



Conceptualizing Spiritual Value Internalization in Pesantren Education: the Role of the Suluk Tradition

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Abstract: This study stems from the limitations of existing research on the internalization of spiritual values in pesantren education, which has tended to be descriptive and normative in nature and has not yet been formulated within a clear pedagogical framework. The purpose of this study is to formulate a concept regarding the process of internalizing spiritual values through suluk tradition at the Babussalam Pesantren in Aceh Singkil, with a focus on the Aliyah level as a transitional phase toward the spiritual and moral independence of the students. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in depth interviews with teachers and students, and document analysis. Based on the results of the study, it was found that the internalization of values occurs through a structured pedagogical process comprising three main stages: cognitive transformation through normative instruction, the formation of social-habitual patterns through daily practices and interactions, and spiritual consolidation through suluk practices as a phase of intensive reflection. Within this framework, suluk functions as a pedagogical-spiritual mechanism that integrates the understanding of values and the habituation of behavior into the students' intrinsic consciousness, thereby allowing values to develop into a relatively autonomous inner orientation. This process follows a spiral pattern, beginning with the stage of understanding, moving toward habituation, and culminating in integration through a series of structured spiritual experiences. Theoretically, this study contributes by offering an integrative model of value internalization in pesantren education that positions spiritual consolidation as a key dimension in strengthening Islamic character.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini berangkat dari keterbatasan kajian internalisasi nilai spiritual dalam pendidikan pesantren yang selama ini cenderung bersifat deskriptif-normatif dan belum terumuskan dalam kerangka pedagogis yang jelas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan konsep mengenai proses internalisasi nilai-nilai spiritual melalui tradisi suluk di Pesantren Babussalam Aceh Singkil, dengan fokus pada jenjang Aliyah sebagai fase transisi menuju kemandirian spiritual dan moral santri. Penelitian menerapkan

pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam terhadap guru dan santri, serta analisis dokumentasi. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian diperoleh temuan bahwa internalisasi nilai berlangsung melalui proses pedagogis terstruktur yang mencakup tiga tahap utama: transformasi kognitif melalui pengajaran normatif, pembentukan sosial-habitual melalui praktik dan interaksi keseharian, serta konsolidasi spiritual melalui praktik suluk sebagai fase refleksi intensif. Dalam kerangka ini, suluk berfungsi sebagai mekanisme pedagogis-spiritual yang mengintegrasikan pemahaman nilai dan pembiasaan perilaku ke dalam kesadaran intrinsik santri, sehingga nilai berkembang menjadi orientasi batin yang relatif otonom. Proses ini mengikuti pola spiral, dimulai dari tahap pemahaman, berlanjut ke tahap pembiasaan, dan berpuncak pada integrasi melalui serangkaian pengalaman spiritual yang terstruktur. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan menawarkan model integratif internalisasi nilai dalam pendidikan pesantren yang menempatkan konsolidasi spiritual sebagai dimensi kunci dalam penguatan karakter Islam.

Keywords : Internalization of spiritual values, suluk pedagogy, spiritual consolidation, pesantren education.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of digital technology has brought about a fundamental transformation in the way the younger generation shapes their values, attitudes, and life goals (Murniasih et al., 2025). These dynamics not only impact communication styles and daily life patterns but also influence the depth of students' moral and spiritual awareness (Jackelén, 2021). The situation presents significant challenges in the context of religious education, including a diminished capacity for spiritual reflection, increased digital distractions, and a shift in the internalization of values from contemplative experiences toward more immediate and superficial patterns (Rahma et al., 2024).

In this context, Islamic religious education still faces various limitations when dominated by normative, instructive, and cognitive approaches (Padilah et al., 2025). These approaches are effective in transmitting religious knowledge, but often insufficient to foster students' inner awareness, self-control, and moral resilience. Given this, it is necessary to implement a pedagogical model that focuses not only on

formal fulfillment but also on honing the internal dimension through regular, long-term spiritual experiences.

In educational research, the understanding of value internalization is generally viewed as a gradual process involving two main mechanisms. First, the transformation of values through cognitive understanding. Second, the instillation of values through social conditioning within the educational environment (Allsyafira & Fauzi, 2025). This perspective aligns with the theory of value internalization in education as well as the experiential learning approach, which emphasizes the crucial role of direct engagement in the process of meaning-making (Hambal, 2026). Furthermore, the concept of habitus explains how repeated social practices have the capacity to shape an individual's dispositions and behavioral orientations (Amanah & Istingadah, 2025). However, these three approaches tend not to fully explain how religious values can transform into a deep and relatively autonomous inner

consciousness, particularly within the context of pesantren-based Islamic education.

A number of studies have examined the process of value internalization in Islamic education through various approaches, from both cognitive and social perspectives. These include the educational system (Wafa et al., 2025), institutional culture, and religious practices that take place within family and community settings (Ristianah, 2020). On the other hand, studies on Sufi traditions such as suluk are more often positioned as spiritual practices or socio-religious phenomena (Ningpitasaki & Rahman, 2025). However, research that specifically analyzes suluk as a pedagogical mechanism in the process of internalizing spiritual values within the formal pesantren education system, particularly involving adolescent students, remains very limited.

Thus, there is a clear research gap: the lack of a conceptual framework that explains how Sufi-based spiritual practices particularly suluk can systematically function as pedagogical mechanisms in the process of internalizing spiritual values. Furthermore, the stages of internalization that could theoretically link cognitive understanding, social conditioning, and spiritual experience into a single integrative framework have not yet been clearly identified or established.

In the tradition of Islamic Sufism, the development of spiritual awareness is rooted in the concepts of tazkiyat al-nafs and ihsan, which emphasize inner transformation through deep and sustained religious experience (Mukhlis, 2024). These principles are then actualized in the practice of suluk, a process of spiritual cultivation involving disciplined worship, intensified dhikr, strengthened self-control, and guidance from a spiritual mentor (Rosdiana

et al., 2026). Unlike conventional instructional approaches, suluk operates through reflective and repetitive existential experiences, thereby possessing the potential to foster a more stable and profound inner consciousness (Yusuf, 2020).

Given this gap, this study was conducted with the aim of examining the process of internalizing spiritual values through the suluk tradition among high school students at the Babussalam Islamic Boarding School in Aceh Singkil. More specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: First, what spiritual values are developed through the practice of suluk in the context of pesantren education? Second, how does the process of internalizing these values take place in the students' lives? Third, how does the practice of suluk function as a pedagogical mechanism in shaping the students' spiritual awareness?

The research was conducted using a qualitative approach through a case study design carried out at the Babussalam Islamic Boarding School in Aceh Singkil, which has a structured spiritual development system and incorporates suluk as an integral part of the character-building process for students, particularly at the Aliyah level as a transitional phase toward achieving independence in spiritual and moral dimensions (Sintia et al., 2026).

Theoretically, this study integrates the theory of value internalization in the field of education, the experiential learning approach, and the concept of habitus with the principle of tazkiyat al-nafs in the Sufi tradition. Unlike internalization models that generally only reach the stage of value transformation and transaction (Marzuqi, 2022), this study proposes that the process of spiritual value internalization requires an additional stage of spiritual consolidation, namely a process of reflective integration

through structured and continuous spiritual experiences.

Based on this framework, this study proposes a conceptual model of value internalization that encompasses three main stages: first, cognitive transformation, second, social habituation, and third, spiritual consolidation. In this proposed model, the practice of suluk is positioned as a pedagogical mechanism that plays a key role in the stage of spiritual consolidation, namely integrating the understanding of values and behavioral habits into inner consciousness through intensive and structured spiritual experiences.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its effort to develop a conceptual model of the internalization of spiritual values in the context of pesantren education, by highlighting the dimension of spiritual consolidation an element that has not previously received adequate attention in the discourse on Islamic education.

In practical terms, this study has implications for refining pesantren educational strategies that not only focus on cognitive and behavioral aspects but also integrate spiritual experiences as an integral component of the character-building process (Pranilinsyia et al., 2025). In this context, an approach based on suluk offers a pedagogical alternative to strengthen students' religious awareness, self-control, and moral resilience amidst the transformation of interaction patterns and the expansion of digital spaces.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the process of internalizing spiritual values through the suluk tradition in the context of pesantren education. This approach provides an opportunity to gain a contextual

understanding of the experiences, practices, and interpretations involved in the process of spiritual.

This study was conducted at the Babussalam Islamic Boarding School in Aceh Singkil, which implements a Sufi-based spiritual development system and integrates the suluk tradition into the education of high school students. The unit of analysis in this study is the process of internalizing spiritual values through suluk practices, with a specific focus on the interrelationship between spiritual development, religious practices, and the religious experiences of the students.

Participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in spiritual guidance. This study involved the head of the Islamic boarding school as the murshid (M1), the ummī as the mentor for female students (U1), and third-year Aliyah students. A total of 67 students (40 female and 27 male) were observed. For in-depth interviews, 12 students (6 female and 6 male) were purposively selected because they were able to provide in-depth and comprehensive information. Interviews were also conducted with the murshid and ummī, who served as the primary sources of information. The number of participants was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation. A summary of the study participants can be seen in Table (1).

Category	Role	Number	Code
Murshid	Pesantren leader and spiritual guide	1	M1
Ummī	Female spiritual mentor	1	U1
Students (Interview)	Aliyah-level students	12 (6F, 6M)	S1–S12
Students (Observation)	Aliyah-level students	67 (40F, 27M)	–

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document review. The interviews were conducted to explore the participants' experiences and interpretations regarding the practice of suluk. Observation was used to understand the socio-religious context and the dynamics at play in the process of the santri's spiritual development. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement data related to the spiritual guidance program and practices. This combination of techniques supported data triangulation (Hariawan et al., 2025).

Data management was conducted using a thematic approach by applying systematic coding procedures (Adelliani et al., 2023). The stages of analysis include: (1) familiarization with the data through transcription and repeated reading, (2) open coding to identify units of meaning, (3) axial coding to group codes into specific categories, and (4) selective coding to formulate main themes. The themes were then reviewed and interpreted by relating the empirical findings to the frameworks of Islamic Religious Education and Sufism. This resulted in a conceptual formulation regarding the function of suluk as a pedagogical mechanism in the process of internalizing spiritual values.

Data validity was ensured through several steps, including source and methodological triangulation, participant verification, and peer review among researchers (Susanto & Jailani, 2023). The researchers also engaged in self reflection to minimize bias in the interpretation process. This study obtained official permission from the boarding school administration. All participants provided consent after first receiving an explanation regarding the research objectives and procedures. Participant identities were anonymized using

specific codes (M1, U1, S1–S12) to maintain confidentiality. This study focuses on a single pesantren context; therefore, these findings are not intended for statistical generalization but rather as a conceptual contribution to the discourse on Islamic education, particularly the spiritual education of pesantren.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Process of Internalization in the Suluk Tradition

The research findings indicate that the process of internalizing values within the suluk tradition at the Babussalam Islamic boarding school in Aceh Singkil cannot be understood as a separate ritual practice, but rather as a process that evolves adaptively and is integrated into the boarding school's educational system. Field data analysis reveals that suluk has undergone a transformation from its original form as a community religious practice into a pedagogical strategy deliberately implemented to address various challenges of social change, particularly those related to adolescent dynamics and the influence of the external environment.

This was revealed by the suluk instructor (M1), who stated that:

“The suluk program at the Babussalam Islamic boarding school was initially intended only for the local community, but over the past six years it has begun to be implemented as a method for instilling spiritual values in the students, in response to the changes and challenges of the times.”

This statement indicates that the implementation of suluk in the context of santri is not merely a continuation of tradition, but rather a form of pedagogical reorientation. Suluk is positioned as a response to the need for the internalization of values, which can no longer be optimized solely through cognitive learning and formal

habituation (Ramadani & Muhlis, 2025). This view is reinforced by the statement from U1, who noted that:

“This suluk tradition is not merely a ritual practice; rather, it encompasses educational exercises and values. Therefore, it is only fitting that suluk involves teenage students particularly those in the third year of high school as preparation for facing the future.”

This data indicates that suluk is viewed by pesantren stakeholders as an integrative educational tool that encompasses intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions simultaneously. Thus, the internalization of values in this context is aimed not only at normative understanding but also at developing the existential readiness that students need to face the realities of life outside the pesantren environment.

From an operational perspective, research findings demonstrate that suluk is implemented within a structured framework and occurs routinely (Bakar, 2025). Based on an interview with a supervisor (M1), the suluk program is conducted four times a year at specific intervals, with each session lasting ten days. This pattern indicates that suluk is not merely a sporadic activity but an integrated component of a normalized training cycle. Furthermore, for third-grade Aliyah students, participation in the suluk program is an absolute requirement for completing their education. One student (S1) provided the following explanation:

“Third-year Aliyah students who participate in this suluk need only attend one session as a graduation requirement, and we participate in the suluk together with members of the community who are also performing suluk at this pesantren.”

These findings reveal two important aspects. First, suluk has been integrated into

the formal education system through the fulfillment of graduation requirements. Second, its implementation, which involves the community, demonstrates that the process of internalizing values takes place within a broader social context, not limited solely to the internal environment of the pesantren. Thus, suluk functions as a collective pedagogical space that bridges formal education with social religious practices.

On the other hand, the mechanism of internalization of values in suluk practices does not occur independently, but rather is a continuation of the pre-existing educational system. Research data reveals that before undergoing suluk programs, students undergo a series of religious lessons and a process of adjustment to life in Islamic boarding schools. In the context of traditional Islamic education that developed in the Aceh region, dayahs play a crucial role in shaping the character, spiritual depth, and moral direction of students, through the teaching of classical Islamic texts and guidance in daily religious activities (Zulkhairi, 2021).

This finding is reinforced by the fact that students are required to obtain parental permission before participating in suluk, as stated by S4:

“Before participating in suluk, we are required to obtain permission from our parents or guardians as a form of consent that we will be under the guidance of the suluk mentor.”

This procedure indicates that the process of internalizing values does not occur solely at the individual level but also involves social recognition from the family. Thus, the process of internalization within the suluk tradition is embedded in a broader educational ecosystem that encompasses the pesantren, the family, and the community.

Overall, the results of the data analysis indicate that suluk does not serve as the initial stage of value formation, but rather as a phase of deepening and reinforcement. Values that have previously been instilled through learning and habit formation undergo an intensification through structured spiritual experiences during the suluk process. Here, suluk functions as a consolidation mechanism that strengthens the connection between cognitive awareness, social application, and inner spiritual experience.

Based on this, the findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of values within the suluk tradition occurs through an adaptive, structured, and multi-layered process. Suluk serves not only as a spiritual practice but also as a pedagogical strategy that systematically deepens and reinforces values within the students, particularly when they face ever-changing social dynamics.

2. Internalized Values and Variations in Their Sustainability

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be seen that the suluk tradition at the Babussalam Islamic boarding school instills fundamental spiritual values that are not limited to the cognitive realm but are also reflected in the transformation of each student's consciousness and behavior. Nevertheless, this internalization is not uniform; in reality, the depth and sustainability of this internalization vary, particularly when the students are outside the pesantren environment.

The most prominent value identified is the awareness of tawhid in the form of muraqabah the constant awareness of being under Allah's watchful eye which then functions as a mechanism for self-control (Hidayat, 2025). This is reflected in the experience of a female student (S2):

"I felt a change after participating in the suluk, my heart has become more at peace, I'm more mindful of what I say, and when I'm at home without the teacher's supervision, I'm afraid to skip my prayers because I feel that Allah is watching over me."

This data indicates that the internalization of values has shifted from external compliance toward reflective internal awareness, where self control no longer depends on institutional oversight. In this context, murāqabah serves as the foundation for the development of self regulation rooted in spiritual awareness (Khalid & Amin, 2021).

Concurrently, the values of ikhlās and spiritual discipline are also internalized through structured suluk practices. The intensification of worship and the restriction of distractions during suluk encourage students to practice their religion more consistently without focusing on external judgment. This is reflected in changes in the affective and relational dimensions, as explained by a male student (S5):

"After participating in suluk, I felt a change within myself, becoming a gentler person. Previously, I often spoke to my parents in a less polite manner, but after participating in the suluk, that change occurred."

Based on these findings, it is evident that the process of internalizing values does not merely impact the vertical relationship with the Creator, but also social relationships, particularly in the context of moral improvement and emotional regulation. Thus, the instilled values do not stop at the stage of inner awareness, but manifest themselves in behavioral changes within social interactions.

Furthermore, suluk also instills the values of ṣabr (self-control) and tawakkal, which

are evident in the students' ability to manage their desires and accept circumstances with greater composure. The inner calm expressed by the students, along with changes in how they respond to situations, indicate a shift from impulsive responses toward more reflective ones. In this context, these values are formed through direct experience during the suluk process, not merely through conceptual learning.

However, the research findings also reveal that the process of internalizing values does not always proceed consistently in daily life. Some students face a tension between their established spiritual awareness and the influence of external environments, particularly digital media and social circles. One female student (S3) shared:

After participating in suluk, there were indeed changes, but due to the influence of social media like TikTok, my heart still tends to be drawn to the latest trends. I realize that this is wrong, yet the influence of digital media still manages to override that awareness."

This statement reveals a dissonance between awareness and behavior, in which values have been internalized at the cognitive and affective levels but have not yet been fully established in behavior. A similar point was also emphasized by another student (S4):

"because of the influence of friends outside."

This finding indicates that the sustainability of internalization is significantly influenced by the external context faced by students after leaving the pesantren environment. Thus, the internalization of values in suluk cannot be viewed as a final achievement, but rather as a process that continually adapts to social reality.

This phenomenon of ambivalence is also evident among male students who admit to continuing behaviors inconsistent with the values they have acquired such as maintaining relationships with members of the opposite sex even as they simultaneously sense positive changes within themselves:

"I continue the relationship due to environmental influences and access to social media, but after participating in suluk, I also feel a change within myself."

This data shows that the internalization of values occurs in two directions simultaneously: building moral awareness, yet not yet fully capable of controlling behavior in complex situations. Analytically, this indicates that suluk effectively fosters an awareness of values, but its long-term impact is highly dependent on the strength of the environment and the continuity of the monitoring process.

This condition was also acknowledged by the mentors, who noted that although positive changes do occur, they are not always sustained over the long term due to students' vulnerability to the influence of social media. For this reason, the pesantren implements continued intervention through mandatory weekly *tawajjuh* sessions as a form of post-suluk reinforcement.

Thus, the findings within this theme indicate that values such as *murāqabah*, *ikhhlās*, *ṣabr*, *tawakkal*, spiritual discipline, and social *adab* are indeed internalized through suluk, although to varying degrees across individuals. The process of internalization is neither uniform nor final; rather, it unfolds dynamically through the interaction between spiritual experience, personal readiness, and pressures arising from the external environment.

3. Longitudinal Dynamics of Value Internalization in the Suluk Tradition

The analysis indicates that value internalization within the suluk tradition at Babussalam Islamic Boarding School unfolds through a longitudinal and non-linear pattern, characterized by reinforcement, fluctuation, and adaptation across changing contexts over time. This pattern was identified through three major phases pre suluk, during suluk, and post suluk each marked by distinct forms of transformation and experience.

Before entering the suluk phase, the process of internalizing values remains at a normative level and has not yet fully become part of one's personal consciousness. This is evident from the statement made by the suluk mentor (M1):

"Conveying material through cognitive or instructional means alone is insufficient to foster awareness."

This data indicates that before undergoing suluk, the students already possessed religious values in the form of knowledge and habit, but had not yet reached a stage of reflective awareness. In other words, internalization at this phase is still external in nature and dependent on the pesantren's monitoring system.

Significant changes began to emerge during the suluk phase, marked by an intensification of spiritual experiences that prompted a shift in consciousness from the external to the internal. One key indicator that emerged was the development of self-control rooted in divine awareness (murāqabah), as expressed by a female student (S2):

"Throughout the suluk process, I became aware of a deeper inner peace, and when I was at home without the teacher's guidance, I felt anxiety and unease if I did not perform prayers because I felt I was always under Allah's watchful eye."

This finding indicates that during the suluk phase, a transformation occurs from obedience based on external supervision toward obedience grounded in internal awareness. Values are no longer practiced merely because of rules, but rather due to a personal awareness that begins to take shape through intensive spiritual experiences

However, in the post- suluk phase, the data indicates that internalization does not always proceed smoothly. Instead, there are fluctuating dynamics influenced by external factors, particularly digital media and the social environment. This is evident from the statement of a female student (S3):

"There have been positive changes, but the influence of social media means my heart still tends to follow the latest trends. I realize that this is wrong, but the influence of social media is still very strong."

A similar situation was also observed in a male student (S5):

"After the suluk, I became more gentle, but during breaks, due to peer pressure and social media, I still dated."

In addition to digital factors, peer pressure also serves as a variable influencing the sustainability of internalization, as expressed:

"because of the influence of friends outside" (S4).

These findings suggest that the values instilled during suluk are not yet fully established when students are outside the controlled environment of the pesantren. Thus, the post-suluk phase serves as a test of the resilience of value internalization.

In response to these dynamics, the pesantren has developed sustainability mechanisms through post-suluk interventions. This is explained by Abuya and Ummi:

"Students remain under monitoring. Although there are positive changes, their

resilience varies. Therefore, they are required to attend weekly tawajjuh sessions.”

This policy indicates that internalization is understood as a continuous process requiring reinforcement following the intensive phase. Weekly tawajjuh serves as a stabilization mechanism to maintain the consistency of values formed during suluk. (Solin et al., 2024).

Overall, these longitudinal dynamics reveal three main patterns: (1) the process in the pre-suluk phase is normative in nature and dependent on external control. (2) the suluk phase serves as a point of intensification that fosters the development of internal awareness. (3) the post-suluk phase exhibits ongoing fluctuations that are heavily influenced by external social contexts.

Thus, the internalization of values within the suluk tradition is not linear or final, but rather dynamic and contextual, necessitating mechanisms for ongoing guidance to maintain its long-term stability.

4. Mechanisms of Internalization and Inner Transformation in the Suluk Tradition

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be seen that the internalization of values within the suluk tradition at the Babussalam Islamic Boarding School takes place through a structured spiritual pedagogical mechanism. This mechanism not only operates at the behavioral level but also plays a role in the formation of inner consciousness. Furthermore, this mechanism is not a single element. Rather, it consists of several key elements: the intensification of spiritual practices, the limitation of distractions, the authority of the mentor, and post-suluk reinforcement.

First, it is clear that the mechanism of intensifying spiritual practices serves as the primary driving force in the process of

deepening consciousness. The structure of suluk, which emphasizes the repetition of dhikr, consistent worship, and contemplative focus, creates psychological conditions that reduce the potential for distraction while strengthening the capacity for self-reflection. Within this framework, practices such as structured dhikr, the prayer of repentance (shalat taubat), and self-reflection (muhasabah) serve not merely as ritual observances but as means for the formation of internal consciousness (Andhika et al., 2026). This is reflected in the experiences of students who state:

“I feel a sense of fear and anxiety if I do not perform prayer because I feel I am under Allah’s watchful eye.” (S2)

This data indicates that the repetition of spiritual practices produces internal effects characterized by the emergence of murāqabah as a form of self-regulation grounded in divine consciousness.

Second, mechanisms for limiting distractions (discipline-based control) play a crucial role in building self-control. During the suluk period, students live in an environment that restricts non-essential social interactions, access to media, and other external stimuli. This situation creates an ascetic space that opens opportunities for individuals to focus more on internal processes (Winarni et al., 2025). However, post-suluk observations reveal that as these restrictions are lifted, external pressures re-emerge, particularly from digital platforms and the social environment. This was articulated by one of the female students:

“I know it’s wrong, but the influence of media is still strong.” (S3)

Based on these findings, it can be understood that the restrictions imposed during the suluk practice serve as an effective initial mechanism for developing self-control; however, they cannot guarantee

the stability of values once individuals return to a more open environment.

Third, the mechanism through the role of authority and example carried out by the guide or mursyid serves to reinforce the legitimacy of values (Duryat, 2021). The guidance, monitoring, and mentoring provided by Abuya are not merely instructional in nature but are capable of fostering compliance in the early stages, which then transforms into internal awareness. This is evident from the statement affirming that:

“suluk is not merely a ritual but an effective educational strategy.” (M1

Thus, the authority of the guide serves as a bridge between external structures and the formation of internal awareness (Wahyudi et al., 2026).

Fourth, a key aspect of maintaining the stability of the internalization process is the implementation of a mechanism for ongoing reinforcement (post-suluk reinforcement). The pesantren does not view suluk as the sole intervention but rather implements it on an ongoing basis through additional practices such as weekly tawajjuh. This claim is supported by statements made by the mentors:

“Students remain under observation, therefore, they are required to attend weekly tawajjuh” (M1/U1)

This step indicates that internalization is understood as an ongoing process requiring systematic reinforcement to address instability that arises after suluk.

Broadly speaking, these four mechanisms work in an integrated manner to support the students' inner transformation. Intensification of spiritual practice serves as a catalyst for the emergence of awareness; distraction helps strengthen students' self-control; the authority of mentors provides direction and legitimacy; and ongoing reinforcement

serves to maintain the continuity of instilled values. The combination of these mechanisms results in a gradual shift from obedience dependent on external control to self-regulation dependent on internal awareness.

Based on these findings, the success of suluk as a strategy for internalizing values is not determined solely by the ritual aspect, but rather by the design of mechanisms that facilitate the integration of spiritual experience, self-control, and ongoing development in forming the personality structure of students.

Thematic Synthesis of Findings

The findings of this study focus on four interrelated themes: the internalization process, internalized values, longitudinal dynamics, and mechanisms of internalization.

First, the process of internalization proceeds through three mutually integrated stages: cognitive transformation, social-habitual formation, and spiritual consolidation. The findings indicate that understanding alone is insufficient; spiritual practice serves as a stage of deepening that integrates knowledge and habit formation into inner consciousness.

Second, the values formed are not limited to normative aspects but develop into a reflective consciousness, particularly in the forms of murāqabah, inner peace, and self-control. Nevertheless, this process is not entirely stable, given the presence of ambivalence arising from the influence of the external environment.

Third, internalization occurs along a longitudinal trajectory that encompasses the pre-, during, and post-retreat phases, following a pattern that begins with a normative stage, progresses to intensification, and then leads to sustained

variations influenced by social and digital contexts.

Fourth, this process is supported by integrative mechanisms, including intensification of spiritual practices, limitation of distractions, the authority of the guide, and ongoing strengthening such as weekly tawajjuh.

Table II. Thematic Summary of Findings

Theme	Main Categories	Key Indicators
Internalization Process	Transformation, Transaction, Consolidation	Understanding, Habituation, Spiritual Deepening
Internalized Values	<i>Murāqabah</i> , Control, Inner Tranquility	Self Awareness of Divine Supervision, Behavioral Change
Longitudinal Dynamics	Pre, During, Suluk and Post	Normative, Intensive, Fluctuating
Mechanisms of Internalization	Intensification, Restriction, Reinforcement	Authority, <i>Dhikr</i> , Distraction Control, Role of the <i>Mursyid</i> , <i>Tawajjuh</i>

This research reveals that the process of internalizing values in the suluk tradition cannot be interpreted superficially as a gradual shift from knowledge to behavior. Although in Islamic education studies, internalizing values is generally described through three stages: transformation, transaction, and transinternalization (Nubuwah et al., 2023), fieldwork indicates that these three stages do not always occur automatically or linearly. In practical implementation, there is a need for a dedicated space for deepening that specifically facilitates the values' true infiltration into inner consciousness.

Within this framework, this study does not reject the existing classical framework,

but rather seeks to provide additional explanations of how the transinternalization stage actually occurs in its implementation. Transformation still occurs in the cognitive realm through formal learning mechanisms. The value transaction stage also plays a significant role, but in the context of the Islamic boarding school that is the object of this study, this stage encompasses not only social activities but also involves the role model of the caregiver, the repeated habituation process (*taqrar*), and advice that creates a normative environment. Based on this explanation, transaction values contribute to the formation of relatively stable habits, although they cannot fully guarantee the formation of internal awareness.

The main contribution of this study lies in its explanation of the advanced stage of this process, which is formulated in this study as spiritual consolidation. This stage represents the tangible manifestation of transinternalization, in which values are no longer merely understood or practiced, but are internalized through intensive and structured spiritual experiences. In this context, the practice of suluk serves as a pedagogical mechanism that systematically integrates cognitive understanding and behavioral habituation with reflective inner experiences.

Unlike previous studies, most research on the internalization of values in Islamic education has tended to emphasize cognitive and behavioral aspects, such as reinforcing teaching materials and fostering the habit of religious activities (Aziz & Makruf, 2025). While this approach is successful in achieving compliance with prevailing norms, it often fails to adequately explain how these values transform into stable intrinsic awareness. On the other hand, studies within the Sufism framework view spiritual

experience as an essential foundation for building awareness, although they do not always link it to structured pedagogical design (Hasibuan & Ritonga, 2026). This research suggests that these two approaches need not be in conflict but can be combined within an integrative framework.

However, field findings also indicate that the internalization process does not end with the suluk experience. In the post-suluk phase, the influence of social media and social circles plays a significant role. In some situations, a conflict arises between one's values and daily practices. This suggests that the success of internalization is not a final outcome but depends on the continuation of the guidance process and the social context in which the individual is situated.

Based on these overall findings, the uniqueness of this study lies in its effort to operationalize the stage of transinternalization into a more concrete form, namely spiritual consolidation through structured suluk practices. Thus, this study not only enriches the existing theoretical framework but also provides an empirical explanation of how values are truly integrated into an individual's consciousness.

Theoretically, these findings suggest that the internalization of values in Islamic education should be understood as a process that simultaneously involves cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions (Nurfatimah & Zaitun, 2026). An approach that emphasizes only knowledge and habit formation risks fostering only situational compliance. Meanwhile, integration with spiritual experiences allows for the formation of more autonomous self-regulation.

In an applied context, this research suggests that approaches such as suluk can be considered as strategies for strengthening educational character, particularly in the face

of current dynamics such as digital disruption and shifting social patterns among the younger generation (Abdul & Adnir, 2025). However, the success of this approach is largely determined by consistency in long-term implementation, as seen in the practice of strengthening through weekly tawajjuh.

The results of this study have proven not only to strengthen understanding of the process of internalizing values in the realm of Islamic education, but also to solidify the practice of Sufi positions as an integral component of pedagogical design that can be systematically examined. More broadly, this study reveals that the combination of normative learning, social habituation, and spiritual experience forms the foundation for the formation of a more mature and reflective awareness of values. This contribution also provides a new dimension for the development of a more comprehensive values-based education model, especially in facing the challenges of today's society which tends to have complex identities, is stressed by the dynamics of the social environment, and is increasingly caught up in digital distractions. Through a spiritual consolidation approach as a central dimension, this study presents a more operational and contextual framework for how educational institutions can build self-evolution that is not merely based on norms, but also embedded in the inner consciousness of each individual.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be understood that the internalization of values in the suluk tradition occurs gradually through a series of interconnected processes, encompassing cognitive transformation, the formation of social habits, and spiritual consolidation. Suluk serves as a stage of deepening that integrates intellectual understanding with the internalization of

behavioral patterns into the inner consciousness, so that these values develop into a relatively autonomous internal orientation, although not entirely independent of the influence of post-suluk dynamics.

Conceptually, this study makes a twofold contribution: on the one hand, it reinforces the classical framework of value internalization, and on the other, it enriches it by presenting empirical evidence at an advanced stage through the concept of spiritual consolidation. These findings suggest that value internalization in the context of Islamic education should be understood holistically, integrating cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions as a single, unified process.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study demonstrate that structured spiritual practices such as suluk have the potential to serve as effective pedagogical strategies for strengthening character education, particularly in addressing the global challenges facing today's youth, such as digital distractions and a crisis of meaning in life. The implications of these findings position pesantren education not merely as a local context, but also as a model for the development of values-based educational approaches for a broader and more diverse society.

Given that this study covers only one pesantren context and employs a qualitative approach, further research is needed to test the application of this model in various educational settings and to examine the extent to which the internalization of values can be sustained over the long term, through longitudinal and comparative research designs.

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