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Characteristics of the Zikir Zawiyah Derived by the Prophet and Its Influence on the Socio-Religious Congregation

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Abstract

The practice of dhikr is a fundamental element in Islamic spirituality which plays an important role in building a relationship between humans and Allah (ḥablum minallah) while strengthening social relations between each other (ḥablum minannas). Amidst the dynamics of modern society characterized by increasingly complex social changes and spiritual needs, studies on the role of dhikr in socio-religious life are still relatively limited, particularly in local tarekat communities. This study aims to analyze the characteristics of dhikr practices at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi and their influence on the socio-religious life of the congregation. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with zawiyah administrators and congregation members, and documentation of dhikr activities and social interactions. The results show that dhikr practices at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi contribute significantly to improving emotional well-being, inner peace, and the quality of worship of the congregation. In addition, collective dhikr strengthens social solidarity, increasing empathy, patience, and cooperation among congregation members. These findings confirm that dhikr not only has a spiritual dimension but also functions as an effective instrument of socio-religious development in forming a harmonious and empowered Muslim community.
Keywords:Collective Zikr; Zawiyah Nurun Nabi; Islamic Spirituality.

A. Introduction

Humans are multidimensional beings with identities, values, and meanings of life, formed from various aspects of life, both material and spiritual. The religious dimension and spiritual needs are inseparable from human existence, as both play a vital role in shaping life orientation, behavior, and social relations. From an Islamic perspective, humans are positioned as beings who bear two primary responsibilities: devotion to Allah SWT and devotion to fellow human beings and the universe. Islam, as a religion of da'wah and humanity, presents a synergy between the divine theological dimension and the human sociological dimension, known as the concept ofḥablum minallah andḥablum minannas. These two dimensions are not dichotomous, but rather complement each other and are the main foundation in shaping the behavior of a Muslim, where all daily activities have the value of worship

as long as they are intended to achieve the pleasure of Allah SWT and the welfare of the people (Syarifudin, 2003).

The increasingly rapid development of the times has brought significant changes to human life, both directly and indirectly. Advances in science and technology have given rise to major leaps in the way humans work, communicate, and live socially. These changes have not only had positive impacts in the form of convenience and efficiency, but have also given rise to negative impacts in the form of shifts in values, perspectives, and life orientations. Modern lifestyles tend to place humans in a vortex of competition, materialism, and instrumental rationality that often ignores the spiritual dimension (Riyadi, 2014). As a result, humans experience a disconnection from meaning, inner anxiety, and a spiritual emptiness that is increasingly evident in everyday life.

According to Sufism, humans are inherently inclined toward material aspects, while spiritual needs are often marginalized. Sufis criticize modern standards of happiness, which are measured through material accumulation and temporary physical pleasures. This orientation toward life actually breeds dissatisfaction, inner emptiness, and spiritual poverty. This imbalance between fulfilling physical and spiritual needs is what gives rise to a spiritual crisis in modern human life. Therefore, Islam emphasizes that the purpose of human life is to worship Allah SWT, which encompasses a balance between life on earth and the afterlife.

Besides being spiritual beings, humans are also social creatures who cannot live without interacting with others. The instinct to live in groups, share identities, and build social relationships is an integral part of human nature. The absence of healthy social relationships can lead to serious psychological disorders, such as stress, depression, and social alienation (Arifin, 2023). In the context of modern society, high life pressures, social demands, and individualistic lifestyles have exacerbated the crisis of meaning in life. Many individuals feel isolated in the crowd, lose their direction in life, and experience existential emptiness (Ibrahim, 1996).

This crisis of meaning is further exacerbated by the rise of materialistic, individualistic, and egotistical lifestyles. The hope for happiness through material attainment actually leads to anxiety, worry, and mental disorders. Various studies have shown that spiritual imbalance is a major factor in the emergence of psychological disorders in modern society (Haryanto, 2002). This situation demands a systematic effort to develop spiritual intelligence and balance in life through a transformative religious approach.

In Islam, a balance between physical and spiritual needs is achieved through worship, one of which is dhikr (remembrance of God). Zikr is a spiritual practice that holds a crucial place in the Sufi tradition, particularly within the tarekat (Islamic order). Through dhikr, a Muslim strives to awaken divine awareness within themselves, cleanse their hearts of inner ailments, and strengthen their relationship with Allah SWT. The practice of dhikr is not merely a verbal ritual, but a means of spiritual transformation that can foster peace of mind, clarity of thought, and inner strength in facing life's challenges.

In a social context, dhikr (remembrance of God) not only impacts individuals but also has collective implications. Dhikr assemblies and ta'lim assemblies serve as spaces for religious development, spiritual recreation, and strengthening social solidarity. Ta'lim assemblies are inclusive, open to all levels of society, and serve as effective media for transmitting Islamic values and building the character of the community (Arifin, 2023). The existence of dhikr assemblies in modern society can be understood as a response to the spiritual crisis experienced by many individuals.

In Aceh, the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) has become an integral part of the community's religious traditions. Zikir is performed individually and in congregation, both within the context of daily religious rituals and within the framework of religious orders (tarekat) and zawiyyah (religious groups). One thriving zikr assembly in Banda Aceh is the Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi Zikir Assembly, located in Lambhuk Village, Ulee Kareng District. This zawiyyah is under the auspices of the Naqsyabandiyah Sufi Order and is known for its active involvement in the spiritual development of its congregation through structured zikr practices.

The Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi Zikir Assembly has unique characteristics, especially in the implementation of congregational zikr combined with Sufi expressions in the form of Sufi dance (sema) which is performed periodically. The practice of sema, widely known in the Sufi tradition of Jalaluddin Rumi, is understood as a form of moving meditation that combines zikr, music, and symbolic movement as a means of spiritual transcendence (Trimingham, 1998). In the context of Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi, sema is not only a spiritual ritual, but also a symbol of the congregation's spiritual journey and collective consciousness (Andriyani, 2019).

Zikr activities at Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi are not limited to rituals alone, but also extend to socio-religious activities, such as religious studies, social assistance, and other community activities. This demonstrates that zikr serves as an instrument for fostering a harmonious socio-religious life, strengthening solidarity, and increasing the congregation's social awareness (Nur Ahmad, 2023). However, scientific studies

specifically examining the characteristics of zikr at Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi and its impact on the congregation's socio-religious life are still relatively limited.

Therefore, this research is crucial to fill this academic gap. It aims not only to describe the practice of dhikr but also to analyze how dhikr acts as a spiritual and social mechanism in shaping the identity, behavior, and interactions of the congregation. With an interdisciplinary approach that integrates theological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Sufism and socio-religious studies (Mufid, 2006; Jamhari, 2002).

Based on this background, the main problem in this study arises from the lack of an in-depth study that systematically reveals the characteristics of the practice of dhikr at Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi and the extent to which this practice influences the socio-religious life of the congregation. On the one hand, dhikr is understood as an individual spiritual practice, but on the other hand, it has the potential to shape social relations, solidarity, and collective awareness. Therefore, this study focuses its study on two main issues: the characteristics of dhikr practiced at Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi, and how this dhikr practice influences the socio-religious life of the congregation in the context of Banda Aceh society.

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to deeply understand the practice of *dhikr*, its symbolic meaning, and the socio-religious dynamics that develop within the Zawiyyah Nurun Nabi community in Gampong Lambhuk, Ulee Kareng District, Banda Aceh City. The research subjects were selected purposively, including spiritual leaders, zawiyyah administrators, and congregants who actively participate in dhikr activities regularly. Data collection was conducted through participatory observation of the implementation of *dhikr* and the social interactions of the congregation, in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants, and documentation in the form of field notes and archives of religious activities (Manan, 2015, 2021). Data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing as a simultaneous process (Sugiyono, 2019). The entire research process was carried out by upholding the ethical principles of social research, including participant consent, confidentiality of informant identities, and the use of data solely for academic purposes, so that the research results are expected to have adequate validity, analytical depth, and scientific relevance.

C. Findings and Discussion

Zikr is one of the most fundamental spiritual practices in Islam, functioning not only as a ritual worship but also as a means of building awareness, transforming personality, and strengthening social relations in the lives of Muslims. Conceptually, zikr comes from the root word dzakara, which means to remember, mention, pay attention, and learn lessons, indicating that zikr encompasses cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions simultaneously (Yunus, 1990). In the Islamic context, zikr is not only interpreted as the repetition of certain words, but as a process of presenting Allah SWT in all dimensions of human life, both verbally, mentally, and in action. This understanding confirms that zikr has a central position in shaping human existence as both spiritual and social beings.

In the treasury of Sufism, dhikr is understood as the core of a seeker's entire spiritual journey. Al-Ghazali emphasized that the essence of dhikr lies in the presence of the heart, not merely in the abundance of verbal utterances (Al-Ghazali, 1985). Dhikr that is not accompanied by inner awareness is seen as merely a mechanical movement with minimal spiritual impact. This view aligns with the thinking of Ibn Atha'illah as-Sakandari, who stated that dhikr functions to free humans from ghaflah (negligence), namely the condition of existential disconnection between humans and God (Ibn Atha'illah, 2007). Thus, dhikr is the primary mechanism in maintaining the continuity of the transcendental relationship between servants and God.

Furthermore, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah interpreted dhikr more broadly, including all acts of obedience as forms of dhikr. According to him, every act carried out in order to obey Allah and avoid His prohibitions falls under the category of dhikr, so that dhikr is not limited to formal worship spaces, but is integrated into all activities of human life (Ibn Qayyim, 2004). This perspective shows that dhikr has direct implications for the formation of ethics, morality, and social behavior of a Muslim.

In the Sufi tradition, dhikr is also understood to have levels that reflect the spiritual quality of the practitioner. The initial level, namely dhikr ma'al ghaflah, is characterized by the dominance of verbal activity without the presence of the heart. Although at the lowest level, this form of dhikr still has value as an entry point to spiritual awareness (Al-Fansuri, 2005). The next level is dhikr ma'al hudhur, where synchronization occurs between speech and inner awareness, so that dhikr begins to provide calm and a real psychological effect (Atjeh, 2015). At a higher level, dhikr ma'al wujud makes awareness of God's presence accompany all life activities, while the peak is dhikr ma'al ghaibah, namely the state of fana in dhikr, where the duality between the one who remembers and the one who is remembered merges (Al-Ghazali, 1985).

This theoretical framework serves as an important foundation for understanding the practice of dhikr that developed at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi, Banda Aceh. This Zawiyah is one of the centers of spiritual activity that has developed

significantly in Acehnese society after the tsunami. Led by Tgk. H. Jamhuri Ramli, SQ., MA., Zawiyah Nurun Nabi is affiliated with the Naqsyabandiyah al-Haqqani Order, a global Sufi order known for its adaptability to modern social contexts. The establishment of this Zawiyah cannot be separated from the social context of Aceh after the 2004 tsunami disaster, which left not only physical destruction but also psychological and spiritual trauma for the community.

In this context, the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi serves as a means of spiritual healing and reconstruction of the meaning of life for the community. Tgk. Jamhuri Ramli, who received his tariqa diploma from Sheikh Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani, introduced a Sufi approach emphasizing love, serenity, and moral development as a response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis (Mulyati, 2010). Zikr is positioned not only as an individual form of worship, but as a collective practice with a strong social dimension.

The main characteristic of dhikr in Zawiyah Nurun Nabi lies in its congregational and structured nature. The practice of dhikr begins with tawassul (recitation of the Qur'an), followed by the core dhikr consisting of tahlil (reflection of the Qur'an) and ism dzat (reflection of the Qur'an), and then concludes with a prayer and a short mau'izhah (reflection of the Qur'an). This ritual structure reflects the continuity between classical Sufism and the contemporary Acehnese social context. The use of Arabic throughout the dhikr recitation is seen as an effort to maintain the authenticity of the words and the blessing of the meaning, while the rhythm and regular body movements create harmony between the physical and spiritual dimensions (Ramli, 2024).

From the perspective of Sunni Sufism, the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) in Zawiyah Nurun Nabi emphasizes compliance with Islamic law and the development of noble morals. Zikr is not directed toward speculative mystical experiences, but rather toward strengthening spiritual awareness that directly impacts daily behavior. This approach aligns with al-Ghazali's view that Sufism is a path to perfecting Islamic law, not a practice that stands outside the framework of Islamic law (Al-Ghazali, 2004).

The research results show that the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi (Nur Nabi Shrine) has a significant impact on the social and religious life of the congregation. From a spiritual perspective, the congregation experiences increased inner calm, emotional peace, and closeness to Allah SWT. Dhikr becomes a contemplative space that allows the congregation to reflect on the meaning of life and strengthen their transcendental orientation. This finding aligns with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's view that dhikr serves as a primary means of connecting fragmented modern humans with their spiritual center.

From a psychological perspective, dhikr serves as a spiritual coping mechanism for dealing with the pressures of modern life. Consistent dhikr practice helps congregants manage stress, anxiety, and inner conflict, thus creating a more stable emotional balance. This corroborates Reza's (2015) findings that the practice of dhikr is positively correlated with mental health and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the impact of dhikr is also clearly visible in the social dimension. Congregational dhikr fosters a sense of togetherness, solidarity, and brotherhood among the congregation. The interactions fostered in dhikr assemblies go beyond mere ritual relationships and develop into mutually supportive social networks. Congregants become more active in socio-religious activities, such as orphanages, community service, and other humanitarian initiatives. From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, this phenomenon demonstrates that dhikr rituals function as a social glue that strengthens community cohesion.

Zikr also plays a role in shaping the social ethics of the congregation. Increased patience, empathy, and concern for others are indicators of significant behavioral change. Congregants demonstrate a tendency to better control their emotions, avoid conflict, and prioritize values of compassion in social interactions. This transformation reflects the function of zikr as a means of internalizing spiritual values into concrete social behavior.

The existence of Zawiyah Nurun Nabi as a spiritual institution also strengthens the role of dhikr in social development. Since its institutionalization as the Nurun Nabi Foundation in Banda Aceh in 2015, this zawiyah has not only become a center for dhikr activities but also develops educational and social initiatives, such as establishing an elementary school for memorizing the Qur'an, managing the Baitul Shadaqah (Islamic charity fund), and conducting social and humanitarian activities. This demonstrates that the practice of dhikr is not exclusive, but inclusive and oriented towards the welfare of the wider community.

In the context of modern human life marked by a crisis of meaning and spiritual alienation, the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi (the Prophet's Sanctuary) demonstrates its relevance as an existential necessity. Dhikr serves as a bridge between the spiritual dimension and social reality and serves as the foundation for developing a complete and balanced personality. By constantly remembering God, the congregation not only strengthens their relationship with Allah but also improves the quality of their daily lives.

Thus, the results of this study confirm that dhikr, particularly in the practice of Zawiyah Nurun Nabi, is not merely a religious ritual, but rather a system of spiritual development with broad implications for the socio-religious life of the congregation. Zikr serves as a means of spiritual transformation, strengthening social cohesion, and establishing social ethics relevant to the challenges of contemporary life. The spiritual

development model developed by Zawiyah Nurun Nabi demonstrates that Sufism and dhikr continue to play a strategic role in building a religious, humanistic, and civilized society.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the practice of dhikr (remembrance) carried out at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi has unique spiritual characteristics and has a significant impact on the socio-religious life of the congregation. The dhikr practiced is not only understood as a worship ritual, but as a structured and ongoing process of spiritual development. These characteristics are reflected in the systematic method of implementing dhikr, the combination of dhikr jahr and dhikr khafi, and the internalization of Sufism values in each series of dhikr. This practice is the result of an adaptation of the teachings of the Naqsyabandiyah-Haqqani order that is aligned with the social and cultural context of the Acehnese people, making it easily accepted and practiced by the congregation.

The research results show that the practice of dhikr (remembrance of God) at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi (Nur Nabi Religious Center) has a positive impact on the individual and social dimensions of the congregation. At the individual level, the congregation experiences an increase in spiritual quality, characterized by inner peace, disciplined worship, and a stronger understanding and appreciation of religious values. Meanwhile, at the social level, congregational dhikr plays a role in strengthening social cohesion, solidarity, and concern among the congregation. The interactions fostered through dhikr activities encourage harmonious social relationships and increase the congregation's participation in socio-religious activities.

Furthermore, this study found a positive transformation in socio-religious behavior. The congregation not only considers dhikr as a ritual activity but also actualizes spiritual values such as patience, sincerity, empathy, and self-control in their social lives. This has resulted in a reduced potential for social conflict and a strengthening of social ethics based on Islamic values. Thus, dhikr at Zawiyah Nurun Nabi serves as a means of fostering both individual and social piety.

As a recommendation, this study still has limitations in terms of scope and approach. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the practice of dhikr in various communities using interdisciplinary approaches, such as sociology, psychology, and the anthropology of religion. In-depth studies of the internalization of Sufism values in dhikr practices and their impact on the formation of the social character of the congregation are also important. Future research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of dhikr in shaping the socio-religious life of contemporary Muslim communities.

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