs can be defined as a systematic process of purifying and cultivating the soul so that its innate potential develops in accordance with divine guidance. From a theological perspective, tazkiyatun nafs represents one of the primary missions of the prophets. The Quran emphasizes that human success depends upon the purification of the soul, as stated in Surah Al A'la verses 14 to 15, which declare that successful is the one who purifies himself and remembers the name of his Lord and prays. This verse highlights the inseparable relationship between spiritual purification, remembrance of God, and ritual devotion. Spiritual development is therefore not an abstract concept but is concretely manifested through disciplined worship and ethical conduct.

In classical Sufi thought, the nafs is understood to have several levels. First, nafs al ammarah refers to the soul that commands evil and inclines toward base desires. Second, nafs al lawwamah represents the self reproaching soul that possesses moral awareness and criticizes itself after wrongdoing. Third, nafs al muthmainnah denotes the tranquil soul that attains inner peace through obedience to God. This classification illustrates the dynamic nature of the human soul and its capacity for transformation through continuous spiritual discipline. Al Ghazali metaphorically describes the soul as a king whose condition determines the well being or ruin of the entire body. When the soul is healthy, outward behavior reflects noble character; when it is corrupted, moral deviation emerges. Conceptually, Al Ghazali explains tazkiyatun nafs through two principal processes: takhalli and tahalli. Takhalli refers to the effort of emptying the soul from reprehensible traits through disciplined struggle, while tahalli involves adorning the soul with virtuous qualities through consistent spiritual training. Hamjah (2014) notes that these processes require perseverance and long term commitment, as purification is gradual and demands sustained effort. Ibn Qayyim further argues that all spiritual illnesses originate from the corruption of the soul. Consequently, healing the soul necessitates both knowledge and action. Knowledge functions as a diagnostic tool to identify spiritual diseases, whereas righteous action serves as the practical means to eliminate their causes.

The forms of tazkiyatun nafs can be categorized into moral development and spiritual therapy. As moral development, tazkiyatun nafs aims to cultivate virtues such as sincerity, gratitude, patience,

honesty, and devotion. Moral character is viewed as the manifestation of the soul's quality. A purified soul produces ethical conduct, whereas a diseased soul results in destructive behavior. As spiritual therapy, tazkiyatun nafs involves treating inner ailments through obedience and avoidance of sin. Solihin (2005) emphasizes that each spiritual disease has identifiable causes that must be examined before effective healing can occur. Sufi scholars often analogize the soul to a mirror, while knowledge and divine realities are likened to images reflected upon it. If the mirror is covered by rust, which symbolizes sin and heedlessness, truth cannot be clearly perceived. Thus, purification of the soul becomes a prerequisite for attaining authentic knowledge and spiritual insight. This process is not merely individual but also carries social implications, as a purified soul contributes to harmonious relationships within family and society.

Within the pesantren context, the implementation of tazkiyatun nafs is manifested through the direction, supervision, and guidance of the kiai. Direction involves guiding students to recognize their faults, repent sincerely, and commit to moral improvement. Supervision ensures that spiritual practices such as dhikr are conducted in accordance with Islamic principles. Assistance is provided through continuous mentoring and reinforcement of worship practices, including prayer, fasting, and remembrance of God. The kiai plays a central role not only as an instructor but also as a spiritual exemplar whose character significantly influences students' internalization of values.

2.2. Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence refers to the dimension of intelligence concerned with meaning, values, and transcendental awareness. Zohar and Marshall (2001) define spiritual intelligence as the capacity to address and solve problems of meaning and value, and to place human behavior within a broader and richer existential context. This intelligence enables individuals to question the purpose of life and evaluate whether their actions possess genuine significance. Unlike intellectual intelligence, which is associated with logical reasoning and measurable cognitive abilities, spiritual intelligence is abstract and reflective in nature. It relates to self awareness, moral sensitivity, and the ability to assign meaning to life experiences. Zohar and Marshall argue that spiritual intelligence allows human beings to transcend rigid structures and creatively transform difficult situations. It equips individuals with the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong, to endure suffering, and to rise from adversity.

Khalil Khavari, as cited by Nggermanto (2001), conceptualizes spiritual intelligence as the non material faculty of the human spirit. This latent potential, inherent within every individual, requires cultivation through conscious effort and disciplined practice. When properly developed, it becomes a source of enduring happiness and inner fulfillment. In the Islamic perspective, spiritual intelligence is closely linked to the internalization of divine values in everyday life. It manifests in the harmony between inner conviction, verbal expression, and outward conduct. Spiritual intelligence is not merely measured by the frequency of ritual performance but by the depth of awareness and sincerity underlying such practices. An individual may outwardly demonstrate religious observance, yet without genuine moral transformation, spiritual intelligence remains underdeveloped.

Therefore, spiritual intelligence can be understood as the ability to align thoughts, attitudes, and actions with divine guidance as revealed in the Quran and exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad. In the pesantren educational framework, the development of spiritual intelligence constitutes a strategic objective, as it forms the foundation of character formation. A strong spiritual orientation fosters resilience, ethical responsibility, and a meaningful engagement with life. Consequently, examining the integration of tazkiyatun nafs practices with the cultivation of spiritual intelligence is essential for constructing a holistic and transformative model of Islamic education.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to analyze the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo. A qualitative approach is selected because the focus of the research lies in exploring processes, meanings, and the dynamics of spiritual value internalization,

which cannot be reduced to statistical measurement. The study seeks to understand the phenomenon contextually within its natural setting by interpreting participants' experiences, perceptions, and patterns of spiritual guidance (Walidin, Saifullah, and Tabrani, 2015). The descriptive method is used to systematically portray the implementation process, the role of the kiai, students' responses, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the development of spiritual intelligence. This research is categorized as field research since the data were collected directly from the research site through interaction with individuals involved in the dhikr activities. The study was conducted from January 5, 2024 to February 23, 2024 at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo, located at Jalan Pesantren 108 RT 04 RW 12 Sepande Candi Sidoarjo. The research subjects consisted of 313 students, with particular focus on takhasus class students who regularly participate in dhikr taskiyatun nafs.

Data sources include primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the pesantren caretaker, ustadz, murobbi, and students through interviews and direct observation. Secondary data were collected from relevant academic literature, journals, classical Islamic texts, and institutional documents related to spiritual development and dhikr practices (Suharsimi, 2006). Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement and capacity to provide in depth information regarding the implementation of dhikr and spiritual mentoring. Data collection techniques included observation, in depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly to examine the stages of dhikr implementation, the interaction patterns between the kiai and students, and the overall atmosphere of the activity. Interviews were conducted in a semi structured manner to allow flexible and comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives (Sahir, 2022). Documentation was used to support and verify findings through photographs, activity schedules, and relevant administrative records (Suharsimi, 2006).

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from different informants. Technique triangulation was conducted by cross checking data from observation, interviews, and documentation. Time triangulation was applied by collecting data at different occasions to ensure consistency and reliability (Mekarisce, 2020). Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Suharsimi, 2006). Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. Data display was conducted in the form of systematic thematic narratives to clarify relationships among categories. Conclusions were drawn gradually through continuous verification to ensure credibility and analytical depth (Rachmawati, 2007). This methodological framework enables the study to produce contextual, data driven, and analytically rigorous findings regarding the role of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in strengthening students' spiritual intelligence.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Institutional Configuration and Design of the Implementation of Dhikr Taskiyatun Nafs

Based on participatory observation, institutional document analysis, and in depth interviews with ustadz and takhasus class students, the findings indicate that dhikr taskiyatun nafs has been firmly institutionalized within the educational system of Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas since its establishment in 1997. This practice is not positioned as a supplementary ritual activity or a temporary program, but rather as an inherent component of the pesantren's educational construction, which is oriented toward the formation of spiritual character. Institutionally, the pesantren adopts an integrative educational paradigm that balances the strengthening of Islamic religious knowledge, mastery of science and technology, and the internalization of faith and piety values. This orientation is not merely normative but is operationalized through a structured system of spiritual guidance. Within this framework, the takhasus class was established as an intensive mentoring unit for students who demonstrate greater commitment, readiness, and academic capacity in deepening religious knowledge while simultaneously strengthening spiritual practices.

In the takhasus class, dhikr taskiyatun nafs is positioned as a central instrument in the process of soul purification and character formation. Its implementation is not detached from the daily rhythm of

pesantren life; rather, it is integrated into students' routine activities. This indicates that the pesantren perceives tazkiyatun nafs as the foundation of moral and spiritual character development, rather than as an incidental devotional practice. The configuration of this dhikr implementation is supported by strong historical legitimacy, spiritual authority from the kiai as the central religious figure of the pesantren, and structural reinforcement through regular schedules and continuous mentoring mechanisms. Consequently, dhikr taskiyatun nafs has become part of the institutional culture that systematically and sustainably shapes the spiritual ecosystem of the students.

4.2. Methodological Pattern and Mechanism of the Implementation of Dhikr Taskiyatun Nafs

The research findings reveal that the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in the takhasus class follows a systematic, gradual, and pedagogical mechanism. The first stage involves the internalization of dhikr recitations through direct instruction by the kiai or ustadz. Students are introduced to a structured sequence of recitations, including istighfar, tahmid, tahlil, takbir, shalawat, and other prescribed formulas. At this stage, emphasis is placed not only on verbal articulation but also on proper etiquette, accurate pronunciation, and the cultivation of conscious intention. The second stage consists of directed and consistent repetition. Dhikr is performed daily in congregational assemblies led directly by the kiai or ustadz, particularly after obligatory prayers and at specific times such as before dawn and after maghrib. Repetition in designated numbers fosters spiritual discipline while training inner concentration. This repetitive pattern generates habituation that strengthens students' spiritual connectedness to Allah. The third stage involves the deepening of meaning. In each session, the kiai elaborates on the theological, ethical, and psychological dimensions of the recited formulas. Students are guided to understand the correlation between dhikr, purification of the heart, control of desires, and the formation of noble character. Thus, dhikr is not practiced mechanically but as a reflective process that engages self awareness. The fourth stage is the practical integration of dhikr into daily life. Students are encouraged to make dhikr a continuous awareness accompanying their learning activities, social interactions, and personal challenges. In this sense, dhikr functions as a mechanism of self regulation that assists in emotional control and value orientation. In terms of supervision, the kiai and ustadz conduct periodic monitoring through dialogue and spiritual counseling sessions. Students are provided with opportunities to express their inner experiences, difficulties in maintaining consistency, and perceived changes. This mechanism demonstrates that the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs encompasses both collective and individual dimensions. In other words, the practice not only cultivates a shared spiritual atmosphere but also aims to build structured personal spiritual awareness among students.

4.3. Transformation of Students' Spiritual Intelligence as an Impact of Dhikr Implementation

The findings indicate significant transformation in the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students following consistent engagement in dhikr taskiyatun nafs. This transformation is identified across several key dimensions, namely reflective self awareness, transcendental relationship, emotional stability, and moral behavior. In the dimension of reflective awareness, students demonstrate an increased capacity for self introspection. They become more sensitive to personal shortcomings, more proactive in engaging in muhasabah, and more motivated to improve themselves through istighfar. This heightened awareness extends beyond formal worship and manifests in daily interactions and attitudes. Regarding the transcendental dimension, students report a strengthened sense of closeness to Allah. Regular dhikr cultivates a sustained awareness of divine presence in daily activities. This is reflected in greater consistency in performing prayers, deeper concentration during worship, and enhanced moral consciousness in decision making. In the emotional dimension, students state that the practice of dhikr reduces anxiety and emotional reactivity. They become more patient, less prone to anger, and calmer in facing academic pressures and interpersonal challenges. This emotional stability is perceived as a direct effect of habitual dhikr, which stabilizes both mind and heart.

In terms of moral behavior, observable changes include increased politeness, discipline, and responsibility toward assigned duties. Social interactions among students become more harmonious, and interpersonal conflicts are addressed in a more mature and controlled manner. Students' testimonies

further reinforce these findings. Several students acknowledged that prior to engaging consistently in dhikr, they often experienced anxiety and emotional instability. After participating regularly in dhikr taskiyatun nafs, they reported increased patience, inner tranquility, and improved quality of worship. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in the takhasus class does not merely enhance the frequency of devotional practices, but also produces tangible transformation in self awareness, emotional regulation, and moral conduct. These transformations serve as empirical indicators of the enhancement of students' spiritual intelligence within the pesantren educational context.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in enhancing the spiritual intelligence of takhasus class students at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas Sepande Candi Sidoarjo. Based on the findings derived from observation, in depth interviews, and document analysis, it can be concluded that dhikr taskiyatun nafs has been systematically institutionalized and plays a significant role in the spiritual development of students. The implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs has proven effective in fostering inner tranquility, strengthening students' transcendental relationship with Allah, and enhancing reflective self awareness. The consistent and structured practice of dhikr functions as a mechanism of self regulation that assists students in managing emotions, reducing anxiety, and cultivating patience in facing both academic and personal challenges. Its impact extends beyond psychological calmness to the reinforcement of moral commitment and value orientation grounded in Islamic teachings.

From a procedural perspective, dhikr taskiyatun nafs at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas is implemented through a structured and gradual method. The process includes the introduction and internalization of specific dhikr recitations, habitual repetition through regular assemblies, deepening of theological and ethical meanings, and integration of dhikr into daily life practices. Regular dhikr assemblies, guided directly by the kiai and ustadz, play a crucial role in maintaining consistency and ensuring the quality of spiritual engagement. Therefore, dhikr is not treated as a merely mechanical verbal practice, but as a reflective and continuous process of soul purification. The findings also indicate positive behavioral transformation among students who consistently participate in dhikr taskiyatun nafs. Observable changes include increased patience, discipline, responsibility, and emotional control in social interactions. Students demonstrate higher moral awareness in both worship practices and interpersonal conduct. Testimonies from participants further confirm that dhikr helps them cope with life challenges more calmly and maturely. Overall, dhikr taskiyatun nafs significantly contributes to the strengthening of students' spiritual quality. It not only increases the intensity of devotional practices but also deepens religious understanding, reinforces the internalization of Islamic values, and cultivates sustained spiritual consciousness. Thus, the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ikhlas can be understood as an effective spiritual mentoring model in fostering holistic and sustainable spiritual intelligence among students within the pesantren educational context.

Ethical Approval

This study did not require formal ethical approval as it constitutes normative legal research and does not involve medical experimentation or vulnerable populations. The research was conducted in accordance with generally accepted ethical standards in social science and legal research. Data collection relied on document analysis of legislation, legal doctrines, and regulations of international sports organizations, as well as publicly accessible institutional documents.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. This study did not involve direct interaction with human participants. All materials analyzed were obtained from publicly available legal sources and institutional documents.

Confidentiality Statement

Not applicable. The study did not collect personal or sensitive data. All legal materials and documents used are publicly accessible and were utilized solely for academic and research purposes.

Authors' Contributions

ADO contributed to the conceptualization of the study, formulation of the research objectives, development of the theoretical framework on dhikr taskiyatun nafs and spiritual intelligence, research design, data collection through observation and in depth interviews, qualitative data analysis, and preparation of the original draft of the manuscript. MYEY contributed to methodological validation, data triangulation, interpretation of findings within the framework of Islamic educational studies, critical revision of the discussion section, and final editing of the manuscript for academic rigor and intellectual coherence.

Disclosure Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this research.

Data Availability Statement

All data supporting the findings of this study are derived from publicly available legal materials, including legislation, academic publications, and official regulations of international and national sports organizations. No additional datasets were generated or analyzed.

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Notes on Contributors

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Angga Dwi Oktafiawan is a researcher in the field of Islamic Education with a focus on spiritual development, character formation, and the implementation of dhikr taskiyatun nafs in pesantren education. His research interests include spiritual intelligence, Islamic pedagogical models, tazkiyatun nafs studies, and the integration of Islamic values in contemporary educational practices.

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Muhammad Yusron El Yunusi is a scholar specializing in Islamic educational studies and spiritual mentoring within pesantren contexts. His academic work concentrates on Islamic character education, the development of spiritual intelligence, qualitative research in Islamic institutions, and the application of classical Islamic concepts such as tazkiyatun nafs in modern educational frameworks.

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