

Fazlur Rahman's Ethical-Transformative Neo-Sufism: The Reactualization of Islamic Spirituality for the Crisis of Modernity

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Abstract : This study aims to analyze Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism as an ethical-transformative paradigm of contemporary Islamic spirituality. This topic is important because modern society faces spiritual and moral crises marked by materialism, alienation, anxiety, and the weakening of social responsibility. This research uses a qualitative library-based method by examining Rahman's major works, especially *Islam, Islam and Modernity*, *Islamic Methodology in History*, and *Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives*. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using qualitative content analysis with a hermeneutical-contextual approach. The findings show that Rahman's neo-Sufism reorients Sufism from individual asceticism toward social ethics. Through his double movement hermeneutics, Sufi values such as sincerity, ascetic restraint, patience, trust in God, and purification of the soul are reinterpreted as moral principles relevant to modern life. These values do not only function as instruments of inner purification but also as foundations for self-control, moral integrity, social responsibility, and public ethics. The study implies that Rahman's neo-Sufism can contribute to the development of Sufi psychotherapy, Islamic counseling, religious moderation, and Islamic social ethics. The originality of this study lies in its formulation of Rahman's neo-Sufism as an integrative framework that connects inner spirituality, moral hermeneutics, psychological healing, and social transformation.

Keywords : ethical-transformative spirituality; fazlur rahman; islamic social ethics; neo-sufism; sufi psychotherapy.

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis neo-sufisme Fazlur Rahman sebagai paradigma spiritualitas Islam yang etis-transformatif. Kajian ini penting karena masyarakat modern menghadapi krisis spiritual dan



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moral yang ditandai oleh materialisme, alienasi, kecemasan, krisis makna, dan melemahnya tanggung jawab sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan menelaah karya-karya utama Fazlur Rahman, terutama *Islam, Islam and Modernity*, *Islamic Methodology in History*, dan *Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives*. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi kualitatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutis-kontekstual. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa neo-sufisme Rahman mereorientasi tasawuf dari asketisme individual menuju etika sosial. Melalui hermeneutika ganda, nilai-nilai sufistik seperti ikhlas, zuhud, sabar, tawakkal, dan tazkiyatun nafs direaktualisasikan sebagai prinsip moral yang relevan dengan kehidupan modern. Nilai-nilai tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana penyucian batin, tetapi juga sebagai dasar pengendalian diri, integritas moral, tanggung jawab sosial, dan etika publik. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa neo-sufisme Rahman dapat berkontribusi bagi pengembangan psikoterapi sufistik, konseling Islam, moderasi beragama, dan etika sosial Islam. Orisinalitas penelitian ini terletak pada perumusan neo-sufisme Rahman sebagai kerangka integratif yang menghubungkan spiritualitas batiniah, hermeneutika moral, pemulihan psikologis, dan transformasi sosial.

Kata kunci : etika sosial islam; fazlur rahman; neo-sufisme; psikoterapi sufistik; spiritualitas etis-transformatif.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society faces increasingly complex psychological and spiritual crises due to the acceleration of technology, social change, and a strong materialistic orientation. Digital advances do provide ease of communication and access to information, but they also give rise to psychological pressure, alienation, anxiety, crisis of meaning, and weakening of social relations. Globally, the WHO reports that in 2021 around 1.1 billion people were living with mental disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common cases (WHO, 2025). In the Indonesian context, the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey shows that one in three adolescents have experienced mental health problems in the past 12 months, while one in twenty adolescents meets the criteria for mental disorders (Health, Queensland, & Health, 2022).

This phenomenon shows that the modern human crisis is not only psychological, but also spiritual and moral. As society becomes more digitally connected, humans are at risk of experiencing loneliness, loss of meaning orientation, consumerism, and weakening of social awareness. In this situation, sufistic psychotherapy and Islamic counseling become relevant because they offer a restorative approach that touches on the inner, moral, and social dimensions. Sufistic values such as sincerity, zuhud, patience, tawakkal, and tazkiyatun nafs can be the basis for building inner peace, self-control, moral integrity, and social awareness. Therefore, Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism is important to be studied as a reactualization of

Sufism that does not stop at individual piety, but is directed at an ethical, contextual, and transformative Islamic spirituality.

The literature on the crisis of modern spirituality shows that modernity not only produces rational-technological progress, but also gives rise to existential problems in the form of alienation, disorientation of meaning, materialism, and moral fragmentation. A number of studies confirm that in this situation, Sufism appears as one of the religious responses that offers inner depth, restoration of meaning, and criticism of the reduction of human life to material aspects (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Jaenuri, 2022; Nasr, 2002). At the same time, the study of neo-Sufism shows that contemporary Sufism can no longer be understood solely as an individual mystical practice, but rather as a form of spiritual renewal that connects the inner dimension, shari'a compliance, morality, and social engagement (Azra, 2013; Hakim, 2024; Fazlur Rahman, 1979; Voll, 2008). Meanwhile, studies of sufistic psychotherapy and Islamic counseling show that values such as dhikr, sabar, tawakkal, muhasabah, and tazkiyatun nafs have relevance in fostering mental health, self-control, and restoring life orientation. However, these studies generally still move in isolation: neo-Sufism studies emphasize more on the dimensions of Sufism reform, Sufistic psychotherapy studies focus more on the therapeutic function of spiritual values, while Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutic studies are more predominantly used in the fields of interpretation, law, and ethics of the Qur'an (Fazlur Rahman, 1982; Saeed, 2006). Thus, there is still an academic gap to formulate Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism as an integrative framework that connects dual hermeneutics, reactualization of sufistic values, sufistic psychotherapy, religious moderation, and Islamic social ethics in one ethical-transformative paradigm of Islamic spirituality.

Based on the literature gap, this study aims to analyze Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism as an ethical-transformative paradigm of Islamic spirituality. In particular, this study seeks to explain how Rahman's dual hermeneutics can be used to reactualize sufistic values such as sincerity, zuhud, patience, tawakkal, and tazkiyatun nafs in responding to the spiritual crisis of modern society. This research also aims to show the contribution of Rahman's neo-sufism to the development of sufistic psychotherapy, religious moderation, and Islamic social ethics. Thus, this study not only reads neo-Sufism as a renewal of Sufism, but also as a conceptual framework that links inner purification, moral consciousness, and social transformation.

The main argument of this study is that Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism can be a model of contemporary Islamic spirituality because it is able to integrate the inner dimension of Sufism with ethical and social responsibility. Through dual hermeneutics, Sufistic values are not understood as static spiritual doctrines, but as moral principles that can be re-read according to the problems of modernity. This research departs from the conceptual hypothesis that the spiritual crisis of modern society is not enough to be answered through individual ritual or psychological therapy alone, but requires a spiritual approach that links mental recovery, the formation of personal ethics, and social engagement. Therefore, Rahman's neo-sufism is positioned as a relevant ethical-transformative paradigm to address the problems of alienation, materialism, crisis of meaning, and the weakening of social solidarity in contemporary life.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study type. The unit of analysis of the research is the idea of Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism, especially related to the reorientation of Sufism, dual hermeneutics, and the reactualization of Sufistic values in the context of contemporary Islamic spirituality. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study

focuses on the interpretation of meaning, the construction of ideas, and the relationships between concepts in the text of the figure's thoughts, not on statistical measurements or quantitative field data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research data consists of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the works of Fazlur Rahman, especially *Islam, Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition, Islamic Methodology in History*, and the article *Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives*. Secondary sources are obtained from books and journal articles that discuss neo-sufism, contemporary Sufism, sufistic psychotherapy, religious moderation, and the spiritual crisis of modern society. The use of documents as a source of data is in accordance with the character of literature studies that place text as the main material of analysis (Bowen, 2009).

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation, namely by searching, reading, selecting, and classifying literature that is relevant to the focus of the research. The literature was selected based on its relevance to three main themes: Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism, the reactualization of Sufistic values, and the transformation of contemporary Islamic spirituality. The data that has been collected is then grouped into thematic categories to facilitate the process of interpretation and preparation of research findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Data analysis was carried out by content analysis based on a hermeneutical-contextual approach. Content analysis is used to identify key ideas, argumentation patterns, and conceptual categories in the text, while the hermeneutical approach is used to interpret the meaning of Rahman's ideas in the context of the spiritual crisis of modern society (Krippendorff, 2019; Schreier, 2012). The validity of the data is maintained through theoretical triangulation, i.e. comparing Fazlur Rahman's thoughts with other literature on Sufism, neo-sufism, sufistic psychotherapy, and contemporary Islamic spirituality.

3. RESULT

Reorientation of Neo-Sufism from Individual Asceticism to Social Ethics

The main data in this subchapter is sourced from the reading of Fazlur Rahman's works, especially *Islam, Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives*, and *Islam and Modernity*. In these works, neo-sufism appears as a project of reorientation of Sufism from mystical-individual tendencies towards spirituality that has moral and social functions. Rahman does not reject the inner dimension of Sufism, but criticizes Sufism's tendency to overemphasize ecstatic experience, passive asceticism, and withdrawal from social life. For him, Islamic spirituality must remain rooted in the awareness of monotheism, adherence to shari'a principles, and moral responsibility in real life. Therefore, neo-Sufism in the framework of Rahman can be read as a form of renewal of Sufism that shifts the focus from the search for individual spiritual perfection to the formation of the social ethics of Muslims (F Rahman, 1970; Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982).

The textual evidence shows that neo-Sufism is not positioned as an abolition of the Sufism tradition, but as a correction to the form of Sufism that is too inward-looking and less responsive to social problems. In Rahman's reading, sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, and *tazkiyatun nafs* are maintained, but their meaning is directed at the formation of an active, responsible, and ethically conscious person in the public sphere. Thus, *zuhud* is no longer interpreted as a total rejection of the world, but as the ability to control materialistic orientation; Sincerity is not only understood as purity of intention in personal worship, but also as moral integrity in social action; Meanwhile, *tazkiyatun nafs* does not stop at the

purification of the individual soul, but becomes the basis for the formation of a social consciousness that is free from selfishness, greed, and injustice.

Secondary data from recent studies also reinforce this pattern. Jaenuri (2022) shows that urban Sufism is a new form of Sufism in modern society that emerged in response to self-alienation, spiritual drought, loss of humanism, hedonism, and materialism. In that context, the form of religiosity that urban society needs is not only personal spirituality, but a religiosity that is universal, human, social, logical, inclusive, and love-based. This study shows that contemporary Sufism has expanded its function from individual mental practices to a more open and responsive model of religiosity to the social problems of modern society.

A similar finding was put forward by Hakim (2024), who explained that neo-sufism in the context of contemporary Indonesia has developed as a paradigm of social da'wah. Sufistic values such as sincerity, patience, and zuhud are not only practiced in private spiritual spaces, but are also applied in Islamic boarding school empowerment programs, sufi clinics, ethical microeconomics, education, health services, and moral rehabilitation. Thus, the Sufi institute and community no longer function only as a space of spiritual experience, but also as an agent of social transformation. This reinforces the reading that neo-Sufism has an ethical-activist orientation that is in line with Rahman's idea of the importance of linking spirituality with social responsibility.

The study by Uyuni, Adnan, and Muhibudin (2025) also supports the direction of this reorientation through the concept of *Spiritual-Social Da'wah*. This study confirms that Islamic spirituality can bridge personal piety and socio-economic transformation through three main domains, namely *tazkiyah* as the formation of ethical-spirituality, *ta'awun* as social collaboration, and *taṭawwur* as institutional innovation. This framework shows that spirituality does not need to be understood as a separate area from social development, but can be an ethical foundation for community empowerment. Thus, the primary data from Rahman's thought and the secondary data from cutting-edge studies both point to an important shift in neo-sufism: from individual asceticism to transformative social ethics.

To clarify the pattern of reorientation of neo-Sufism in Fazlur Rahman's thought, the data from the reading of primary sources and cutting-edge literature can be visualized in the form of a thematic matrix. Because this research is qualitative-literature, the data visualization is not presented in the form of statistical numbers, but in the form of conceptual categorization tables. The following table shows the shift in Sufism's orientation from an ascetic-individualistic model to an ethical-social model.

Table 1. Reorientation of Neo-Sufism from Individual Asceticism to Social Ethics

Bukti/Tema Utama	Orientasi Sufisme Asketik-Individual	Reorientasi Neo-Sufisme	Implikasi Analitis
Neo-sufism as a <i>reformed sufism</i> that connects spirituality with Islamic morality	Sufism tends to be understood as a personal mystical experience, asceticism, and the search for individual inner perfection	Spirituality is directed at the formation of morality, social responsibility, and the involvement of the people in public life	Rahman's neo-sufism shows a shift from individual piety to social piety
Inner values are not erased, but ethically reinterpreted	Sincerity is understood as purity of personal intention; <i>zuhud</i> as imprisonment from the world; <i>Tazkiyatun nafs</i> as the purification of the individual soul	Sincerity becomes moral integrity; <i>zuhud</i> becomes a critique of materialism; <i>tazkiyatun nafs</i> becomes social ego control	Sufistic values acquire a new function as an ethics of modern life
Urban sufism emerged as a new form of modern sufism and a response to the spiritual needs of urban society	Spirituality can be trapped as a personal experience separate from social dynamics	Contemporary Sufism is moving towards a religiosity that is more social, inclusive, humane, and adaptive to modern life	Sufism is no longer merely contemplative, but has become a space for the formation of social religiosity in modern society
Neo-sufism is positioned as a paradigm of social da'wah and a framework for moral reform	Sufism is often stereotyped as a practice detached from social reality	Neo-sufism became a model of moral reform, community development, and social engagement based on spiritual values	Reinforcing the reading that neo-sufism has an activist and transformative character
<i>The Spiritual-Social Da'wah Framework</i> connects spirituality, da'wah, and social empowerment	Spirituality is understood as an individual inner affair	Spirituality is the basis for community empowerment through <i>tazkiyah</i> , <i>ta'awun</i> , and institutional innovation	Neo-sufisme dapat dipahami sebagai jembatan antara penyucian diri dan transformasi sosial

The data shows that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism is a renewal of Sufism that does not reject the inner dimension, but directs it to be more active in social life. Rahman criticized the Sufism style that overemphasizes mystical experience, asceticism, and withdrawal from the world because it can weaken the function of religion as a moral force. Therefore, sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* need to be understood not only as a means of individual piety, but also as the basis for the formation of integrity, social responsibility, and concern for the problems of modern society (F Rahman, 1970; Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982).

From this data, the main pattern appears to be a shift in the orientation of Sufism from individual asceticism to social ethics. First, spirituality is no longer understood as a way away from worldly life, but as the basis for moral involvement in society. Second, Sufistic concepts have expanded their meaning: *zuhud* becomes a critique of materialism, sincerity becomes social integrity, and *tazkiyatun nafs* becomes a process of ego control and liberation from greed. Third, this trend is in line with recent studies of contemporary Sufism which show that Islamic spirituality is increasingly functioning in response to alienation, hedonism, crisis of meaning, and weak social concern in modern society (Hakim, 2024; Jaenuri, 2022; Uyuni et al., 2025).

These findings show that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism has an important meaning as an ethical-transformative paradigm of Islamic spirituality. This means that Sufism not only functions as a path of inner purification, but also as a source of social ethics that shapes humans to be more responsible, just, and caring for their common life. Thus, Rahman's neo-sufism adds to the understanding that the spiritual crisis of modern society is not sufficiently answered through individual rituals, but requires a spirituality that is able to connect inner depth with social action. In the context of Sufistic psychotherapy and Islamic counseling, these findings provide the basis that Sufistic values can be used to establish soul balance, self-control, moral integrity, and social awareness.

Dual Hermeneutics and the Reactualization of Sufistic Values

Fazlur Rahman's thinking shows that the reactualization of neo-sufism cannot be separated from the dual hermeneutic approach he developed. Through this approach, the teachings of Islam are not understood literally and statically, but are read through the back and forth between the historical context of revelation and the ethical needs of modern society. Rahman emphasized that the moral message of the Qur'an must be understood by paying attention to the socio-historical situation when revelation came down, then drawing general principles to be applied in the context of contemporary life (Rahman, 1982). In this way, sufistic values are not positioned as frozen spiritual doctrines, but rather as moral principles that can continue to be actualized according to the changing times.

In this framework, sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, *sabar*, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* are not sufficiently understood as individual inner practices. These values need to be reread as ethical energy that is able to answer modern human problems. *Zuhud*, for example, should not be interpreted as a rejection of the world, but as a critical attitude towards materialism and consumerism. Sincerity does not only mean purity of intention in personal worship, but can also be understood as moral integrity in social action. Patience is not only resilience in accepting suffering, but also ethical resilience in the face of social, economic, and psychological stress. *Tawakkal* does not mean passive surrender, but spiritual awareness that encourages humans to continue to strive responsibly. Meanwhile, *tazkiyatun nafs* can be understood as a process of self-purification from selfishness, greed, and destructive life orientation (Nasr, 2002; Fazlur Rahman, 1979; Schimmel, 2000).

This data shows that Rahman's dual hermeneutics provides a methodological basis for a new reading of Sufism. Neo-Sufism not only revives classical sufistic teachings, but also reinterprets its meaning to suit the moral needs of contemporary society. Thus, the reactualization of Sufistic values does not mean changing the substance of Islamic teachings, but rather returning these values to their ethical purpose, which is to form human beings who have spiritual awareness, moral clarity, and social responsibility. In this context, Rahman's hermeneutics becomes a bridge between the classical sufistic heritage and the problem of

modernity marked by a crisis of meaning, alienation, materialism, and a weakening of social sensibility.

These findings are also supported by a study of contemporary Islamic thought that places Rahman's contextual approach as one of the important models in Islamic reform. Saeed explained that Rahman's thought emphasized the importance of reading religious texts by considering the historical context as well as its universal moral purpose (Saeed, 2006). In relation to neo-sufism, this approach allows the inner values of Islam not only to be preserved as a spiritual heritage, but also to be developed as an ethical framework to respond to the challenges of the times. Therefore, the data found show that dual hermeneutics functions as an instrument of reactualization, while sufistic values become a moral substance that is relevant to contemporary life.

Table 2. Dual Hermeneutics and the Reactualization of Sufistic Values

Sufistic Values	Classic/Individual Meaning	Classic/Individual Meaning	Contemporary Relevance
Ikhlas	Purity of intention in personal worship	Reads as moral integrity in social action	Shaping public honesty, responsibility, and ethics
Zuhud	Getting away from the world and reducing material attachments	It is read as a critical attitude towards materialism and consumerism	Controlling a hedonistic lifestyle and materialistic life orientation
Sabar	Resilience in accepting suffering	It is read as ethical and psychological resilience in the face of life's pressures	Helping modern humans cope with stress, anxiety, and social crises
Tawakkal	Submission to Allah after effort	It is read as a spiritual awareness that encourages active and responsible endeavor	Build inner peace without falling into fatalism
Tazkiyatun nafs	Purification of the soul from evil	It is read as a process of liberation from selfishness, greed, and moral alienation	Becomes the basis for the formation of inner health, self-control, and social care

The data shows that Fazlur Rahman's double hermeneutics serves as a way of rereading sufistic values to keep them relevant to modern life. Values such as sincerity, zuhud, patience, tawakkal, and *tazkiyatun nafs* are not only understood as inner teachings for personal piety, but also as moral principles that can shape social behavior. With this approach, Sufism is not treated as a static spiritual heritage, but as a source of ethics that can be revived to answer the problems of materialism, crisis of meaning, psychological pressure, and weakening of social responsibility in contemporary society (Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

From this data, the main pattern can be seen in the form of an expansion of the meaning of sufistic values from personal orientation to ethical-social orientation. Sincerity shifts from purity of individual intentions to moral integrity in social action; Zuhud shifted from the imprisonment of the world to a critical attitude towards materialism and consumerism; patience shifts from passive resilience to ethical and psychological resilience; tawakkal shifts from resignation to spiritual awareness that still encourages active effort; Meanwhile, *tazkiyatun nafs* shifts from the purification of the individual soul to the process of ego control, greed, and moral alienation. This pattern suggests that dual hermeneutics allows sufistic

teachings to remain rooted in the Islamic tradition, but at the same time open to the needs of modern society.

These findings show that Fazlur Rahman's important contribution lies in his ability to make sufistic values a contextual moral principle. Dual hermeneutics provides the basis that the teachings of Sufism are not sufficiently defended in the form of rituals and classical doctrines, but need to be translated into the real problems of modern man. By implication, neo-Sufism can be understood as a model of Islamic spirituality that not only heals the mind personally, but also shapes moral awareness, self-control, social integrity, and public responsibility. Thus, these findings reinforce the argument that the transformation of contemporary Islamic spirituality requires a historical, ethical, and transformative Sufistic reading.

Ethical-Transformative Neo-Sufism as a Model of Contemporary Islamic Spirituality

Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism can be formulated as a model of ethical-transformative Islamic spirituality. This model departs from the view that Islamic spirituality is not sufficiently understood as an individual inner experience, but must be a moral force capable of shaping social life. In Rahman's framework, Islamic spiritual values must be directed at the formation of human beings who have moral awareness, social responsibility, and the ability to respond actively to the problems of the times. Therefore, neo-sufism not only revitalized classical Sufism, but also transformed it into a more rational, contextual, and socially transformation-oriented paradigm of spirituality (Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982).

This data can be seen from the way Rahman positions religion as a source of social ethics. Islam, according to Rahman, has a strong moral purpose, which is to form a just, responsible, and oriented human life for the common good. In this context, neo-Sufism does not stop at self-purification, but moves towards the formation of public ethics. True spirituality not only produces inner peace, but also encourages humans to engage in social life constructively. Thus, sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can be understood as the foundation for the formation of a spiritually balanced person as well as being active in facing social problems.

Data from contemporary studies also show that modern society is facing a spiritual crisis that is not only personal, but also social. Materialism, hedonism, individualism, psychological pressure, and moral alienation are symptoms that show a weakening of the balance between the inner dimension and social life. In this situation, contemporary Sufism exists as a response to modern man's need for meaning, tranquility, and direction in life. However, the spirituality that is needed is not a spirituality that escapes from social reality, but a spirituality that is able to build self-control, moral integrity, social concern, and human responsibility (Hakim, 2024; Jaenuri, 2022; Nasr, 2002).

These findings are also reinforced by studies of Sufism and social empowerment that show that Islamic spirituality can play a role in the transformation of society. Sufism is not only a path of purification of the soul, but it can also be the basis for social *da'wah*, moral education, community empowerment, and the recovery of people's spiritual crises. In this context, neo-sufism has a dual function: first, as a mental therapy for human beings who experience anxiety, alienation, and crisis of meaning; second, as a social ethics that encourages active involvement in improving our common life (Uyuni et al., 2025).

Table 3. The Ethical-Transformative Model of Neo-Sufism as Contemporary Islamic Spirituality

The Dimension of Neo-Sufism	Key Focus	The Function of Spirituality	Contemporary Relevance
Penyucian Batin	The formation of clarity of soul through sincerity, patience, tawakkal, and <i>tazkiyatun nafs</i>	Strengthen inner calm, self-control, and spiritual awareness	Answering the anxiety, alienation, crisis of meaning, and psychological pressure of modern humans
Moral Awareness	Strengthening ethics through zuhud, integrity, responsibility, and ego control	Forming a person who does not submit to materialism, hedonism, and egoism	Being a critic of the consumptive lifestyle and the weakening of public morality
Social Transformation	Actualization of spirituality in care, justice, solidarity, and empowerment	Turning personal righteousness into social righteousness	Encouraging social da'wah, Islamic counseling, sufistic psychotherapy, and community empowerment
Contextual Spirituality	Reading of sufistic values according to the needs of the times	Making Sufism a living and adaptive source of ethics	Helping Islam respond to modernity, secularization, and technological disruption

The data shows that Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism can be understood as a model of Islamic spirituality that links inner purification, moral awareness, and social responsibility. Spirituality is not only directed to obtain personal tranquility, but also to form human beings who are able to live ethically in society. Thus, neo-Sufism does not stop at inner practices such as sincerity, patience, tawakkal, and *tazkiyatun nafs*, but directs these values to become the basis for self-control, integrity, social concern, and the transformation of common life (Nasr, 2002; Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982)

From the data, the main pattern can be seen in the form of integration between spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. First, neo-sufism works as an inner purification that helps humans deal with anxiety, alienation, and crisis of meaning. Second, neo-sufism shapes moral consciousness through criticism of materialism, hedonism, egoism, and consumptive lifestyles. Third, neo-sufism encourages social transformation because sufistic values are directed at care, solidarity, justice, and community empowerment. This pattern shows that contemporary Islamic spirituality is not passive, but actively shapes more ethical individuals and societies (Hakim, 2024; Jaenuri, 2022; Uyuni et al., 2025).

These findings suggest that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism made an important contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic spirituality models. The main meaning of these findings is that the modern human crisis is not adequately answered with individual spirituality, but requires a spirituality capable of linking inner peace with moral and social change. In the context of the study of Sufistic psychotherapy, ethical-transformative neo-sufism can be the conceptual basis for building soul balance, self-control, restoration of the meaning of life, and social concern. Thus, these findings reinforce the novelty of the article that Rahman's neo-sufism is not only a renewal of Sufism, but a holistic, contextual, and transformative paradigm of Islamic spirituality.

4. DISCUSSION

From Normative Sufism to Contextual Spirituality

The results of the study show that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism can be understood as an attempt to reactualize Sufism from an ascetic-individual orientation towards ethical and transformative spirituality. The first findings show that Rahman did not reject the inner dimension of Sufism, but criticized Sufism's tendency to place too much emphasis on personal mystical experience and withdrawal from social life. The second finding shows that Rahman's dual hermeneutics allows sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, *sabar*, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* to be reread contextually to be relevant to the problems of modern society. The third finding confirms that Rahman's neo-Sufism can be formulated as a model of contemporary Islamic spirituality that integrates inner purification, moral awareness, and social responsibility. Thus, the results of this study show that neo-sufism is not just a renewal of the teachings of Sufism, but a paradigm of Islamic spirituality that is able to answer the crisis of materialism, moral alienation, and the weakening of social ethics in modern society (Nasr, 2002; Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

These results arise because in Fazlur Rahman's thinking there is a strong relationship between the renewal of religious understanding, moral awareness, and social responsibility. Neo-Sufism cannot be separated from Rahman's criticism of the religious model that is too formalistic on the one hand and too mystical-individual on the other. Through dual hermeneutics, Rahman seeks to restore the teachings of Islam to its basic moral purpose, which is to form faithful, ethical, and responsible human beings in social life. Therefore, sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* have undergone an expansion of meaning: from the practice of personal purification to ethical principles to deal with materialism, selfishness, alienation, and moral crises in modern society. This relationship occurs because spirituality in Islam, according to Rahman, does not stand apart from social life, but must instead be a source of moral energy for the transformation of society. Thus, Rahman's neo-sufism becomes ethical-transformative because it connects the inner dimension of Sufism with the moral and social demands of contemporary human beings (Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

The findings of this study have similarities with previous studies that placed neo-sufism as a response to the spiritual crisis of modern society. Harisman and Irham show that neo-Sufism emerged as a form of spirituality in modern society that seeks to answer the problems of materialism, excessive rationalism, and mental dryness (Harisman & Irham, 2023). In line with that, the study of urban sufism also shows that contemporary Sufism developed in urban spaces in response to alienation, hedonism, and urban society's need for a deeper meaning in life (Jaenuri, 2022). The findings of this article reinforce these studies because they both see contemporary Sufism as a form of spirituality that is relevant to the problem of modernity.

However, this study differs from previous studies in that it not only positions neo-sufism as a socio-religious phenomenon or psychological response to modern crises, but reads it specifically through the framework of Fazlur Rahman's thinking. If previous research has placed more emphasis on the symptoms of the revival of Sufism, urban Sufism, or the spirituality model of modern society, this article places Rahman's dual hermeneutics as the methodological basis for reactualizing Sufistic values. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the formulation of Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism as an ethical-transformative paradigm of Islamic spirituality, which is a model that links purification of the mind, moral reading of tradition, and social responsibility in the face of contemporary crises (Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

The significance of these findings is that Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism expands the understanding of Sufism from a mere individual spiritual path to a paradigm of Islamic social ethics. Socially, these findings suggest that modernity crises such as materialism, alienation, consumerism, and weakening solidarity are not adequately answered through formal rituals, but require a spirituality capable of shaping moral consciousness and public responsibility. Historically, Rahman's ideas can be read as a continuation of the renewal of Sufism that sought to reconcile the inner dimension of Islam with the social needs of the ummah. Ideologically, Rahman's neo-sufism offers a middle ground between spirituality that is too individualistic and religiosity that is too legal-formalistic. Thus, the results of this study contribute to a broader understanding that contemporary Sufism can be a source of moral transformation, not just a personal contemplative practice.

This finding has a positive function because it shows that neo-Sufism can be the basis for the formation of an Islamic spirituality that is more active, inclusive, and responsive to the problems of modern society. Values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can help modern humans manage the ego, psychological pressure, materialistic orientation, and crisis of meaning in life. In the context of sufistic psychotherapy and Islamic counseling, these values can be used as a basis for inner development, strengthening self-control, and forming social awareness. However, these findings also have the possibility of dysfunction if neo-sufism is only understood as a normative discourse without being translated into concrete social practice. Moreover, if the reactualization of sufistic values is carried out without a strong methodological basis, there is a risk of simplifying Sufism into a mere general moral motivation that loses its spiritual depth.

Based on these findings, several practical steps are needed to actualize neo-sufism as a model of contemporary Islamic spirituality. First, Islamic educational institutions need to integrate Sufistic values with social ethics education so that Sufism is not only taught as a spiritual doctrine, but also as the basis for character building, social concern, and public responsibility. Second, Islamic counseling institutions and sufistic psychotherapy can develop approaches based on the values of sincerity, *zuhud*, *sabar*, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* to help individuals deal with anxiety, alienation, and crises of meaning. Third, religious communities and da'wah institutions need to direct spiritual practices not only to personal piety, but also to community empowerment, strengthening solidarity, and solving social problems. With this step, Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism can be actualized as an Islamic spirituality that not only calms the mind, but also transforms social life.

Rahman's Neo-Sufism Contribution to Sufistic Psychotherapy

The results of the study show that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism has a conceptual contribution to the development of sufistic psychotherapy because it places Islamic spirituality as a process of inner purification as well as the formation of moral consciousness. Sufistic values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* not only function as normative teachings, but can also be understood as a soul-building mechanism in the face of anxiety, alienation, crisis of meaning, and the pressures of modern life. Previous findings show that Rahman's neo-Sufism integrates the inner dimension, social ethics, and public responsibility, so that spirituality does not stop at personal tranquility, but also forms a morally and socially healthy person (Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982; Saeed, 2006).

These contributions arise because Rahman's sufistic psychotherapy and neo-sufism both depart from the assumption that modern human crises are not only psychological, but also spiritual and moral. Anxiety, emptiness, materialism, and alienation are not enough to be

described as individual disorders, but are related to the weakening of the orientation of meaning and the breakdown of human relationships with God, oneself, and others. In this context, Sufistic values serve as a path of inner restoration: sincerity helps to build sincerity and self-acceptance, *zuhud* reduces dependence on material, patience strengthens psychological endurance, *tawakkal* builds a sense of spiritual security, while *tazkiyatun nafs* helps man cleanse the ego and destructive impulses. It is this relationship that makes Rahman's neo-sufism relevant to sufistic psychotherapy, as it not only offers personal healing, but also directs individuals to moral balance and social responsibility.

This finding is in line with the study of the psychology of Sufism which places sufistic values as the basis for fostering mental health and mental balance. Studies on the psychology of Sufism show that spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can help individuals deal with anxiety, life stress, and crisis of meaning (Zulfani & Salsabilah, 2025). This finding is also in line with Nasr's thinking that the modern human crisis is rooted in the disconnection of humans from the sacred dimension and spirituality (Nasr, 2002). However, this study is different because it does not only see Sufism as a means of individual inner healing, but reads it through Fazlur Rahman's neo-Sufism as an ethical-transformative framework. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the placement of sufistic psychotherapy not only as a personal therapy, but also as a process of forming moral awareness and social responsibility.

The important significance of these findings is that sufistic psychotherapy can be developed not only to restore peace of mind, but also to establish a more ethical and meaningful life orientation. In Rahman's neo-Sufism perspective, inner healing does not simply stop at the loss of anxiety or the attainment of personal calm, but must be continued with the formation of a person who has integrity, self-control, social concern, and spiritual awareness. Thus, sufistic psychotherapy can be understood as a holistic approach that connects the psychological, spiritual, and moral dimensions of human beings. These findings broaden the understanding that modern human mental crises are often related to meaning-crises, value crises, and weak spiritual connections.

This finding has a positive function because it provides a conceptual basis for the development of sufistic psychotherapy that is more contextual with modern human problems. The values of sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can be used to strengthen self-acceptance, control consumptive impulses, build psychological resilience, and foster inner peace. However, there is potential for dysfunction if these values are understood passively. For example, *tawakkal* can be misunderstood as surrender without effort, patience can be interpreted as allowing injustice, and *zuhud* can be understood as rejection of social life. Therefore, Sufistic psychotherapy needs to be developed with an active, ethical, and transformative reading as emphasized in Rahman's neo-Sufism.

Based on these findings, the development of sufistic psychotherapy should be directed at the integration between inner development and the strengthening of social ethics. First, Islamic counselors and Sufistic psychotherapy practitioners need to use Sufistic values as spiritual companionship instruments that help clients understand the meaning of life, manage emotions, and control the ego. Second, educational institutions and Islamic boarding schools can develop a curriculum of soul development based on sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* with an emphasis on mental health and social responsibility. Third, the practice of sufistic psychotherapy needs to avoid an approach that is too normative-dogmatic, and then directed to an empathetic, reflective, and contextual approach. With this step,

Rahman's neo-sufism can contribute to a sufistic model of psychotherapy that not only calms the mind, but also forms a healthy, ethical, and caring personality for social life.

Implications for Religious Moderation and Islamic Social Ethics

The results of the study show that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism has important implications for strengthening religious moderation and Islamic social ethics. Previous findings show that neo-sufism is not only oriented towards purification of the mind, but also shapes an active moral consciousness, social responsibility, and religious attitude in public life. Values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, patience, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can be the basis for personal formation that is not extreme, not materialistic, and able to build just, peaceful, and inclusive social relations (Nasr, 2002; Fazlur Rahman, 1979, 1982).

The implication arises because Rahman's neo-sufism links inner spirituality with social ethics. Religious moderation requires a balanced religious attitude, tolerance, non-violence, and being able to accept cultural diversity. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia formulated four indicators of religious moderation, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture; This formulation is in line with the orientation of neo-Sufism which emphasizes a balance between personal piety and social responsibility. Therefore, Sufistic values can strengthen religious moderation by controlling religious egos, avoiding exclusive claims of truth, and encouraging compassion in social relations.

These findings are in line with a study that places neo-sufism as a social da'wah paradigm that is able to respond to spiritual disorientation, social fragmentation, and religious radicalism in modern society (Hakim, 2024). Other studies of neo-sufism and social harmony have also shown that neo-sufism can open up a moderate religious paradigm through spiritual development and social solidarity. However, this study differs in that it places Fazlur Rahman's thinking as a conceptual basis for explaining the relationship between spirituality, moderation, and Islamic social ethics. Thus, the novelty of this article lies in the affirmation that religious moderation can not only be built through regulation or formal tolerance education, but also through inner development based on sufistic values.

The important significance of these findings is that religious moderation requires a strong spiritual foundation. Tolerant, nonviolent, and accommodating attitudes towards local culture are not enough to be built through normative knowledge, but need to be sustained by self-control, inner clarity, and moral awareness. In Rahman's neo-Sufism perspective, Islamic spirituality can be the basis of social ethics because it teaches humans to subdue their egos, avoid religious pride, and direct religion to profit. Thus, neo-sufism contributes to the understanding that religious moderation is not just a formal middle stance, but the result of spiritual and moral maturity.

This finding has a positive function because it shows that neo-sufism can be a source of Islamic social ethics that is relevant to pluralistic societies. The value of sincerity can form sincerity in accepting differences, patience can strengthen the ability to resist conflict, *zuhud* can reduce the ambition of religious-based power, *tawakkal* can foster calmness in the face of differences, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can help cleanse sectarian egos. However, there is potential for dysfunction if neo-sufism is only understood as a personal spirituality without a social orientation. In such conditions, Sufism can lose its critical power against intolerance, injustice, and symbolic violence in religious life.

Based on these findings, strengthening religious moderation needs to include a sufistic dimension as part of Islamic social ethics education. First, Islamic educational institutions can

integrate the values of sincerity, patience, *zuhud*, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* into the learning of religious moderation so that it does not stop at the discourse of tolerance, but touches on character development and inner awareness. Second, Islamic boarding schools, *taklim* assemblies, and *da'wah* communities need to develop spiritual practices that encourage social awareness, cross-group dialogue, and nonviolence. Third, Islamic counseling and *sufistic* psychotherapy can be directed to help individuals manage religious egos, social prejudices, and exclusive tendencies. With this step, Rahman's neo-sufism can be actualized as a spiritual basis for religious moderation and a more peaceful, inclusive, and transformative Islamic social ethics.

5. CONCLUSION

This research shows that Fazlur Rahman's neo-sufism can be understood as a reactualization of Sufism that moves from individual asceticism to ethical and transformative Islamic spirituality. The main findings of this study confirm that *sufistic* values such as sincerity, *zuhud*, *sabar*, *tawakkal*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* not only function as a means of inner purification, but also as a basis for the formation of moral awareness, social responsibility, and public ethics. Through dual hermeneutics, Rahman opens up a new reading space for Sufism to remain rooted in the Islamic tradition, but at the same time relevant to the crises of modern society such as materialism, alienation, the crisis of meaning, and the weakening of social solidarity.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in the formulation of Rahman's neo-sufism as a paradigm of ethical-transformative Islamic spirituality. Different from studies that only place neo-sufism as a phenomenon of spiritual awakening or the renewal of Sufism, this study shows that Rahman's neo-sufism can be an integrative framework that links purification, moral hermeneutics, *sufistic* psychotherapy, religious moderation, and Islamic social ethics. Thus, this research makes a conceptual contribution to the development of contemporary Sufism studies, especially in expanding the function of Sufism from the contemplative-personal realm to a more active, inclusive, and contextual moral-social space.

This study has limitations because it uses a qualitative approach based on literature studies, so it has not empirically tested how the concept of Rahman's neo-sufism is practiced in religious communities, Islamic counseling institutions, Islamic boarding schools, or *sufistic* psychotherapy practices. In addition, this research still focuses on Fazlur Rahman's thoughts, so it has not been compared in depth with other neo-Sufism figures such as Hamka, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, or Nurcholish Madjid. Therefore, further research is suggested to examine the implementation of neo-sufism in the practice of *sufistic* psychotherapy, religious moderation education, and social empowerment based on Islamic spirituality through more comprehensive field research.

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