

Integration of Sufi Epistemology and Adherence to the Sharia: A Model for Mainstreaming the Moderation of Islamization at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the integration of Sufi epistemology and adherence to sharia as a model for mainstreaming Islamic moderation through educational institutions, specifically at *Pondok Pesantren* Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) Candung, West Sumatra, Indonesia. This is a descriptive qualitative study utilizing an intrinsic case study design. Data collection employed observations, documentation, and interviews. The findings indicate that the integration between Sufi epistemology and adherence to sharia was conducted through a staged curriculum involving the study of *taṣawwuf* texts, such as *Akhlaq li al-Banīn*, *Muraqī al-‘Ubdīyyah*, *Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn*, and *al-Hikam*. These texts are integrated with compliance to sharia through the study of *Shāfi‘īyyah fiqh* literature. This integrative process is reinforced by a *hidden curriculum* consisting of strengthening worship practices, fostering social ethics, and promoting the synergy between religious teachings and local culture, which includes *ziarah* (pilgrimage to graves), *khidmah al-mujtama‘* (community service), and participation in communal events. The key to successful integration lies in the application of the Sufi principle of *al-islāh* (reform/reconciliation) to build an Islamic paradigm of *tawāsiṭ* (moderation) and *tasamūh* (tolerance), which ultimately shapes the perspectives of students (*santri*) to be non-extremist, moderate, and respectful of local customs without compromising sharia standards. This research contributes an Islamic educational model focused on balancing spiritual depth (*ihsān*) with ritual adherence (*īmān* and *islām*).

Keywords: Sufi Epistemology, Adherence to Sharia, Islamic Moderation, Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah, *Pondok Pesantren*

Introduction

The dynamic interplay between the need to preserve Sufi tradition and the importance of comprehensively internalizing Sharia compliance has emerged as a social phenomenon in Indonesian Islamic education, particularly within Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah (MTI) institutions, religious educational bodies similar to *Pondok Pesantren* in West Sumatra. In practice, some Islamic educational institutions still exhibit a dichotomy between the dimension of Sufi spirituality and a normative *fiqh* orientation, leading to an imbalance in the religious learning process (Azra, 2021). If left unmanaged, this condition may foster a rigid religious worldview or one that is unadaptive to the context of Indonesian diversity (*kebhinekaan*) (Madjid, 2019).

Although the MTIs in West Sumatra are generally moderate educational institutions, certain discussions within *fiqh* instruction risk generating the opposite attitude by fostering exclusivity, self-righteousness, and antipathy toward social practices deemed inconsistent with a literal interpretation of Sharia. Similarly, inevitable differences in viewpoints among *madhhabs* (schools of law) regarding various *fiqh* issues can sometimes be conveyed in a manner that emphasizes the correctness of only one *madhab*. All of this can potentially diminish tolerance toward other *madhhabs* if not taught in balance with knowledge, insight, and mechanical-spiritual capacities (Nurhadi et al., 2013).

MTI Canduang, a pioneering traditional educational institution in West Sumatra and the object of this research, has consistently taught values of moderation such as *tawasut* (moderate), *tasamuh* (tolerant), and *tawazun* (balanced) through teaching classical *fiqh* and *tasawuf* texts (*kitab kuning*). Nevertheless, in the process of becoming moderate, a tendency is sometimes found among individuals whose mastery of Sharia sciences (*fiqh*) is not yet accompanied by an understanding of Sufi epistemology, leading them to display less moderate attitudes and views, particularly when dealing with contemporary issues, differences in *madhhabs*, varying religious understandings, and the reality of social diversity, which inherently risks causing division. In this context, the relationship between *fiqh*, *tasawuf*, and religious moderation becomes a compelling research issue. *Tasawuf* functions as a counterbalance and is capable of overcoming religious extremism. Spiritual maturity is attained only by those whose inner self (*ruhani*) possesses a mechanical-awareness and connection with Allah as the source of strength and maturity, which becomes the foundation of the capacity for moderation (Anshori & Hayat, 2023; Mustofa et al., 2024; Rasyid et al., 2022).

This social reality highlights the need for an educational model capable of harmoniously integrating the inner Sufi experience with normative Sharia compliance. *Pesantren* and Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiah (MTI), as Islamic educational institutions, are intrinsically familiar with moderate Islamic values that can serve as a framework for addressing current challenges facing the *ummah* (Magdalena et al., 2024; Rivauzi, 2015; Zamimah, 2016). Religious moderation has been advocated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI) through three key concepts: moderation of thought, moderation of movement, and moderation of action. The presence of religion is not diametrically opposed to culture; instead, they are mutually open, engaging in dialogue to generate new cultural forms (Arisman et al., 2023; Massoweang, 2020; Mustofa et al., 2024; Rasyid et al., 2022; Satria et al., 2019).

Various studies indicate that *tasawuf* has been extensively discussed in the context of character education, the formation of student spirituality, and the reinforcement of Islamic ethics (Al-Attas, 2014; Nasr, 2007). Other research highlights the importance of Sharia compliance in ensuring that educational regulations adhere to the principles of Islamic law (F. Rahman, 2018). While researchers have explored the topics of moderation, Sufism, and Sharia compliance, studies that explicitly integrate Sufi epistemology, encompassing *kasyf*, *ma'rifah*, and intellectual *adab* (propriety), with shariah compliance as a foundation for mainstreaming Islamic moderation within the MTI environment remain scarce and underexplored. Previous research has primarily focused on a limited number of themes: the first theme concerns the concept of moderation in *tasawuf* (Aden et al., 2023; Mukhlisin, 2023). the second on moderation and Sharia (Novendri S et al., 2022). and the third on the general concept, implementation, and mainstreaming of religious moderation (Arafah, 2020a; M. T. Huda, 2021a; Mahyudin et al., 2022; Zaluchu et al., 2025b). The research gap is evident in the limited conceptual and implementation models that explain the harmonious relationship between Sufi spirituality and Sharia discipline within the context of traditional educational institutions (Fauzi, 2022).

Based on this condition, this research aims to analyze the characteristics of Sufi epistemology developed in MTI, identify the forms of Sharia compliance practiced in the school culture, and formulate a model for integrating both as a foundation for mainstreaming Islamic moderation. In this context, how does MTI Canduang synergize *fiqh* instruction oriented toward Sharia compliance with *tasawuf* oriented toward spirituality, so that it not only produces mastery of Islamic law but also shapes spiritual maturity and moderate attitudes, thereby mitigating *madhhab* fanaticism and intolerant attitudes that may arise from a narrow understanding of *fiqh*? This objective generates a theoretical novelty in the form of an integrative epistemological model and a practical novelty in the form of implementation-oriented recommendations for MTI in strengthening moderate and balanced Islamic education.

The urgency of this research is further reinforced by the historical fact that MTI is an Islamic educational institution with deep intellectual roots and plays a crucial role in shaping the religious character of society (Djamal, 2019).). Amid rising polarization and radicalism, the integration of Sufi epistemology and Sharia compliance is believed to provide a strong foundation for Islamic moderation because it can establish unity between spiritual depth and moral-legal firmness (Hidayat, 2020). The strategic urgency of this research also lies in the fact that MTI Canduang, the focus of this study, is one of

the oldest traditional educational institutions in West Sumatra, serving as a reference for other *madrasahs* in the region and acting as a pioneer in the establishment of the Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (PERTI) mass organization, which accommodates traditional religious views and attitudes (*Kaum Tuo*) in West Sumatra. This research assumes that when Sufi epistemology and Sharia are combined within a framework of moderation, an educational model will emerge that produces students with religious character who are tolerant, Sharia-compliant, and possess refined *akhlāq* (ethics). This argument underpins the importance of this research for the development of contemporary Islamic scholarship and educational practice.

Literature Review

Sufi Epistemology

Sufi epistemology, or '*irfānī* epistemology, is one model of reasoning within the Islamic Sufi intellectual tradition. The term '*irfān*' itself comes from the Arabic root '*arafa*', which is synonymous with *ma'rīfah* (gnosis or intuition), meaning knowledge, but distinct from scientific knowledge (al- Jābirī, 1993). '*Irfañī* relates to knowledge acquired directly from God (*kasyf*) through spiritual exercise (*riyādah*) undertaken based on *hubb* (love) or *irādah* (strong will) (Soleh, 2010). '*Irfañī* knowledge is "present knowledge" (*'ilm huđūrī*), while rational knowledge is "acquired knowledge" (*'ilm muktasab*) (Yazdi, 1994). Henri Bergson described '*irfañī* knowledge as "knowledge of," which is obtained directly, in contrast to "knowledge about", which is acquired through an intermediary, whether the senses or reason (Kattsoff, 1996).

Sufi reasoning is understood as an attitude toward the world and a perspective for interpreting reality and worldly life. As an attitude, '*irfañī* reasoning is motivated by an intense desire to draw near to and unite with God. As a perspective, '*irfañī* reasoning leads to esoteric interpretation (*bātīnī*) and a theosophical view in understanding the development and dynamics of the universe. Sufi reasoning is built upon the principles of: 1) centering on God; 2) paying close attention to the aspects of sincerity (*ikhlās*) and deep concentration (*khuṣū'*); 3) being based on feeling (intuition) with a spirit of moral and noble character development (*akhlāq karīmah*); and 4) being constructed through an inclusive and tolerant understanding. On a theoretical level, its presence can penetrate the boundaries separating one Islamic discipline from another. On a practical level, this reasoning contributes to overcoming relational barriers caused by differences in beliefs, religions, schools of thought or movements, and other forms of difference (Futaqi, 2018). On one hand, Sufi epistemology centers on Allah as the subject, the source of knowledge, and the truth received by humans (*tanāzul*), leading to *kasyf*. On the other hand, Sufi reasoning demands the submission of man as a seeker of knowledge (truth) who strives to acquire knowledge, thereby elevating human consciousness toward divine consciousness (*tarāqqī*).

Compliance to Sharia

The term Sharia originates from the Arabic root *syara'a*, meaning path or law. Sharia refers to all the laws and regulations established by Allah for His servants, regulating the relationship between man and Allah, among humans, and between man and his environment. Sharia encompasses all divine rules related to creed ('*aqīdah*), worship ('*ibādah*), ethics (*akhlāq*), and social interactions (*mu'amalāt*) (Al-Qathān, n.d.). Sharia compliance refers to adherence to Islamic principles and laws in daily activities, including worship, social interactions, and other aspects of life. The Qur'an elaborates on this concept in various verses, such as QS. Ash-Shura: 13 and QS. Al-Jathiyah: 18. This compliance involves religious rituals, the integration of Sharia teachings into all dimensions of life, and ensuring that one's actions align with the moral and spiritual guidelines established by Islam.

Factors influencing the level of Sharia compliance include: 1) awareness and knowledge of Sharia principles and laws; 2) the factor of infrastructure and monitoring or supervision systems for Sharia compliance; and 3) the availability of competent human resources in the field of Sharia (Atmajaya et al., 2024).

To realize the objectives of Sharia (*Maqāṣid al-Syāri'ah*) and achieve spiritual perfection in both personal and communal life, a total and integrative religious practice is required. The position of *Maqāṣid al-Syāri'ah* also serves as the primary reference and ethical-spiritual foundation for the dynamization of

Islamic legal processes in addressing contemporary issues (Nur et al., 2020; Wimra, 2016). Comprehensive Islam (*al-Islām al-kāffah*) integrates the dimensions of *aqīdah*, sharia, and *haqīqah* (ultimate truth). *Taṣawwuf* (Sufism) cannot be practiced independently of Sharia, just as Sharia cannot be practiced without the foundation of *aqīdah* (creed) and *taṣawwuf* (Sufi epistemology). According to Imam Malik, "practicing *taṣawwuf* without *fiqh* is heresy (*zindiqah*), and likewise, practicing *fiqh* without *taṣawwuf* is spiritual emptiness; true realization is achieved by combining both" (Alba, 2012). In *taṣawwuf*, there are stages (*maqāmāt*) and states (*ahwāl*) which serve as stations and conditions that need to be strived for in order to draw near to Allah (Alba, 2012). In general, Sharia regulates worship (*'ibādah*), social transactions (*mu'āmalāh*), and religious laws. Sharia law (*hukm syar'i*) refers to the act of preventing and determining matters related to the actions of the accountable individual (*mukallaf*). Sharia law encompasses demands, commands, prohibitions, explanations of permissibility, determination of causes, conditions, or impediments to a law. Sharia law is divided into *hukm taklīfī* and *hukm wad'i*. *Hukm taklīfī* is the law that demands, prohibits, or gives a choice to the *mukallaf* regarding an action. *Mahkūm fīh* is the action of the *mukallaf* related to the injunction/burden (*taklīf*). The *taklīf* originating from Allah is directed at humans in all their actions. *Mahkūm 'alaih* is the *mukallaf* whose actions are related to the law from the Lawgiver (*syār'i*) (Farhan et al., 2024). A good Muslim is one who adheres to the provisions of their religion (*syār'i*). However, in religious life, problems such as interfaith conflict, coercion, extreme interpretations, intolerance, aggressive attitudes, fanaticism, and exclusive truth claims frequently arise (Robita & Anwar, 2025; Sukmayadi et al., 2023).

Mainstreaming of Islamic Moderation

Mainstreaming can be defined as a conscious and systematic effort to make something the principal current or a prioritized agenda. Mainstreaming is a conscious endeavor to establish moderate Islamic values – those characterized by mercy and peace (*rahmah* and peace) – as the values that underpin, inspire, and guide policies and programs within the process of Islamization. Moderation in Islamization (*Moderasi Islamisasi*) is a conscious effort that avoids violence and instead chooses a middle, peaceful path in the process of Islamization or in shaping an individual Muslim – one who is merciful (*rahmah*) and peace-loving (Rivauzi, 2023).

Islamization is not merely defined as an effort to convert non-Muslims into Muslims, but also as an effort to make people who are already adherents of Islam become *Islami* (truly Islamic in character and practice). Not every person who adheres to Islam is *Islami*, and viceversa. *Islami* means having knowledge, understanding, and awareness of Islamic values and putting them into practice. Educating someone who is already a Muslim to live an *Islami* life is also an activity of Islamization (Rivauzi, 2023).

Thus, moderation in Islamization is the process of internalizing, implementing, and disseminating Islamic values in a balanced, inclusive, and contextual manner. This process harmonizes the purity of Islamic teachings with the socio-cultural realities, thereby resulting in religious practices that are neither extreme nor exclusive and remain aligned with the principles of Sharia (*syār'i*), its objectives (*maqāṣid*), and public benefit (*maslahah*). Moderation refers to the attitudes of *tarawassut* (moderateness), *i'tidāl* (fairness or justice), and *tarwāzun* (balance) in classical Islamic discourse, meaning balance and non-excessiveness. Islamization, on the other hand, is the process of introducing Islamic values, principles, norms, and ethics into various aspects of life (education, culture, law, social life, morality). Moderation in Islamization signifies that Islam is practiced, taught, and disseminated not radically, sectarianly, or through extreme textualism, but through an approach that is normative (compliant with sharia and *maqāṣid*), contextual (aligned with socio-cultural realities), inclusive (accommodating diversity), and transformational (enhancing the quality of public religiosity). This term emphasizes that the process of Islamization must not incite conflict, intolerance, or coercion, but must give rise to a society that embodies mercy to all worlds (*rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*). Madrasah/MTI is one strategic place for Islamization to shape Muslim individuals and generations to become *Islami*. Abdurrahman Wahid identified three main values commonly developed in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools): worship (*'ibādah*), a strong love for religious knowledge, and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) (Wahid, 2001).

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, as its primary focus was to deeply understand a specific case (individual, group, or phenomenon) due to the compelling uniqueness of that case. The aim was to explore its distinctive characteristics comprehensively and holistically, rather than to develop general theories or generate broader generalizations to other cases (Creswell, 2014). An intrinsic case study was chosen because the phenomenon of integrating Sufi and Shari'ah epistemology at MTI Candung is unique, compelling, and contextually situated (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted at the Islamic boarding school *Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (MTI) Candung, Agam Regency, West Sumatra. The informants included MTI leadership, dormitory supervisors, Scout mentors, and other relevant personnel. A purposive sampling technique was selected because the informants possessed knowledge relevant to the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Data were collected through in-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines to allow information to develop naturally (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), participatory observation to understand daily behaviors and practices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and document analysis. The data were analyzed by summarizing, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming them into a more manageable and understandable form (condensation), followed by data presentation and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Validation was carried out through methodological and source triangulation as well as member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

Sufi Epistemology at MTI Candung, Indonesia

MTI Candung is one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Founded by Shaykh Sulaiman Arrasuli in 1928, MTI Candung has a long history of producing scholars and prominent community leaders. According to Zulkifli, the Deputy *Rais* of MTI Candung, the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*) has become the core of the curriculum, emphasizing classical Arabic texts such as works on theology (*tawhid*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), and other religious sciences. Among the consistently taught subjects are *taṣawwuf*, *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *qawā'id fiqhīyyah* (Zulkifli, Interview, June 2, 2025).

Table 1. List of Sufi Books and Contents

| No | Class | Author Name | Book Name | Contents of Book |
|----|----------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. | I and II | Umar bin Ahmad Barajā' | <i>Akhlaq li al- Banīn</i> | <p>Juz I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Importance of Good Morals Since Childhood; 2) Children who are polite and civilized; 3) Honest and obedient children; 4) Manners towards Parents; 5) Adab towards brothers and relatives; 6) Manners towards Teachers and Friends; 7) Adab in Social Life; 8) Manners at School; 9) General Advice. <p>Juz II:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A child's obligation to Allah Ta'ala; 2) A beloved student; 3) A child's obligation to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); 4) A glimpse of the Prophet's morals; 5) Loving both parents; 6) Obligations to siblings and relatives; 7) Unity creates strength; 8) Obligations to servants; 9) Obligations to neighbors; 10) Obligations to teachers; |

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|----|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | | | | 11) Obligations to friends. Juz III: Contains the following manners 1) Time etiquette; 2) Sitting etiquette; 3) Conversational Manners; 4) Etiquette for eating alone; 5) Etiquette for eating with a group of people; 6) Manners of visiting and asking permission; 7) Manners of visiting sick people; 8) Manners of sick people; 9) Etiquette for visiting Taziah; 10) Adab experiences disaster; 11) Adab visits to congratulate; 12) Manners in Traveling; 13) Manners of dress; 14) Manners at bedtime; 15) Manners of waking up; And 16) The etiquette of Istikharah and Deliberation. Sufism, adab, and ways a Muslim can improve the quality of worship and relationship with Allah: 1) Preface, the opening of the book which explains the importance of obedience to Allah and the purpose of this book; 2) Manners of waking up; 3) Manners of entering the restroom; 4) The etiquette of ablution and bathing; 5) The etiquette of performing <i>tayamum</i> ; 6) Manners of going out to the mosque; 7) Manners of entering the mosque; 8) Etiquette between rising and setting of the Sun; 9) Adab preparation for prayer; 10) Sleep Manners; 11) Prayer etiquette; 13) Friday prayer etiquette; 14) Fasting etiquette; 15) Avoid immoral acts; 16) Talk about disobedience; And 17) Manners of getting along with Allah and others. A guide to living a life of piety and spiritual awareness, along with the stages that must be passed to achieve perfect worship and closeness to God: 1) The Stage of Knowledge (Gnosis); 2) The Stage of Repentance; 3) The Stage of Temptation ('Awaiq); 4) The Stage of Obstacles ('Awaridh); 5) The Stage of Encouragement (Bawa'ith); 6) The Stage of Deficiency (Qawadiah); and 7) The Stage of Praise and Gratitude. |
| 2. | III and IV | Muhammad Nawawī al-Bantānī | <i>Murāqī al-'Ubūdiyyah</i> | Wisdom and spiritual advice to guide a servant on his journey towards Allah. 1) The priority of relying on Allah; 2) Avoid dependence on charity; 3) The importance of patience in exams; 4) Sincerity in worship; 5) Get to know the nature of the world; 6) The relationship between the Servant and Allah; |
| 3. | V and VI | Imām al-Ghazālī | <i>Minhāj al-'Ābidin</i> | |
| 4. | VII dan Ma'had Aly, | Ibn 'Atā'illāh al-Iskandarī | <i>Al-Hikam</i> | |

- 7) The importance of *dhikr* and remembering Allah;
- 8) Stay away from arrogance and *riya'*;
- 9) The True Meaning of Destiny; And
- 10) How to know God with a clean heart.

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

The book *Kitāb al-Akhlāq li al-Banīn* (Baraja, n.d.) emphasizes moral aspects. The traces of Sufi epistemology within the text appear in the spiritual values that are taught and cultivated from an early age. In *taṣawwuf*, knowledge is not merely an intellectual understanding but rather an inner experiential process that guides a person toward a deeper comprehension of Allah and life.

Table 2. Epistemology of the Book of *al-Akhlāq li al-Banīn*

| No. | Principles of Sufi Epistemology | Explanation in Sufism | Application |
|-----|--|--|---|
| 1. | Purification of the Heart as the Source of Knowledge | True knowledge comes from a pure heart; a corrupt heart cannot receive divine light. | Students are taught to avoid negative traits such as arrogance and jealousy so that their hearts remain pure and ready to receive wisdom. |
| 2. | The Importance of Etiquette and Respect in Knowledge | Respect for the teacher (<i>mursyid</i>) is a prerequisite for the blessing of knowledge; etiquette is more important than mere knowledge. | Students are taught to respect their teachers and parents as part of the proper etiquette in seeking knowledge. |
| 3. | Awareness of Allah's Presence in Every Action | <i>Ihsan</i> : Worship as if seeing Allah or feeling watched by Him in every action. | Santri are trained to always feel observed by Allah, always maintaining good conduct. |
| 4. | Avoiding Ego and Desires as a Form of <i>Mujahadah</i> | The ego and desires are the main obstacles to the truth; overcoming them requires spiritual struggle (<i>mujahadah</i>). | Santri are taught to control anger, ego, and practice humility as part of their spiritual training (<i>mujahadah</i>). |
| 5. | Gradual Spiritual Education | The journey to Allah is gradual: <i>Shari'ah</i> – <i>Tariqah</i> – <i>Haqiqah</i> – <i>Ma'rifah</i> | Starting from basic morals (honesty, politeness) leading to higher values like sincerity and piety progressively. |

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

Purification of the heart is the foundation for acquiring knowledge, and good moral character serves as the gateway to true understanding. This aligns with the Sufi concept that a purified heart is more receptive to the light of truth (Fahrudin, 2016). In Sufi teachings, knowledge is not obtained solely from books but also through direct experience and a respectful attitude toward one's teachers in order to attain the blessings of knowledge (Najah, 2021). Awareness of Allah's presence in every action (*ihsān*) constitutes an essential aspect of *taṣawwuf* (Faridah, 2023). The ego and lower desires (*nafs*) must be restrained as a form of *mujahadah*. The *nafs* often becomes the primary obstacle in the pursuit of true knowledge (Afaningtyas et al., 2025). The *Kitāb Akhlāq li al-Banīn* teaches similar values, training students (*santri*) to consistently guard their attitudes and behaviors, exercise self-control, remain humble, and refrain from anger, as Allah observes all that they do. Furthermore, *taṣawwuf* teaches a gradual spiritual journey, from basic knowledge to *ma'rifah* – the highest form of knowledge of Allah (Efendi et al., 2025). Through the study of *Kitāb Akhlāq li al-Banīn*, students are taught simple virtues such as courtesy and honesty and are gradually guided toward higher concepts such as piety (*taqwā*) and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), enabling them to receive divine wisdom. Although *Kitāb Akhlāq li al-Banīn* is not explicitly a Sufi text, the essence of Sufism is embedded within its moral teachings. The book establishes a foundational ethical framework that allows students to live with heightened spiritual awareness – an essential principle of Sufi epistemology.

The *Kitāb Marāqil 'Ubūdiyyah* describes how a person attains knowledge and *ma'rifah* through stages of worship and self-purification (Rahman, 2023). In *Marāqil 'Ubūdiyyah*, the principles of Sufi epistemology can be identified in the following table:

Table 3. Epistemological Principles of *Marāqil 'Ubūdiyyah*

| No. | Core Principle | Explanation |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | <i>Bidāyah</i> → <i>Nihāyah</i> | The spiritual journey begins from <i>Bidāyah</i> (the beginning) toward <i>Nihāyah</i> (the perfection). Knowledge must be practiced; it is not enough merely to understand. |
| 2. | <i>Syari'ah</i> → <i>Tarīqah</i> → <i>Haqīqah</i> | <i>Syari'ah</i> is likened to a boat, <i>Tarīqah</i> to the ocean, and <i>Haqīqah</i> to the pearl at the bottom. Sufi knowledge requires actual practice and an inner journey. |
| 3. | <i>Tazkiyat al-Nafs</i> (Purification of the Heart) | The heart must be purified of inner diseases (such as arrogance, envy, and love of the material world) to be ready to receive divine light. |
| 4. | Awareness of God's Presence: Every act of worship must be performed with the awareness that God is always watching (the value of <i>ihsan</i>). | Awareness of God's presence: every act of worship must be performed with the awareness that God is always watching (the value of <i>ihsan</i>). |
| 5. | <i>Mujāhadah</i> (Avoiding Sin and Lust) True knowledge is achieved by consistently fighting against desires and abandoning sin. | <i>Mujāhadah</i> (Avoiding Sin and Lust) True knowledge is achieved by consistently fighting against desires and abandoning sin. |

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

Kitāb Marāqil 'Ubūdiyyah (Al Jawi, n.d.) teaches that the spiritual journey of a Sufi begins with *bidāyah* (the starting point) and culminates in *nihāyah* (perfection). A Sufi cannot attain *nihāyah* without first understanding and practicing *bidāyah*. Shaykh Nawawī illustrates the relationship between sharia, *tarīqah*, and *haqīqah* through a compelling analogy: sharia is likened to a boat, *tarīqah* to the sea that must be traversed, and *haqīqah* to the pearl lying at the bottom of the sea. A Sufi must employ the boat (*syari'ah*) to navigate the vast ocean (*tarīqah*) in order to discover the pearl (*haqīqah*). Sufi knowledge is not merely theoretical but must be practiced through acts of worship and self-purification. The book also emphasizes that one must purify the heart of negative traits such as arrogance, envy, and excessive worldly attachment. True knowledge can only be attained when one's heart is purified and ready to receive divine light, accompanied by a constant awareness of being under Allah's watch in every action (Rahman, 2023). This text teaches that worship is not merely a routine practice but must be performed with full awareness and sincerity, avoiding sinful acts, engaging in *mujāhadah*, exercising self-restraint, and struggling against the *hawā nafs*.

Kitāb Minhāj al-'Ābidīn (Al Ghozali, n.d.) outlines how a person acquires knowledge and *ma'rifah* through sequential stages of worship and self-purification, as presented in the following table:

Table 4. Epistemological Principles of *Minhāj al-'Ābidīn*

| No. | Main Principle | Explanation |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | Knowledge as the Foundation of Worship | Knowledge is the first step in the spiritual journey. It must be understood and practiced for worship to be meaningful. |
| 2. | Repentance as the Beginning of the Journey | Repentance is not only about asking for forgiveness but also involves a change of heart and behavior as the first step towards Allah. |

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| 3. Facing Spiritual Obstacles (<i>Awā'iq</i>) | Obstacles such as desires, worldly distractions, and Satan must be faced with patience and struggle (<i>mujahadah</i>). |
| 4. Tests and Trials as a Means of Closer Proximity | Trials are part of the process of drawing closer to Allah and must be accepted with contentment (<i>ridha</i>) and patience. |
| 5. Fear (<i>Khauf</i>) and Hope (<i>Raja'</i>) as Spiritual Motivators | Fear and hope must be balanced to avoid falling into despair or arrogance. |
| 6. Avoiding Heart Diseases | The heart must be purified of showing off (<i>riya'</i>), arrogance (<i>ujub</i>), and pride (<i>takabbur</i>) to attain true understanding (<i>makrifat</i>). |
| 7. Peak: Gratitude and True Servitude | Gratitude is the highest station, that shows full awareness of Allah's blessings and a form of true servanthood. |

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

Knowledge constitutes the first step of the spiritual journey. A servant must understand the essence of worship before performing it. In Sufi epistemology, knowledge is not merely intellectual but must also be practiced in daily life. After acquiring knowledge, one must repent of one's sins. *Tawbah* in *taṣawwuf* is not limited to seeking forgiveness but also involves inner transformation and behavioral change. It represents the initial stage of the journey toward Allah.

Along the path of worship, a person will encounter various obstacles (*awā'iq*), such as worldly temptations, the *hawā nafs*, and satanic whispers. In Sufi epistemology, these obstacles must be overcome through patience and *mujahadah* (the struggle against the lower desires). A Sufi must understand that trials and tribulations are integral components of the journey toward Allah. One must accept divine decree with an open heart and use it as a means to draw closer to Allah (Faridah, 2023).

In the practice of *taṣawwuf*, spiritual impulses such as *khauf* (fear of Allah) and *raja'* (hope for His mercy) must be balanced. This balance is essential to prevent an individual from falling into despair or arrogance (Waskito, 2021). Spiritual diseases such as *riya'* (showing off), *ujb* (self-admiration), and *takabbur* (arrogance) can corrupt one's worship. The final stage of the spiritual journey is attaining the *maqām* of gratitude, which entails realizing that all things come from Allah and must be received with complete sincerity (Br & Syamsuddin, 2025). *Kitāb Minhāj al-Ābidīn* offers a clear description of how a Muslim acquires knowledge and *ma'rifah* through a structured spiritual journey.

The next Sufi text taught at MTI Candung is *Kitāb al-Hikam* (as-Sakandari, n.d.). This book explains how a person attains knowledge and *ma'rifah* through inner experience, self-purification, and direct connection with God:

Table 5. Epistemological Principles of *al-Hikam*

| No. | Main Principle | Explanation |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Knowledge as Divine Light | True knowledge originates from Allah, not only through reason but also through a pure and sincere heart. |
| 2. | <i>Ma'rifah</i> as the Peak of Knowledge | The highest knowledge is attained through spiritual experience, not merely intellectual knowledge. |
| 3. | Purification of the Heart (<i>Tazkiyatun Nafs</i>) | Purification from bad traits is a prerequisite for attaining <i>ma'rifah</i> and closeness to Allah. |
| 4. | Awareness of Allah's Presence | Every action should be based on the awareness that Allah is always observing; worship must be performed with sincerity. |
| 5. | Striving Against Sin (<i>Mujahadah</i>) | Struggling against desires is essential for achieving spiritual perfection. |
| 6. | The Concept of God's Existence (<i>Wujud Ilahi</i>) | Known through three stages: 1) <i>Su'a'ul Bashirah</i> , 2) <i>'Ainul Bashirah</i> , 3) <i>Haqqul Bashirah</i> . |
| 7. | Epistemology: <i>'Irfani</i> and <i>Burhani</i> | a) <i>Burhani</i> : The existence of the universe serves as proof of God. b) <i>'Irfani</i> : Direct witnessing of God is prioritized. |
| 8. | Implementation in Santri Education | Morality is a requirement for promotion and graduation; the practice of Sufism (<i>tariqa</i>) is a means of attaining spiritual depth under the guidance of a teacher. |

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

The *Kitab al-Hikam* reveals the concept of knowledge as a divine light. Knowledge is not obtained solely through reason and logic, but also through a purified heart. Ibn 'Atā'illāh emphasizes that true knowledge is granted by God to His sincere servants whose hearts are pure and earnest in seeking the truth. *Ma'rifah* refers to knowledge of God acquired through spiritual experience and profound inner journey. Ibn 'Atā'illāh explains that the Divine Reality can be witnessed with the inner eye ('ayn al-baṣīrah) by the 'arifūn. To attain this understanding, one must undergo three stages: *su'āl al-baṣīrah* (initial awareness of God's existence), *'ayn al-baṣīrah* (a deeper level of spiritual insight), and *haqq al-baṣīrah* (the highest realization of the Divine Reality). Ibn 'Atā'illāh integrates two epistemological approaches in understanding God: *burhānī* epistemology (the existence of the universe indicates the existence of God) and *'irfānī* epistemology (the existence of God illuminates the existence of the universe).

In *al-Hikam*, the *'irfānī* approach is more dominant, as it emphasizes direct spiritual experience and inner witnessing of the Divine. The *Kitab al-Hikam* provides a clear description of how a Muslim may attain knowledge and *ma'rifah* through a structured spiritual journey (Bustomi & Umar, 2021). The practice and application of Sufi teachings derived from these classical texts are reflected in institutional regulations. Morality serves as the primary criterion for students' promotion to the next level and also functions as a standard for graduation in each subject or educational phase. According to Zulkifli, the implementation of Sufism among students becomes visible when, at certain stages, they are guided to deepen their understanding of *'aqidah* and *shari'ah* by participating in the rituals of one or more Sufi orders (*tariqāt*). Although these practices are not formally conducted in the school, they remain under the supervision of the teachers at MTI Candung and are not obligatory for all students (Zulkifli, Interview, June 2, 2025)

Moderation in *Fiqh* books

There are four *fiqh* books taught at MTI Candung, all of which follow the Shāfi'i school of thought (Supani et al., 2025), namely: *Matn al-Ghāyah wa al-Taqrīb* (Al-Ashfahani, n.d.), *Fath al-Qarīb al-Mujīb* (al-Ghāzy, n.d.), *I'ānat al-Tālibīn* (al-Dimyathi, 1997), and *al-Mahallī* (Al-Qalyubi & Umairah, n.d.). Generally, the Shāfi'i madhhab is characterized by balance and tolerance in accommodating various scholarly disagreements. These texts do not present a single authoritative opinion but instead include *khilāfiyyah* (differences of opinion) within the Shāfi'i tradition. This approach becomes a pedagogical path for teachers to instill moderation in *fiqh* during classroom learning. Overall, the *fiqh* books taught at MTI Candung contain values of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) reflected in several foundational principles. These principles seek to balance religious texts (*nass*) and social context, the individual and society, as well as idealism and practical reality (Mobeen & Pakeeza, 2022; Yaqin et al., 2022).

Several values of moderation found in these *fiqh* texts include: 1) *Tawassuṭ* (The Middle Path), emphasizing the need to avoid extremism; 2) *Tawāzun* (Balance), which includes balance between worldly and spiritual life, material and spiritual needs, and rights and obligations to ensure proportional fulfillment for individuals and society; 3) *I'tidāl* (Proportionality and Justice) (Zayd, 1997), requiring objectivity and fairness in applying Islamic law in alignment with the objectives of the Sharia (*maqāṣid al-shari'ah*) (Rohmanu & Rofiah, 2023); 4) *Tasāmūh* (Tolerance), including interreligious tolerance and the protection of rights (Faiz, 2020); 5) *al-Shūrā* (Consultation), emphasizing collective deliberation in public affairs as an ideal decision-making mechanism; 6) *al-Islāh* (Reform), where the Sharia aims at public welfare (*al-maṣlahah al-āmmah*) rather than harm (Mafaid & Zulfikar, 2022; Mobeen & Pakeeza, 2022; Samoh et al., 2024; Muhamarrah & Soebahar, 2024), and 7) *I'tirāf al- 'Urf* (Recognition of Local Customs), where classical *fiqh* acknowledges the importance of local culture ('urf) as a legal consideration, as long as it does not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah. This demonstrates the adaptability of *fiqh* to local contexts. The implementation of moderation in *uṣūl al-fiqh* is reflected in its methodological principles, especially through three important concepts: *maṣlahah mursalah* (establishing rulings based on untextualized public benefit), *istihsān* (rulings based on considerations of greater welfare), and *'urf* (elevating positive local customs as legal bases) (Y. Huda et al., 2022; Yaqin, 2021).

Table 6. List of the Names of *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, and *Qawā'id Fiqhiyyah* Books at MTI Candung

| Class | Subject Name | Book Name | Author |
|-------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| I | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>Matn al-Ghāyah wa al-Taqrīb –</i> | Aḥmad Ḥasan bin Aḥmad (Abī Shujā') |
| II | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>Fatḥ al-Qarīb al-Mujīb</i> | Muḥammad bin Qāsim al-Ghāzī |
| III | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>Fatḥ al-Qarīb al-Mujīb</i> | Muḥammad bin Qāsim al-Ghāzī |
| | <i>Uṣūl al-Fiqh</i> | <i>Ushul al-Fiqh fi Mabadiy Awwaliyah</i> | ‘Abd al-Hamīd Ḥakīm |
| IV | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>I‘ānat al-Tālibīn, al-Juz’ al-Awwal</i> | Abū Bakr Shaṭṭā |
| | <i>Uṣūl al-Fiqh</i> | <i>al-Waraqāt</i> | Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Dimyāṭī |
| V | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>I‘ānat al-Tālibīn, al-Juz’ al-Thānī</i> | Abū Bakr Shaṭṭā |
| | <i>Uṣūl al-Fiqh</i> | <i>al-Waraqāt + Laṭā’if al-Isyārāt</i> | Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Dimyāṭī & Abī ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad bin al-Ra‘īnī |
| | <i>Qawā‘id al-Fiqhiyyah</i> | <i>Qawā‘id al-Fiqhiyyah fī Mabādi‘ Awwaliyyah</i> | ‘Abd al-Hamīd Ḥakīm |
| VI | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>I‘ānat al-Tālibīn, al-Juz’ al-Thālith</i> | Abū Bakr Shaṭṭā |
| | <i>Ushul Fiqh</i> | <i>Laṭā’if al-Isyārāt</i> | Abī ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad bin al-Ra‘īnī |
| | <i>Qawā‘id al-Fiqhiyyah</i> | <i>al-Asybah wa al-Naṣā’ir</i> | al-Jalāl al-Dīn al-Subkī |
| VII | <i>Fiqh</i> | <i>al-Maḥallī, al-Juz’ al-Thālith</i> | Shahb al-Dīn al-Qalyūbī wa ‘Āmirah |
| | <i>Ushul Fiqh</i> | <i>Ḩāsyiyah al-‘Allāmah al-Banānī</i> | Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Subkī |
| | <i>Qawā‘id al-Fiqhiyyah</i> | <i>al-Asybah wa al-Naṣā’ir</i> | al-Jalāl al-Dīn al-Subkī |

Source: MTI Candung Manuscript Data, Indonesia

Mainstreaming Moderate Islam through Sufi Reasoning and Sharī‘ah Compliance in the Hidden Curriculum

The hidden curriculum refers to the values, norms, and behaviors that students learn indirectly through daily school life (Jackson, 1968). Snyder explains that there are “unwritten rules” within educational environments that shape how students interpret various aspects of their lives (Snyder, 1971). The hidden curriculum is closely connected to power, ideology, and social reproduction in schools, as educational structures often—consciously or unconsciously—reinforce dominant values that are not explicitly stated in the official curriculum (Apple, 2004). The hidden curriculum influences students’ social development through interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, and the cultural environment of the institution. For example, a teacher who consistently arrives on time indirectly teaches students the value of discipline (Jackson, 1968), while highly competitive ranking systems may cultivate excessive competition (Snyder, 1971). Thus, interaction patterns between teachers and students may nurture cooperation or social exclusivity (Giroux & Penna, 1979).

Islamic moderation (*al-wasaṭiyah al-islāmiyyah*) is instilled through curriculum design, modelling, institutional culture, and social relations within the pesantren environment (Arifin, 2023). Moderation at MTI is developed through the orthodox tradition of *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jamā‘ah*, adhering to the Shāfi‘ī school (*madhhab al-Shāfi‘ī*) in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the Ash‘arī school (*al-‘aqīdah al-Ash‘ariyyah*) in theology, and al-Ghazālī’s Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf al-ghazālī*). Some students also participate in *ṭariqah* practices from recognized Sufi orders (*al-ṭuruq al-mu’tabarah*), such as the Naqshbandiyyah (*al-Naqṣabandīyyah*), Syattariyyah (*al-Syāṭariyyah*), and others. The Shāfi‘ī school is known for harmonizing rationality and textuality (*al-‘aqliyyah wa-al-naqliyyah*) (Abu Zaid, 2003), while Ghazālian Sufism represents the synthesis between jurisprudence and ethics. This Islamic orthodoxy is institutionalized as religious doctrine, ideology, and educational philosophy at MTI, manifesting in patterns of thought, curriculum, attitudes, and socio-educational movements. Moderate ideas are articulated through religious texts studied at MTI and through the works of scholars. Meanwhile, moderation in attitudes and social practices appears in the daily cultural expressions of the MTI community.

Various forms of moderation education are implemented as conscious efforts to understand, cultivate, and strengthen awareness of religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. Through diverse approaches and pedagogical strategies, students develop moderate attitudes embodied in values such as respect for diversity, tolerance, balance, and justice. These values of moderation become a lived tradition

and cultural identity of the institution. Hidayati emphasizes that strengthening Islamic moderation at MTI can be achieved through formulating a vision and mission oriented toward moderation, developing a comprehensive curriculum that integrates moderation values, optimizing institutional habituation, enhancing school culture as a strategy for internalizing moderate character, and designing programs for moderation empowerment (Hidayati, 2023).

According to Ilham, a teacher and dormitory supervisor at MTI Candung, compliance with the sharia (*al-iltizām bi-al-syari'ah*) is understood as the ability of students who have acquired Islamic knowledge to internalize it as a guiding principle for daily life. This compliance can be observed in various aspects of students' life. Their understanding of Islamic law becomes the foundation for their actions and conduct. Students' performance of the five daily prayers (*al-ṣalawāt al-khams*) is directly supervised by teachers, parents (for those living at home), and dormitory supervisors (for those residing on campus). Before classes begin, teachers routinely evaluate students' prayer performance. Students who neglect obligatory prayers are reminded, guided to repent (*al-tawbah*), and required to make up missed prayers (*qadā' al-ṣalāh*) (Ilham, Interview, June 3, 2025).

To strengthen spirituality and cultivate obedience to the sharia, the entire MTI community, including school leaders, teachers, and students, habitually performs the *zuhř* and *'aṣr* prayers in congregation (*salāt al-jamā'ah*). The *zuhř* prayer is preceded by a short sermon (*kultum*, "seven-minute lecture") delivered by designated students. Dormitory students also perform *maghrib*, *'ishā'*, and *ṣubh* prayers in congregation. These congregational prayers take place in the MTI mosque or, during rainy conditions, in the dormitory prayer hall. Dormitory supervisors accompany the evening and dawn congregational prayers.

Following the *'aṣr* prayer on the first and third weeks of each month, students recite *Shi'r 'Aqīdat al-'Awām* (*Sy'i'r 'Aqīdatu al-'Awām*) from *Kitāb 'Aqīdatu al-'Awām*. On the second and fourth weeks, they recite *Sy'i'r al-Miftāh*. Afterward, they attend lessons on *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim* and *Nūr al-Zalām*, a commentary (*sharḥ*) on *'Aqīdatu al-'Awām*. After the *maghrib* prayer, students read *Sy'i'r Lam Yahtanīm*—a poem on the virtues of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)—followed by the *ba'diyyah* Sunnah prayer and Qur'anic recitation (*tadarrus al-Qur'ān*). On the first Thursday of each month, they recite *Sūrat Yāsīn* and *Barzanīj*; on the second Thursday, *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*; on the third Thursday, *Burdah* with *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*; and on the fourth Thursday, *Diyā' al-Lāmi'*. After the dawn prayer, students engage in *salawāt* and other litanies (*al-awārid*). These routines are more structured for dormitory residents. Additional Sunnah prayers—*rawātib*, *tahajjud*, *duhā*, *ṣalāt al-tawbah*, *istikharah*, and *hājrah*—are also encouraged (Ilham, Interview, June 3, 2025).

Voluntary fasting (*al-ṣawm al-nafilah*) is also encouraged, including Monday–Thursday fasting, Shawwāl fasting, and Dhū al-Hijjah fasting. Students often compete in performing these acts. Communal *iftār* gatherings are common among dormitory and non-dormitory students. For dormitory students, meal preparation is coordinated based on fasting attendance lists; catering staff prepare *suhūr* meals accordingly. Students routinely recite prayers before and after lessons, both collectively and in guided formats. Memorization of daily prayers is also included in the practical examination for graduating students (Ilham, Interview, June 3, 2025).

Silvia, the Deputy Headmaster for Curriculum for the lower secondary level at MTI, adds that compliance with the sharia is also cultivated through regular charitable giving (*al-infaq wa-al-sadaqah*). When a fellow student, family member, or community member faces hardship, students voluntarily initiate class-based fundraising activities coordinated by the Student Organization (OSTI). Silvia also notes that students' shopping activities typically occur at IC Mart and nearby canteens. IC Mart plays an important role in character education by promoting and monitoring honesty. CCTV cameras are installed, and students who are caught cheating are called in and guided toward honesty. At first, they behave honestly because they feel monitored by CCTV; however, over time, they develop sincerity because they feel watched by Allah (*murāqabah Allah*) (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

The mainstreaming of Islamic moderation through the strengthening of the relationship between religion and the local traditions and cultures surrounding MTI Candung is understood as a strategy or process of instilling Islamic values into students' lives by encouraging participation and harmonization

between the practice of religious teachings and the local cultural traditions of the community in Nagari Candung. Students are involved in collective *dhikr* activities, such as those conducted during the commemoration of *Milad Perti*. *Milad Perti* is an event commemorating the establishment of *Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (PERTI), the organization overseeing all MTI institutions. PERTI was founded on June 5, 1928, and its anniversary is commemorated annually at MTI Candung. The series of events includes *dhikr*, collective *salawāt*, and a grand Islamic assembly (*tablīgh akbar*). This event is attended by the entire academic community of MTI Candung, its alumni, and members of the surrounding society. It is usually held one day before the awarding of *ijazah* to students who have completed Grade VII at MTI Candung (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

The tradition of grave visitation (*ziyārah qubūr*) is deeply rooted in the life of the Candung community. This practice is not only part of local customs but is also integrated into religious activities, such as the commemoration of *Milad PERTI*. Furthermore, *ziyārah* is an essential component of the *Khatam al-Qur'an* celebrations routinely conducted by the Candung community. One form of this practice includes visiting the tomb of Shaykh Sulaiman Arrasuli. *Ziyārah* is often performed in a ceremonial procession, with varying schedules—some conducted before the *Khatam al-Qur'an* competitions and others afterward. In general, however, *ziyārah* remains a fixed element of every *Khatam al-Qur'an* celebration, particularly for residents involved in the *Sidang Sebuah Balai* community (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

MTI Candung also offers *khidmatul mujtama* or a social and religious service program, a crucial component of mainstreaming culturally based Islamization. This activity is dynamic and adapts to the community's needs each year. The concrete program is a collaboration between MTI Candung and the Agam Regency Government. The *pesantren* selects students or alumni who meet the criteria for religious and social competence to be assigned as *gharin* (mosque guards), *khatib* (preachers), *imam* (prayer leaders), and *muazin* (azan reciters). They are then deployed to various prayer rooms (mushallas) and mosques in Candung area during Ramadan to strengthen religious life within the community. Additionally, in certain years, the *pesantren* forms a Ramadan Safari team which plays an active role in spreading Islamic preaching directly to the community through lectures and coaching activities at various places of worship. This *Khidmatul Mujtama* program also strengthens the relationship between the *pesantren* and the local community. Through this approach, Islamic values are not only taught in the classroom, but are also brought to life in everyday social life, thus strengthening the relationship between religion and tradition and strengthening the Islamic culture of the Minangkabau people (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

The *muhādarah* (speech), sermon, trilingual oration, and *khutbah* programs serve as a significant hallmark of MTI Candung and function as practical examinations for final-year students, determining their graduation. Training sessions are conducted routinely on designated days—Mondays (except on flag ceremony days), Wednesdays, and Saturdays—from 07:15 to 07:30 a.m. Activities take place in the schoolyard and are attended by all students. At certain times, activities are conducted per class, occasionally combined, and sometimes even organized as inter-level competitions. In addition, students, together with school leaders and teachers, participate in funeral rites and *yāsīn* recitations (*tanjīz al-mayyit*), both within the MTI Candung community and the surrounding society. The implementation of funeral rites also constitutes a component of the final-year practical examination and serves as a determinant of students' graduation (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

Reading and memorizing the Qur'an are routine activities scheduled in the *pesantren* curriculum. Typically conducted three days a week, on Mondays (except during flag ceremonies), the first class hour is allocated for *murāja'ah* of Qur'anic memorization with homeroom teachers. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, students perform collective Qur'an reading and *murāja'ah* for fifteen minutes before lessons begin. These activities are supervised directly by the subject teachers of the first hour. Students demonstrate high enthusiasm for learning and memorizing the Qur'an; some even voluntarily use their days off (Fridays) to visit teachers' houses for Qur'anic study and memorization (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

According to Hurriyatul Annisa, the Scouting coordinator, MTI Candung hosts a *salawāt/hadrāh* group called *Syifā' al-Qulūb*. The group is often invited by educational institutions or community groups for training or *salawāt* performances. The *Organisasi Santri Tarbiyah Islamiyah* (OSTI) supervises all extracurricular organizations. Students interested in journalism join JUSTIC, while those interested in

martial arts join *Silek*, *Karate*, and similar activities. Numerous extracurricular organizations accommodate students' interests and talents, including scouting, *hadrah*, and others. MTI Candung also has extracurricular organizations based on regional origins, such as the Riau Students Association. Additionally, a collaborative scholarly discussion forum known as PASTI (*Perkumpulan Antar Santri dan Tokoh Intelektual*) is held among Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah-based *pesantren*. This activity serves as a strategic platform for strengthening religious understanding and fostering inter-*pesantren* institutional networks. OSTI from each educational institution, including MTI Candung, typically facilitates this forum (Annisa, Interview, June 3, 2025).

MTI Candung has hosted several *muzākarah* activities for teachers from various *pesantren* at local, provincial, and even national levels. The topics discussed range from curriculum alignment to contemporary issues in Islamic studies. Through this forum, the exchange of ideas enriches scholarly perspectives and strengthens academic networks among Islamic scholars and educators rooted in classical intellectual traditions while remaining adaptive to contemporary challenges. Such *muzākarah* activities not only reinforce moderate and contextual religious understanding but also serve as an important medium in the process of Islamizing society through dialogue-based, intellectual, and inter-*pesantren* collaborative approaches (Silvia, Interview, June 3, 2025).

Scouting activities, both indoor and outdoor, are actively promoted. The scouting program at MTI Candung is called PRAKТИCA. One of the activities is an exploration program in which students are divided into groups and assigned different routes, with each group provided with plastic bags. During the journey from the school to the destination, students are required to collect any litter encountered along the way. This activity is intended to instill discipline, cooperation, and the Islamic teaching of "*al-naẓāfah syu'batun min al-īmān*" (cleanliness is part of faith). Another activity is *Pramuka Kerja Nyata* (PKN), which is prioritized for female students. They are trained in domestic skills and household management. Students stay for several days in teachers' or community members' homes (depending on needs), where they are responsible for managing and completing household tasks such as cleaning and cooking. This serves as part of their personal development and training for independence.

This study affirms that the integration of Sufi epistemology and sharia compliance practiced at MTI Candung is not merely normative and descriptive but also constitutes a distinctive epistemological model within the tradition of Indonesian Islamic education. Sufi epistemology, which emphasizes *tazkiyat al-nafs*, *adab*, and the dimension of *iḥsān*, is organically integrated with sharia epistemology, which is grounded in Shāfi'i fiqh, *bayānī* analysis, and *burhānī* argumentation (Al-Attas, 2014; al-Ghazali, 2013). This epistemological integration grows naturally through the *pesantren*'s academic culture, ritual practices, and values reproduced through the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968). From a legal-theoretical perspective, religious practices at MTI Candung demonstrate that Islamic law (fiqh) is practiced not merely as a set of rules but also as *ethico-spiritual values*. This aligns with al-Ghazālī's view that sharia and *haqīqah* represent two complementary dimensions of the law (al-Ghazali, 2013). Meanwhile, from the perspective of *maqāṣid al-syārī'ah*, the Sufi-Syārī'ah integration at MTI Candung aligns with Islam's legal objectives to preserve religion (*hifz al-dīn*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), and morality (*hifz al-'ird*) (Auda, 2008). The habituation of worship, *adab*, social service, and tolerant *mu'amalah* practices serves as an implementation of *maqāṣid*-based legal consciousness, distinguishing this traditional *pesantren* from narrow legalism.

MTI Candung represents a form of tradition-based Islamic moderation. Religious practices such as *ziārah*, *ṣalawāt*, *barzanjī*, *khidmat al-mujtama'*, and intra-madhab tolerance demonstrate that moderation is not taught through an indoctrinative approach but emerges from the repeated transmission of cultural practices (Azra, 2021). This aligns with the view that religious moderation becomes strong when rooted in stable traditions and social ecosystems (Yusuf, 2019). MTI Candung serves as a site of legal production grounded in local traditions, consistent with legal pluralism theory, which asserts that law is produced not only by the state but also by social, religious, and cultural institutions (Merry, 1988). In other words, the *pesantren* functions as a *juridical community*, shaping norms, moral sanctions, and students' legal consciousness regarding Islamic law. This practice aligns with the theory of *living law*, which emphasizes that law as it lives in society is often more effective than the law formalized in texts (Rahardjo, 2006). The

values of *taṣawwuf*, sharia, and Minangkabau *adat* embedded in MTI Candung create a legal order that is situational, contextual, and oriented toward social welfare.

The integration of Sufi spirituality and adherence to sharia also aligns with the framework of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, which emphasizes national commitment, non-violence, tolerance, and the accommodation of local culture (Kemenag RI, 2019). Adaptable *Šaifi'i fiqh* respect for differing opinions, and the internalization of *adab* demonstrate the practical and sustainable application of moderation principles (Rahman, 2015). In this regard, the *pesantren* not only implements religious teachings but also fulfills the national legal mandate of building a moderate religious ecosystem.

The synergy between *'irfānī* (intuitive-spiritual knowledge), *bayānī* (normative textuality), and *burhānī* (argumentative rationality) within the educational process at MTI Candung produces a religious habitus that balances the outward and inward dimensions (al-Jābirī, 1986). This functions as a mechanism of deradicalization, preventing tendencies toward either spirituality without sharia or legalism devoid of spirituality (El Fadl, 2005). From the perspective of contemporary Islamic legal theory, this integration illustrates a combinative model of legal reconstruction: spiritual, textual, and rational. Such a model offers significant contributions to the reform of Islamic law in Indonesia, particularly in preserving social plurality and preventing religious polarization. It also responds to critiques of classical fiqh, which is perceived as overly legalistic and insufficiently responsive to social developments (An-Na'im, 1990; Rahman, 1982).

The principal contribution of this research is the formulation of the *Integrative Sufi-Syārī'ah Epistemological Model for Islamic Moderation* which demonstrates that the Sufi dimension reinforces ethics and spirituality, whereas the sharia dimension provides a normative framework and structured discipline in worship. This integration produces moderate students with strong character, spiritual depth, and adaptability to diverse religious practices—qualities that align with the vision of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia (Hidayat, 2020). This model may be replicated in other *pesantren* as an approach for strengthening religious moderation based on local values and cultural heritage. Ultimately, this study proposes a theoretical contribution in the form of the “*Integrative Sufi-Syārī'ah Epistemological Model for Islamic Legal Moderation*,” a legal model that encompasses not only norms (*syārī'ah*) but also legal ethics (*adab*), spiritual consciousness (*iḥsān*), and social welfare (*maqāṣid*).

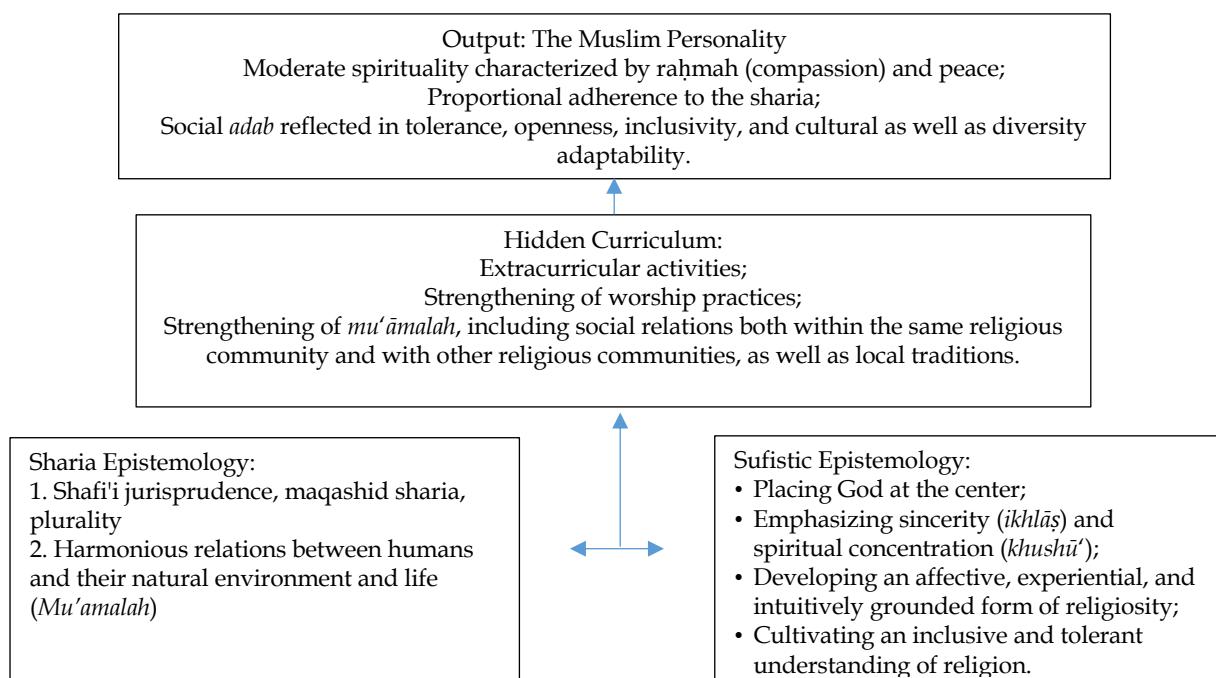


Figure 1: Moderation Model of Islamization

Conclusion

This study enriches the discourse of Islamic education by formulating an integrative epistemological model that combines Sufi reasoning, grounded in *kashf*, *tazkiyah*, and *adab*, with sharia compliance based on *Shāfi’ī fiqh*, *maqāṣid al-syārī’ah*, and disciplined devotional practices. Developed in the context of MTI Candung, this model serves as a foundation for mainstreaming Islamization moderation by demonstrating that moderation is not merely a theological abstraction but is concretely enacted through the hidden curriculum, pesantren culture, and locally embedded religious traditions. The study offers a novel contribution to the scholarship on religious moderation by linking classical Islamic epistemologies (*‘irfānī-bayānī-burhānī*) with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' moderation policy framework and the objectives of sharia. This linkage positions moderation as an epistemological, pedagogical, and cultural process rather than a purely normative or doctrinal stance. By integrating textual reasoning, spiritual formation, and rational deliberation, the model provides a holistic guideline for contextual and tradition-based Islamic educational transformation. As such, it expands current debates on Islamic moderation beyond policy discourse into lived educational practices.

At the empirical level, the study demonstrates that *fiqh* instruction and general sharia compliance may risk producing rigid or less moderate attitudes when taught in a decontextualized manner and without sufficient spiritual and ethical cultivation. Such limitations can manifest in antipathy toward social practices perceived as inconsistent with literal interpretations of sharia, thereby undermining social harmony. At MTI Candung, epistemological integration is operationalized through tiered instruction in Sufi texts and *Shāfi’ī fiqh* manuals, reinforced by disciplined devotional practices, social ethics, and the internalization of *mu’āmalah* values such as honesty and social responsibility. This process is further strengthened through the synergy between religious teachings and local traditions, including *ziyarah*, *khidmat al-mujtama’*, and other community-based activities. The integration of Sufi epistemology and sharia compliance offers a holistic framework for cultivating moderation, peace, and spiritual integrity within the Muslim community. Nevertheless, given its focus on a single institution, this study acknowledges its contextual limitation and recommends further research across diverse Islamic educational settings to assess the adaptability and effectiveness of the sufi-sharia integration model in broader contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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