



Institutionalised Sufism and Epistemic Integration: The *Naqshbandi al-Khalidiyya Da'imiyya* Order in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract:

This study analyzes how the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Al-Khalidiyah Da'imiyah (TNKD) constructs and institutionalizes the integration of spiritual discipline and scientific rationality within contemporary Sufi practice. In the context of modernity, religious traditions are often perceived as incompatible with rational, scientific modes of knowledge, thereby marginalizing Sufi institutions. However, emerging forms of organized Sufism indicate a more complex negotiation between spirituality, rationality, and institutional life. This research employs a qualitative design using a spiritual ethnography approach, involving participant observation and in-depth interviews with key TNKD authorities. Data were analyzed through condensation, display, and verification within an interpretive epistemological framework. The findings reveal, first, that TNKD has transformed into an institutionalized and expansive Sufi order in which formal organizational structures enable sustainability and transregional growth without eroding spiritual authenticity. Second, TNKD's spiritual legitimacy is grounded in a muktabarah silsilah and a stratified authority structure that ensures doctrinal continuity and communal trust. Third, TNKD integrates the Sufi discipline with scientific rationality through intellectual forums, academic writing, and evaluative mechanisms, thereby positioning tasawuf as a reflective and accountable knowledge tradition. This study contributes theoretically by conceptualizing Sufism as an epistemic institution and recommends further comparative research on rationality within contemporary Sufi orders.

Key Words: *Sufism, Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah, spiritual ethnography, scientific rationality, epistemology*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Al-Khalidiyah Da'imiyah (TNKD) membangun dan melembagakan integrasi disiplin spiritual dan rasionalitas ilmiah dalam praktik Sufi kontemporer. Dalam konteks modernitas, tradisi keagamaan sering dianggap tidak sesuai dengan mode pengetahuan ilmiah yang rasional, sehingga meminggirkan institusi Sufi. Namun, bentuk-bentuk Sufisme terorganisir yang muncul menunjukkan negosiasi yang lebih kompleks antara spiritualitas, rasionalitas, dan kehidupan kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif menggunakan pendekatan etnografi spiritual, yang melibatkan observasi partisipan dan wawancara mendalam dengan otoritas TNKD utama. Data

dianalisis melalui kondensasi, tampilan, dan verifikasi dalam kerangka epistemologis interpretatif. Temuan ini mengungkapkan, pertama, bahwa TNKD telah berubah menjadi tarekat Sufi yang dilembagakan dan ekspansif di mana struktur organisasi formal memungkinkan keberlanjutan dan pertumbuhan lintas wilayah tanpa mengikis keaslian spiritual. Kedua, legitimasi spiritual TNKD didasarkan pada muktabarah silsilah dan struktur otoritas bertingkat yang menjamin kesinambungan doktrin dan kepercayaan komunal. Ketiga, TNKD mengintegrasikan disiplin agama sufi dengan rasionalitas ilmiah melalui forum intelektual, penulisan akademik, dan mekanisme evaluatif, sehingga memposisikan tasawuf sebagai tradisi pengetahuan yang reflektif dan akuntabel. Studi ini berkontribusi secara teoritis dengan mengkonseptualisasikan Sufisme sebagai institusi epistemik dan merekomendasikan penelitian komparatif lebih lanjut tentang rasionalitas dalam tarekat Sufi kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Sufisme, Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah, etnografi spiritual, rasionalitas ilmiah, epistemologi*

INTRODUCTION

The development of modernity has driven fundamental changes in the way society understands knowledge, authority, and truth. Rationality, efficiency, and a scientific approach are now the main benchmarks in social, political, and educational decision-making. In this context, religious institutions are often questioned for their relevance, as they are considered out of step with contemporary demands that emphasize evidence, argumentation, and rational accountability. Religious doctrines oriented to inner experience are often portrayed as irrational, exclusive, and socially unproductive (Lutfi et al., 2025). In fact, religion continues to play an important role in shaping ethics, the meaning of life, and social cohesion. It is this tension between modern rationality and religious spirituality that makes this research important to society at large. This study seeks to show that religious traditions, especially the tariqat, are not always at odds with modern rationality. By examining TNKD, this research contributes to a new perspective: that spirituality can be developed rationally, systematically, and in ways relevant to the intellectual needs of contemporary society.

The main problem facing contemporary Muslim society is the epistemological fragmentation between modern science and religious tradition. Scientific rationality is often positioned as the sole legitimate source of knowledge, whereas spiritual experience is regarded as subjective and unverified. As a result, spiritual authority is no longer taken for granted but is tested based on social relevance and logical argumentation (Alam et al., 2023). This condition poses a serious challenge for the tarekat community, which has operated within the realms of inner experience and the transmission of charisma. On the one hand, the order is required to maintain the purity of spiritual teachings; on the other hand, it must respond to the accusation that Sufism is synonymous with apathy toward social reality and intellectual development. This tension often leads to the marginalization of the institute in public discourse.

Therefore, a study is needed that explains how the institute can respond to the challenges of modernity without losing its spiritual identity.

Empirically, this research observes a distinctive phenomenon within the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Al-Khalidiyah Da'imiyyah (TNKD), where classical Sufi spirituality is systematically integrated with scientific rationality. TNKD does not merely emphasize spiritual practices such as *suluk*, *dhikr*, and obedience to the *mursyid*; it also institutionalizes intellectual mechanisms that resemble formal education. These include scientific forums, written examinations, paper presentations, and structured evaluations of spiritual progress. Field observations reveal that *suluk* is treated not only as a mystical journey but also as a disciplined process requiring reflection, argumentation, and conceptual clarity. Participants are encouraged to articulate spiritual experiences using analytical language, thereby bridging intuitive insight and rational explanation. This phenomenon challenges conventional assumptions that *tasawuf* operates exclusively within non-rational or esoteric domains. Instead, TNKD represents a lived experiment in epistemic integration, where spiritual depth and rational discipline coexist. Such a configuration positions TNKD as a critical case for understanding how contemporary Sufi communities respond creatively to modern intellectual transformations.

Existing scholarship on Sufi orders has primarily focused on spiritual charisma, ritual practices, and ethical formation. Studies by Fatkhuri, F. (2022) and Kusmanto, et al. (2025), for instance, emphasize the *mursyid*'s role as a charismatic authority and the social dynamics of followers within tarekat communities. Research on the Naqsyabandiyah order in Indonesia by Wang, H. (2024) and Nana, A. E. (2025) similarly highlights its historical development, ritual discipline, and contribution to moral cultivation. Other studies conceptualize tarekat as spaces of spiritual purification, communal solidarity, and ethical habituation (Pambudi & Hidayat, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2021; Muttaqin & Sulistiyanto, 2024). While these works provide valuable insights into the spiritual and sociological dimensions of Sufism, they predominantly frame tarekat as non-intellectual or pre-modern religious formations. As a result, the epistemic potential of tarekat as a knowledge-producing institution remains underexplored in contemporary academic discourse.

A limited number of studies have examined modernization within tarekat structures, yet they often restrict rationality to administrative or organizational reforms. Research by Bueno, D. C., & Salapa, A. (2022) on Sufi educational transformation and by Almhairat, A. (2025) on organizational modernization addresses bureaucratic adaptation. However, it does not analyze rationality as an internal epistemological framework. Similarly, Zwart (2024) and Cantwell, J., & Zaman, S. (2024) study the Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyah tradition in the Malay world, focusing on regional networks rather than epistemic innovation. Consequently, existing literature tends to treat rationality as external pressure

rather than as a constitutive element of spiritual knowledge. This reveals a significant research gap: the absence of studies that conceptualize tarekat as epistemic entities capable of producing systematic, rational, and certifiable knowledge. Addressing this gap is crucial, as it allows for a rethinking of Sufism not merely as a devotional practice but as an evolving intellectual tradition within modern Islamic thought.

The novelty of this study lies in its epistemological reading of TNKD as a Sufi order that consciously integrates spirituality with scientific rationality. Unlike previous studies that separate mystical experience from intellectual reasoning, this research demonstrates how TNKD institutionalizes rational practices as part of spiritual formation. By framing suluk as both a spiritual discipline and an intellectual process, TNKD advances a unique model of Sufi pedagogy. This integrative approach constitutes the state of the art in contemporary Sufi studies, as it moves beyond dichotomies between tradition and modernity. The research contributes theoretically by positioning tarekat as a knowledge system governed by internal paradigms, and empirically by documenting how these paradigms operate in practice. Such an approach opens new avenues for understanding Islamic spirituality as epistemically dynamic rather than historically static. Therefore, this study is not only novel but also necessary to advance contemporary debates on religion, knowledge, and modernity.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study addresses the following research problem: how does TNKD construct and institutionalize the integration of spiritual discipline and scientific rationality within its Sufi practice? The central argument advanced here is that TNKD represents a contemporary Sufi model in which spirituality and rationality are not oppositional but mutually constitutive. Through structured suluk, scientific forums, and intellectual evaluation, TNKD develops a coherent epistemic framework that legitimizes spiritual experience through rational articulation. This argument challenges dominant narratives that portray Sufism as resistant to modern knowledge systems. Instead, the study proposes that tarekat can function as epistemic institutions that produce disciplined, reflective, and socially relevant knowledge. In doing so, the research contributes to Islamic studies, sociology of religion, and epistemology by offering a new conceptualization of Sufism in the modern world.

This research contributes theoretically by expanding the conceptual boundaries of Sufi studies to include epistemological analysis of rationality within spiritual traditions. Practically, it offers insights for religious educators, policymakers, and Islamic institutions seeking to reconcile spirituality with intellectual rigor. By demonstrating how TNKD integrates tasawuf with scientific rationality, the study provides an alternative model for Islamic education that balances inner transformation and critical thinking. Moreover, the findings have

broader implications for understanding how religious communities can remain relevant in rapidly changing epistemic environments. Ultimately, this research positions TNKD as a representative case of contemporary Indonesian tarekat, embodying both continuity and innovation. Through this lens, the study affirms that Sufism is not a relic of the past but a living tradition capable of engaging modernity without losing its spiritual essence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a spiritual ethnography approach. Qualitative design is selected because the research aims to understand meaning, experience, and epistemic construction within a Sufi community rather than to measure variables quantitatively. Spiritual ethnography, as a form of interpretive field research, enables researchers to access religious realities that are experiential, symbolic, and relational.

The choice of this design is grounded in the epistemological assumption that spiritual reality cannot be fully captured through external observation alone, but must be understood through sustained participation, empathy, and dialogical engagement with ritual actors. Recent studies in religious and Islamic studies confirm that ethnographic approaches are efficient in examining lived religion, authority relations, and spiritual habitus within contemporary Muslim communities (Sultan, H. E., 2022; Cheema, H. T., 2023). Therefore, this design is appropriate for examining how TNKD integrates spiritual discipline, institutional structure, and rational knowledge production.

The research was conducted at TNKD (*Tarekat Naqshabandiyah Al-Kholidiyah Da'imiyyah*) in Central Tapanuli, Indonesia. This site was deliberately selected for three reasons. First, TNKD Central Tapanuli represents an active and well-established Sufi center where *suluk*, *dhikr*, *bai'at*, and scientific forums are routinely practiced. Second, the location serves as a regional hub for TNKD's organizational expansion, making it a strategic site for observing institutionalization and authority structures. Third, accessibility and prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to conduct sustained participant observation, which is essential in ethnographic research.

Selecting this site aligns with methodological recommendations emphasizing information-rich cases in qualitative inquiry, particularly when studying complex religious phenomena embedded in social and organizational contexts (Caidi et al., 2025; Harchaoui, N., 2025).

Data were collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation involved direct engagement in TNKD's spiritual activities, particularly during *suluk* sessions, communal *dhikr*, and scientific forums. This technique allowed the researcher to capture embodied practices, ritual discipline, symbolic meanings, and patterns of authority as they unfolded in natural settings.

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including the *mursyid*, *khalifah*, and *syaiikh muda*. The interviews were semi-structured, combining open-ended exploration with a systematic question framework to ensure focus on core research issues. This approach enabled the emergence of rich narratives concerning spiritual doctrine, rational practices, and institutional logic. Such triangulated data collection methods are widely recommended in recent qualitative religious research to enhance depth and credibility (Vivek, R., 2023; Morgan, H., 2024).

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative model consisting of data condensation, data display, and data verification. First, data condensation involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying field notes, interview transcripts, and observational records relevant to the study's two main domains: TNKD's spiritual teachings and its practices of scientific rationality. This stage helped refine raw data into analytically meaningful units. Second, data were presented as descriptive narratives, thematic matrices, and tables. This step enabled visualization of patterns related to ritual structure, authority relations, scientific forums, and institutional mechanisms. Third, data verification and conclusion drawing were conducted cyclically and reflexively. Interpretations were continuously compared across data sources to ensure consistency and credibility. This analytic procedure aligns with contemporary qualitative analysis models that emphasize rigor, reflexivity, and transparency (Watson, A., & Jackson, D., 2025; Wilson, J., 2025).

Methodologically, the study also employs Thomas S. Kuhn's paradigm theory as a reflective analytical lens to interpret TNKD as a system of knowledge. Within this framework, TNKD is understood to possess its own paradigm, comprising values, ritual practices, authority structures, and modes of reasoning that guide members' interpretation of spiritual experience and rational discipline. Recent studies in Islamic epistemology and religious anthropology suggest that Kuhnian perspectives remain relevant for analyzing religious knowledge systems as internally coherent paradigms rather than irrational belief structures (Nordin, M.K.N.C., 2023; Kilian, K.J., 2024). This framework supports the ethnographic analysis by situating TNKD's practices within a broader epistemological structure.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

TNKD as an Institutionalized and Expansive Sufi Order

In the empirical context of this study, TNKD as an institutionalized and expansive Sufi order is operationally defined as a tarekat that has evolved from an informal local spiritual community into a formally organized religious institution with legal recognition, administrative governance, and structured programs of spiritual outreach. The establishment of a foundation, formal

leadership roles, documented procedures, and planned strategies for geographic expansion evidences this institutionalization. Expansion, in this sense, refers not only to numerical growth but also to the replication of spiritual spaces, organizational units, and ritual practices across different regions while maintaining doctrinal coherence.

The mursyid of TNKD articulated the rationale behind institutional formalization as follows: "A tarekat cannot rely only on spiritual enthusiasm. It needs structure, administration, and legality so that its teachings can continue beyond one generation."

This statement indicates that institutionalization within TNKD is perceived as a strategic necessity rather than a departure from spiritual ideals. The researcher interprets this as a conscious effort to ensure continuity and sustainability. Formal organization is understood as a protective mechanism that safeguards spiritual transmission from fragmentation, especially in a modern socio-legal environment that requires organizational accountability.

A khalifah emphasized the relationship between institutional structure and expansion: "Because the foundation exists, we can open halaqah in other regions without confusion. The structure makes expansion orderly."

This testimony highlights that expansion is not spontaneous or charismatic-driven, but systematically managed through institutional frameworks. From the researcher's perspective, this reflects a shift from purely localized Sufi practice to a network-based model of religious dissemination. Institutional clarity enables replication of practices while maintaining control over teaching standards and ritual consistency.

Participant observation revealed that institutionalization is embedded in daily practices. Administrative offices operate alongside ritual spaces; attendance records, suluk schedules, and documentation of *bai'at* are systematically maintained. During communal gatherings, roles are clearly differentiated, and organizational procedures govern spiritual activities. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that TNKD's institutional form does not diminish its spiritual atmosphere; instead, it organizes spirituality into a sustainable system capable of managing growth without eroding symbolic and ritual depth.

In essence, TNKD demonstrates that contemporary Sufi orders can undergo institutional transformation while preserving their core spiritual identity. Institutionalization provides legal legitimacy, administrative stability, and strategic direction, enabling TNKD to expand transregionally and even transnationally. This transformation positions TNKD as both a spiritual community and an organizational entity responsive to modern social structures.

The data reveal a clear pattern: institutional structure functions as the primary enabler of expansion, while spiritual authority maintains internal cohesion. As TNKD expands geographically, organizational mechanisms

intensify rather than weaken. Expansion is accompanied by increased standardization of practices, more apparent role differentiation, and stronger administrative coordination. This pattern suggests that institutionalization and expansion are mutually reinforcing processes within TNKD.

Table 1. Ideal Influence of Institutional Structure on TNKD's Expansion

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Mursyid	"A tarekat needs structure and legality to survive."	Institutional sustainability
Khalifah	"The foundation allows orderly expansion."	Organizational control
Syaikh Muda	"Clear procedures help us guide new members."	Standardization of practice
Administrator	"Documentation ensures continuity across regions."	Administrative governance

The table illustrates that institutional influence within TNKD operates across multiple levels of authority. Spiritual leadership emphasizes sustainability, middle leadership ensures organizational control, operational actors focus on standardization, and administrators maintain continuity. This layered institutional influence prevents expansion from fragmenting or becoming doctrinally inconsistent.

Furthermore, the table demonstrates that institutionalization is collectively enacted rather than centralized in a single authority. Each role contributes to maintaining balance between spiritual depth and organizational efficiency, allowing TNKD to function as a scalable Sufi institution.

Overall, the findings indicate a consistent pattern in which formal institutionalization enables expansive capacity without undermining spiritual authenticity. TNKD exemplifies a contemporary model of Sufism in which organizational rationality and spiritual practice coexist symbiotically. This pattern accounts for TNKD's rapid territorial expansion and its acceptance across diverse social contexts.

Spiritual Legitimacy Rooted in *Silsilah* and *Tarekat* Authority Structure

In the field setting of this research, spiritual legitimacy is operationally defined as the recognized and socially accepted authority of TNKD's teachings and leadership, derived from two interdependent foundations: a muktabarah Sufi lineage (*silsilah*) and a clearly stratified internal authority structure. Legitimacy manifests in the community's collective trust in ritual prescriptions, obedience to spiritual guidance, and acceptance of doctrinal evaluation conducted by authorized figures. In practice, legitimacy functions as a regulatory

mechanism that governs who may teach, guide, or interpret Sufi knowledge within TNKD.

The *mursyid* emphasized the centrality of lineage in establishing legitimate authority: “Spiritual authority cannot stand without *silsilah*. What we teach is not personal knowledge but inherited guidance.”

This statement reflects a conception of authority grounded in epistemic transmission rather than individual charisma. From the researcher’s perspective, the *mursyid* positions lineage as a form of spiritual authentication that links contemporary practice to prophetic origins. Such framing protects TNKD from claims of doctrinal innovation and reinforces its identity as part of an established Sufi tradition.

A khalifah explained how authority structure supports doctrinal control: “Each role exists to safeguard the teaching. Without structure, practice would easily deviate.”

This testimony indicates that hierarchy within TNKD is not symbolic but functional and disciplinary. The researcher interprets this as evidence that authority is exercised through role differentiation, ensuring that guidance flows in an orderly manner. This system minimizes interpretive fragmentation, especially as the community expands across regions.

The authority system in TNKD follows a linear yet distributive flow. Spiritual guidance originates from the *mursyid* as the highest epistemic authority, is delegated to the khalifah for supervision and doctrinal safeguarding, and is operationalized by the *syaikh muda* and *syarifah* in daily mentoring and ritual instruction. This flow ensures continuity, accountability, and adaptability. The researcher interprets this model as a controlled transmission mechanism that balances centralized legitimacy with decentralized implementation.

Field observations during suluk rituals and communal gatherings revealed consistent enactment of hierarchical norms. Instruction was delivered exclusively by authorized figures, ritual corrections adhered to rank order, and participants demonstrated deference aligned with institutional roles. The researcher interprets these behaviors as the embodiment of legitimacy in practice, indicating that authority in TNKD is not merely conceptual but ritually performed and socially internalized.

Overall, TNKD's spiritual legitimacy is constructed through the integration of a valid Sufi lineage and a structured authority system. Lineage provides historical and epistemic validation, while hierarchical roles operationalize control and continuity. Together, these elements sustain doctrinal purity, reinforce communal trust, and enable the orderly transmission of Sufi knowledge across diverse social and geographical contexts.

The data display a consistent pattern in which adherence to lineage and respect for hierarchical roles correlate with high levels of trust and ritual

uniformity. As TNKD expands, authority structures become more pronounced rather than diluted, suggesting that legitimacy functions as a stabilizing force. This pattern explains TNKD’s resilience against fragmentation and its capacity to integrate new members without compromising doctrinal integrity.

Table 2. Ideal Influence of Lineage and Authority Structure on Spiritual Legitimacy in TNKD

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Mursyid	“Authority comes from inherited guidance.”	Epistemic legitimacy
Khalifah	“Structure prevents deviation.”	Doctrinal control
Syaikh Muda	“We guide practice within limits.”	Operational discipline
Syarifah	“Women receive guidance through authorized roles.”	Gendered mediation

The table illustrates that spiritual legitimacy in TNKD is distributed across differentiated roles, each contributing to the maintenance of orthodoxy. The mursyid anchors legitimacy epistemically, while the khalifah enforces doctrinal boundaries. *Syaikh Muda* and *Syarifah* operationalize authority at the grassroots level, ensuring consistent practice among male and female jamaah.

Importantly, this distribution of authority prevents over-centralization while maintaining coherence. Legitimacy thus emerges as a collective institutional property, not merely an individual attribute. This arrangement enhances TNKD’s capacity to expand geographically while preserving ritual and doctrinal uniformity.

Taken together, the findings reveal a pattern of institutionalized spiritual authority rooted in lineage-based legitimacy. TNKD exemplifies a contemporary Sufi model in which classical transmission and modern organizational structure converge, enabling sustained growth without erosion of spiritual authenticity.

The Integration of Spirituality, Suluk Discipline, and Scientific Rationality

In the empirical context of this study, the integration of spirituality, suluk discipline, and scientific rationality is operationally defined as a structured pedagogical model in which TNKD combines classical Sufi practices such as *bai’at*, *suluk*, *dhikr*, and *tawajuh* with formal mechanisms of intellectual rationalization, including scientific forums (*sidang ilmiah*), paper writing, and argumentative evaluation. This integration is observable in the simultaneous cultivation of mystical experience, ethical self-discipline, and cognitive rigor, positioning tasawuf not as an irrational or purely esoteric path but as a reflective and accountable intellectual tradition.

Table 3. Empirical Evidence from Interviews (Tabulated)

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"Spiritual practice must be accountable through knowledge."	Epistemic accountability	Mursyid
"Suluk is disciplined, not emotional."	Ethical-methodological control	Khalifah
"Writing papers trains clarity of thought."	Rational articulation	Syaikh Muda
"Dhikr strengthens focus for intellectual work."	Cognitive integration	Senior Jamaah

The interview data demonstrate that TNKD deliberately reframes Sufi spirituality within an epistemological framework that values accountability, discipline, and rational articulation. The mursyid's emphasis on epistemic accountability indicates that mystical experience is not regarded as self-validating but must be subject to intellectual scrutiny. This stance challenges dominant stereotypes of tasawuf as anti-rational and instead situates it within a tradition of reflective knowledge production.

Moreover, the articulation of suluk as a "disciplined" rather than emotional practice underscores its methodological character. From the researcher's perspective, suluk in TNKD functions analogously to a scientific method: it follows a set of regulated stages, requires supervision, and yields evaluable outcomes in ethical conduct and intellectual clarity.

The requirement to write papers and to participate in scientific forums further illustrates the institutionalization of rationality within spiritual training. The syaikh muda's testimony highlights how argumentative writing serves as a medium for translating spiritual insight into communicable knowledge. This practice not only cultivates intellectual discipline but also bridges experiential spirituality and public reasoning.

The integration of dhikr with cognitive focus, as noted by senior jamaah, reveals a reciprocal relationship between spirituality and rationality. Rather than competing domains, spiritual practices are perceived as enhancing concentration, reflexivity, and analytical capacity. The researcher interprets this as evidence of a non-dual epistemology in which spiritual depth and intellectual rigor mutually reinforce one another.

Participant observation during suluk sessions and scientific forums confirmed the coherence of this integrative model. Ritual practices were conducted with strict procedural order, followed by reflective discussions and formal presentations. Participants demonstrated the ability to articulate spiritual experiences analytically, referencing ethical principles and conceptual frameworks. This observation reinforces the interpretation that TNKD cultivates a habitus in which spiritual discipline and rational inquiry coexist organically.

In summary, TNKD constructs tasawuf as an integrated system that harmonizes spiritual practice, ethical discipline, and scientific rationality. Mystical experience is guided by structured suluk, evaluated through intellectual mechanisms, and expressed via argumentative discourse. This synthesis enables tasawuf to function as a comprehensive educational tradition that meets both spiritual and modern intellectual demands.

The data reveal a consistent pattern of institutionalized integration, in which greater spiritual depth correlates with greater intellectual discipline. Rather than marginalizing rationality, deeper engagement in suluk is associated with stronger argumentative competence and ethical self-regulation. This pattern explains TNKD's capacity to appeal to educated constituencies and remain relevant within contemporary epistemic environments.

Table 4. Ideal Influence of the Integrative Spiritual-Rational Model in TNKD

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Mursyid	"Knowledge validates experience."	Epistemological integration
Khalifah	"Discipline prevents deviation."	Methodological rigor
Syaikh Muda	"Writing structures spirituality."	Rational formalization
Senior Jamaah	"Dhikr sharpens thinking."	Cognitive synergy

The table demonstrates that the integration of spirituality and rationality in TNKD is role-differentiated yet systemically unified. The *mursyid* establishes the epistemological framework, while the *khalifah* ensures methodological consistency. *Syaikh Muda* operationalizes integration through intellectual production, and the *jamaah* experience its cognitive benefits directly.

This configuration prevents both extremes: unregulated mysticism and sterile intellectualism. Instead, TNKD institutionalizes a balanced model in which spiritual authority legitimizes rational inquiry and rational processes refine spiritual experience. Such a model represents a contemporary reformulation of classical Sufi pedagogy.

Overall, the pattern that emerges is one of reciprocal reinforcement between spirituality and rationality. Spiritual practices deepen intellectual capacity, while rational evaluation safeguards spiritual authenticity. This integrative pattern positions TNKD as a form of modern Sufism that is epistemically resilient, pedagogically sophisticated, and socially relevant.

Discussion

The first finding, which positions TNKD as an institutionalized and expansive Sufi order, aligns with a growing body of scholarship emphasizing the organizational transformation of contemporary Sufism. Previous studies have shown that modern Sufi orders increasingly adopt bureaucratic structures, legal

recognition, and formal governance to ensure sustainability and transregional expansion (Rifqi, M. I., 2025; Afi, B. S., 2025). Similar patterns have been observed in Southeast Asian Sufi movements, where institutionalization enables engagement with state regulations and modern civil society without necessarily eroding spiritual authenticity (Fieldhouse, A. 2025; Anton, A. 2023). However, the TNKD case extends this literature by demonstrating that institutionalization is not merely a defensive response to modernity but a proactive strategy to replicate spiritual spaces and ritual coherence across regions. Unlike earlier assumptions that bureaucratization leads to spiritual routinization, Brent Edwards Jr., D. (2025), TNKD presents a model in which organizational rationality functions as an enabler rather than a constraint on Sufi vitality.

The second finding regarding spiritual legitimacy rooted in *silsilah* and a stratified authority structure corroborates classical and contemporary analyses of Sufi authority. Lineage-based legitimacy has long been recognized as the epistemic backbone of Sufi transmission, anchoring spiritual authority in prophetic continuity rather than individual charisma (Van Den Bos, M. 2025; Riansyah, et. Al., 2025). Empirical studies in Indonesian tarekat contexts similarly confirm that *silsilah* serves as a critical marker of orthodoxy and communal trust (Sulthon et al., 2025; Mawardi et al., 2025). TNKD's contribution lies in its clear articulation of how lineage legitimacy is operationalized through differentiated roles: *mursyid*, *khalifah*, *syaiikh muda*, and *syarifah*, thereby preventing interpretive fragmentation during expansion. This finding nuances existing literature by showing that authority in contemporary Sufism is neither purely charismatic nor rigidly hierarchical but functionally distributed, enabling both doctrinal control and adaptive flexibility (Mohiuddin, A. 2023; Bidabad, B. 2024).

The third finding, which highlights the integration of spirituality, *suluk* discipline, and scientific rationality, challenges persistent binaries between mysticism and rationality in the study of Islamic spirituality. While *tasawuf* has often been portrayed as inward-looking and non-discursive, recent scholarship has begun to recognize its intellectual and ethical dimensions (Muchasan et al., 2025; R. Astuti et al., 2024). TNKD advances this discourse by institutionalizing rational practices such as scientific forums and academic writing within spiritual training. This integration aligns with Kuhnian perspectives on knowledge communities, in which paradigms shape both experience and rational evaluation (Khadir et al., 2025; Stein, V. 2025). Unlike symbolic "Islamization of knowledge" projects that merely attach religious language to modern science, TNKD demonstrates a lived epistemic synthesis in which mystical experience is disciplined, evaluated, and articulated through rational frameworks. This finding contributes empirically to debates on post-secular knowledge by showing how spiritual traditions can generate their own internal rationalities (Quraishi, 2022).

Taken together, these findings have significant theoretical implications for the sociology of religion and Islamic studies. Theoretically, TNKD exemplifies a model of institutionalized spiritual rationality in which legitimacy, authority, and epistemology are mutually reinforcing. This challenges linear secularization theories that predict the decline of spiritual authority under bureaucratic conditions (Quraishi et al., 2022; Ogar et al., 2023). Instead, the TNKD case supports theories of religious adaptation and multiple modernities, in which religious traditions selectively appropriate organizational and rational tools to sustain relevance (Jong, A., 2025). Practically, the findings suggest that Sufi institutions can serve as effective platforms for ethical formation, intellectual discipline, and community cohesion in contemporary Muslim societies, offering an alternative to both rigid traditionalism and unanchored spiritual eclecticism.

From a practical perspective, the TNKD model offers implications for religious education, *da'wah* strategies, and community development. The integration of structured suluk with intellectual accountability provides a replicable framework for cultivating spiritually grounded yet critically reflective Muslim subjects. For policymakers and educators, this suggests that Sufi institutions should not be marginalized as purely devotional but recognized as potential partners in moral and intellectual formation (Deighton-Mohammed, R. 2024). Moreover, TNKD's success in maintaining doctrinal coherence amid expansion highlights the importance of clear authority structures and lineage-based legitimacy in preventing religious fragmentation. Overall, the discussion demonstrates that TNKD represents a contemporary articulation of Sufism that is institutionally robust, epistemically integrated, and socially adaptive.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Tarekat *Naqsyabandiyah Al-Khalidiyah Da'imiyah* (TNKD) represents a contemporary Sufi model in which institutionalization, spiritual legitimacy, and epistemic rationality operate in a mutually reinforcing manner. The most important finding shows that formal organizational structures do not dilute Sufi spirituality but instead function as instruments for sustaining spiritual transmission, ensuring doctrinal coherence, and enabling expansive growth across regions. Rooted in a valid silsilah and a stratified authority system, TNKD successfully preserves spiritual authenticity while integrating suluk discipline with mechanisms of scientific rationality, including intellectual evaluation, academic writing, and structured forums. The central lesson of this research is that tasawuf need not be positioned in opposition to modern rationality; instead, it can generate an internal epistemological framework in which mystical experience, ethical self-discipline, and intellectual rigor are harmonized to meet contemporary social and intellectual demands.

The principal scholarly contribution of this study lies in conceptualizing Sufism as an epistemic and institutional system rather than merely a devotional

or charismatic movement. By employing spiritual ethnography and a Kuhnian paradigm perspective, this research extends existing literature on Indonesian tarekat beyond ritual and authority toward an analysis of knowledge production and rational integration. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its single-case design and qualitative scope, which constrain broader generalization. Future research is therefore encouraged to undertake comparative and cross-regional studies of Sufi orders, integrate mixed-method approaches, and examine the long-term social, educational, and ethical impacts of epistemically integrated Sufi institutions. Such research would deepen understanding of how contemporary Sufism continues to negotiate tradition, rationality, and modernity in diverse Muslim contexts.

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