Building Religious Character through *Suluk* on Multiethnic Students of Thariqah Al-Mu'min Community in West Kalimantan

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Abstract

The moral damage caused by the erosion of positive values and national character is quite concerning. This phenomenon has encouraged government concern through strengthening students' character. Strengthening students' character through formal education has not produced significant results, as evidenced by the many symptoms of moral decay and crime involving students in Indonesia. To overcome this, an alternative strategy is needed to elaborate between character education based on thoughts and hearts, which non-formal educational institutions can carry out. This research explores the *suluk* method as an alternative for forming religious characters for students who practice the Thariqah Al-Mu'min in West Kalimantan. This study uses a case study method and a qualitative approach. The research results found that; *suluk* can shape the religious character of students who practice the Al-Mu'min Order; these characteristics are; peace of mind, discipline, enthusiasm in worship, gratitude, trustworthiness, honesty, understanding the purpose of life, feeling close to Allah, feeling more moral than before, feeling more important in controlling lust, respecting others, increasing love for the hereafter, increasing longing for Allah and His Messenger, and sincere in worship. *Suluk* can give a deep religious impression and feel the presence of God in his life. This study emphasizes the importance of using the method of *suluk* in non-formal Islamic societies and formal Islamic education institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and religious colleges to form pious students. However, *suluk* also has weaknesses; only a thariqah

practitioner can practice *suluk*. The students must also be physically and mentally prepared because the *suluk* method requires seriousness to form a religious character in the performer.

Keywords: character education, character building, *suluk*, Thariqah Al-Mu'min

1. Introduction

In the current era of globalization and industrial technology 4.0, the role of the younger generation as a milestone in the history of the nation's struggle has begun to be eroded by exposure to an individualist, permissive, and hedonic culture, some of whom are even trapped in promiscuity and abuse narcotics. In the next stage, the younger generation, who should be the nation's hope, actually "withers before developing," this is because they have left a noble national character. Relevant to the statement of Wulandari et al. (2017) supported by Tamimy's study (2017), Wijayanti (2017), Syarif (2020), and Rofidah (2017) naturally, young people's enthusiasm is indeed happy to try or observe new things, but when it is not balanced with the formation of positive character, it is almost sure that the generation that tends to worldly pleasures will be straightforward to be swayed by the mighty waves of destructive morals and national character.

The national character, which manifests spiritual values, is no longer the basis of behavior. In the context of nation and state, the national character must be used as the primary basis for the nation's children to act and behave well in individual, social, national, and state life (Bakti, 2016). According to Nasrullah (2020), The phenomenon of behavioral and personality tendencies of today's young generation that are increasingly far from religious values and have lost their identity as children of the nation who were born and live and develop from noble values and deeply rooted characters. These noble values and positive culture have been reduced by negative cultures such as brawls between students and students, alcohol abuse, illegal drugs (narcotics and psychotropics), promiscuity (free sex), online prostitution, motorcycle gangs, and a culture of violence in solving all problems (Leni, 2017).

Leni's Study (2017) supported by Syarbini (2014, p. 1) said, "...the Indonesian nation is currently believed to be experiencing moral or moral decay, in almost all segments of life and all levels of society." At the elite (leader) level, the deterioration of the nation's morals is marked by rampant corruption, collusion, and nepotism in almost all government agencies (Azra, 2010). Based on the Corruption Perception Index, Collusion corruption and nepotism practices in Indonesia in 2009–2010 increased from 2.6% to 2.8%; this score placed Indonesia first out of 12 countries in Asia and third place out of 180 countries worldwide. "Weak internalization of the noble values of the younger generation, exacerbated by the rapid influence of a foreign culture that is unstoppable in this country, has fostered an all-permissive view (permissive culture) and has had a significant impact on the growth of a culture that perceives pleasure and material enjoyment as the purpose of life" (Nasution, 2020).

Moral decadence caused by the erosion of positive values and national character in Indonesia is already at a very worrying point. According to Syarbini (2014) that "the biggest problem (the biggest problem) facing the Indonesian nation today is actually not an economic or food crisis, but a moral or moral crisis, this crisis has caused other crises such as economic, political, social, cultural,

defense and security." Damage to the morality of the younger generation, especially among students and students, demands special attention from all elements of the nation, especially parties who have an interest or have authority, to anticipate and overcome these problems. This is in line with Luthfi's statement (2018) supported by Muslich (2022) The decline in culture and morality among students indicates a weak national character of resilience because of a lack of absorption of religious values such as morals, manners, courtesy, discipline, responsibility, and other positive cultures.

Activities to instill a national character are a challenging matter. It requires synergy from all elements of the nation, across groups and organizations, and the active role of community leaders and religious leaders. To prevent and overcome the decline in morals, manners, discipline, and responsibility, as well as a positive culture among students and students, it is necessary to review the models and patterns of character education that have been used in the last few decades. The role of formal and non-formal religious education is expected to assist the government in instilling a positive character through the internalization of religious values (Saridudin, 2021).

According to Asmani (2012) there are at least five methods of character education, namely; "teaching (submission of character-forming theories and concepts), examples (teachers are able to provide examples to students), determine priorities (educational institutions make character education a priority that must be implemented in the school environment), priority praxis (evidence of implementing priority basic values of character education), and reflection (programmed character formation by educational institutions which is evaluated and reflected critically and continuously)." Hasanah (2013) reveals that references to character configuration in psychological and socio-cultural contexts can be grouped into four activities; "exercise the heart (spiritual and emotional development), exercise the mind (intellectual development), exercise and kinesthetic (physical and kinesthetic development), exercise taste and intention (affective and creativity development)."

Manullang (2013, p. 3) states that "The concept of character education and anti-corruption education designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture can be categorized as a practical approach that tends to produce artificial (pretend) characters, making it less effective in building the nation." Manullang (2013) recommends a character education model by placing intellectual, emotional and spiritual quotes as antecedents which are hypothesized to shape attitudes, ways of thinking (mindsets), and commitments as intervening, which can affect competence, and will ultimately shape the character of the golden generation in 2045, according to Koesuma (2010) there are three effective character education designs, namely; class-based character education, culture-based character education, community-based character education.

Based on the empirical facts and phenomena described, a formal character education model in schools or colleges is seen as a model that will give birth to a pseudo-character because it is not carried out through a deep-rooted internalization process. This fact is reinforced by the results of Manullang's research (2013), the character education programs in schools are practical and are said to be less effective and tend to produce pretend characters. The character education models are only limited to theoretical concepts and thought processes at the cognitive level. Therefore, a method or approach is needed that can synergize the exercise of the heart (dhikr) and thought (mindset), which will produce stability, breadth of mind, consistency, and commitment in action to give birth to a person who has a character that is firmly rooted in the student or student through a programmed process of internalizing spiritual values.

The increasingly visible indications of damage to the morality of the younger generation in Indonesia have encouraged the government to make national policies to strengthen the nation's character. Given the importance of efforts to strengthen national character, the government emphasized implementing character education in every educational institution, both formal and non-formal. It launched a Strengthening Character Education program through Permendikbud Number 20 of 2018 (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 20 Tahun 2018 Tentang Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter, 2018). The program has been going on for more than a decade. However, its impact has not yielded significant results, considering that there are still many cases of students killing teachers or lecturers, motorcycle gangs, student prostitution, drug abuse by students, and other crimes involving students. For this reason, an alternative method is needed to elaborate between thought-based character education and heart-based character education carried out by non-formal educational institutions such as Islamic organizations, remembrance assemblies, and *taklim* assemblies.

One of the most intensive *taklim* and remembrance assembly institutions in providing mental and spiritual training to its congregation is *Thariqah* Al-Mu'min. One riyadhah program or spiritual practice is known in almost all *thariqah* institutions, namely, the *suluk* method is also practiced in *Thariqah* Al-Mu'min. According to Nasrudin's study (2021, p. 1) "Consistency in carrying out practices and discipline [through the *Suluk*] will make people who are mentally and spiritually pious so that they become role models in the social life of society." This is in line with Fuadi (2021), and Asmanidar (2021) that "*suluk* can change the social behavior of the perpetrator [*salik*]."

There are hundreds of *thariqah*s around the world, and there are at least 40 muktabarah *thariqah*s (Mulyati, 2011). One religious institution or organization that has succeeded in elaborating thought, heart, and sports in Indonesia is the *Thariqah* Al-Mu'min. *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* is a religious organization founded by a Murshid Sheikh named Muhammad Efendi Sa'ad in Singkawang City, West Kalimantan Province, on March 27, 1997, (Suprianto, 2016).

The results of a preliminary research interview with a representative of the Murshid *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* on October 9, 2021, said that "the *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* already has thousands of members consisting of students, civil and military officials and ordinary people. During carrying out its program, *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* has succeeded in awakening and rehabilitating Narcotics addicts, reducing thuggery, treating sufferers of psychiatric disorders and disturbances of spirits, reducing juvenile delinquency and various other mental and spiritual ailments. "*Thariqah* Al-*Mu'min* conducts a thought exercise program through the *taklim* assembly and implements a heart exercise program *(tazkiatunnafs)* through remembrance guidance, spiritual guidance (*Suluk*), and *ruqyah* shariah for the congregation who are members of it. Of the many "heart care" programs by *Thariqah* Al-Mu'min, spiritual guidance or *tasawuf* is considered a particular program (Suprianto, 2016).

Thariqah Al-Mu'min, in carrying out its programs, is shaded by an organization called the Nur *Al-Mu'min* Indonesia Foundation based in Singkawang City, West Kalimantan Province. Along with the rapid development of the *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* congregation, the Nur *Al-Mu'min* Foundation has also opened many representative offices throughout Indonesia. Regional representatives for the Nur *Al-Mu'min* Foundation consist of the areas of Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang Bekasi, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Surabaya, Lampung, Pontianak, and several City Regencies in West Kalimantan Province (Suprianto, 2016).

West Kalimantan, in an ethnic context, is a province in Indonesia known for its ethnic diversity as well as a history of tragic interethnic riots (Fernando & Marta, 2019). The existence of character education through *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* becomes very important. *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*, whose members consist of various tribes and ethnic groups, can be an association of nations, especially in Western Kalimantan. This ethnic diversity of the *Thariqah* jamaah, both directly and indirectly, serves as a medium to get to know each other and to understand the cultural character of different tribes and ethnic groups, as well as to remove interethnic prejudices (Ahyar et al., 2022) which have been regarded as the "seed" of inter-ethnic riots. Through this character education and cross-cultural understanding, the researchers can hope to build a more peaceful and harmonious society where diversity is valued, and the unity of nations is prioritized.

This study aims to explore and analyze *suluk* as an alternative method of forming a religious character for Muslim students practising *thariqah Al-Mu'min* in West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Character Education

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia has made efforts to strengthen national character; this is indicated by the issuance of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2020 concerning Strengthening Character Education. Through this regulation, the government explains that: "The Strengthening Character Education campaign is a component of the National Mental Revolution initiative. The education unit's responsibility, with the aid of academic departments, families, and society, is to develop students' personalities by bringing their hearts into harmony and providing them with opportunities to think, feel, and play sports." (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 20 Tahun 2018 Tentang Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter, 2018).

There are fifteen dimensions of character education, namely, religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, appreciation of achievement, communication, peace-love, liking to read, caring about the environment, caring socially, and being responsible (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Nomor 20 Tahun 2018 Tentang Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter, 2018).

According to Haryati (2017, p. 16), character education is "a conscious effort made to shape students to become positive individuals and have good morals according to graduate competency standards, so that they can be implemented in everyday life." This is in line with Ramdhani (2017, p. 28), "character education develops a student's ability to conduct himself well. It is marked by developing many skills that will make people divine (according to the idea of divinity) and help them do their jobs as global leaders."

According to Haryati's studies (2017) this is the purpose of character education: to develop the affective potential of students as human beings and citizens with character values; to develop the habits and behaviors of students that are commendable and in line with universal values and cultural traditions; to instill a spirit of leadership and responsibility in students as the nation's future, and to develop the abilities of students to become independent and creative human beings. Syarbini (2014) propose eight components that can be involved in character education: "educational goals, educators, students, materials, methods, tools, activities/efforts (programs), and evaluation."

Setiawan's study results (2014) concluded that Islamic character education has principles; Integration of the goals of studying *taqarub ilallah*, the urgency of knowledge and its development, complex and earnest work, continuity, the principle of responsibility, advising each other is a form of affection, avoiding religious prohibitions or principles that are *wara'*, trust, respect for teachers, balance, *istiqomah* (consistent), and *sakinah* (calm), *'ubudiyah*, sincere, simplicity, principles of honesty, tolerance, exemplary, creative, independence, democracy, principles of national spirit, love of the motherland, love of peace, intelligence, *tawadu'*, patience, principles of deliberation, have ideals, gratitude, fulfillment of costs, and memorization. This is relevant to Rokhman et al. (2014) which explains that the main purpose of an education is to form character. Specifically, Jumriani et al. (2022) explained that religious characteristics include performing the five daily prayers intensively, attending Islamic studies, reading, and studying the Al-Qur'an, being disciplined, sincere, honest, and playing an active role in Islamic studies. Relevant to Wisono & Khozin's study (2022) that religious character "... is manifested by introducing faith in Allah SWT, reading, writing and understanding, worshiping according to guidance, exemplary, and practicing Islamic teachings in the life of society, nation and state."

According to Agboola & Tsai (2012), and Romanowski (2005), there are several valuable suggestions for implementing character education, including: the involvement of educators in program planning will increase the effectiveness of the program; the curriculum must be relevant to the lives of students who are intellectually, emotionally, and socially challenging; the administration must support and provide sufficient space for educators to carry out flexible pedagogy according to character traits, carry out class discussions that can effectively involve students in the program. Reflection will lead to more in-depth conversations. It is up to the school to create a good learning environment and teach students how to behave well. Thus, students also practice the values learned from the character education program.

Character education is a concerted and aggressive effort made by schools and districts. It says its goal is to teach students basic ethical principles like compassion, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and self-respect (Singh, 2019), additionally, character education is crucial to creating superior generations that can adapt to the changing world.

2.2. Character Education Models

According to Paul et al. (2002), School character education approaches include monolithic, integrated, out-of-school time, and combinations. Monolithic Paradigm: Character education is a specific topic in this model. Therefore, character education is addressed like other topics. Character education teachers must create a curriculum, syllabus, lesson plans, and instructional material. This methodology teaches character education, which is excellent. However, this implies that the value of what students learn is determined by how the curriculum is artificially constructed (Sumarni et al., 2015).

Integrated Models: Teachers might contain several character values. This strategy teaches kids to internalize character ideals. Out-of-School Model: Out-of-school character education is possible. This generally involves extracurricular activities and a talk afterward. Out-of-school time lets pupils practice character qualities. This is less effective for quickly instilling character traits in students. Integration is the combination of integrated and out-of-school time concepts. Teacher-outsider cooperation can accomplish this. This paradigm encourages academic and community

collaboration. Character education will overwhelm kids, who will then practice it beyond school (Watts & Kristjánsson, 2023).

It can be concluded that referring to the experts' opinions, and the integrative model is the model closest to the ideal and a perfect representation of reality. That is, character education is taught in all subjects at school, and students can use the skills they learn in character education in the real world.

2.3. *Thariqah* and *Suluk* in Islam

According to Asari et al. (2021), *suluk* is a spiritual and physical training activity for a *salik*. This is relevant to Rahmah's study (2012) that *suluk* is "...a model of worship to Allah with a form of self-exile from society for some time, bound by strict rules, and is a medium of self-filling which is very beneficial for the formation of the soul, mental and behavior." According to Maslahah (2018), *suluk* is a mental and spiritual practice that can only be carried out through Sufi orders. Asari et al. (2021) define *suluk* based on the goal that the *Salik* wants to achieve; according to him, the goal of *suluk* is the activity of a person taking a path closer to God.

Suluk requires a container called *"tariqat"* or *"thariqah"*; without *thariqah*, *suluk* cannot be carried out. This is relevant to Aripudin (2014), which explains that the congregation is a spiritual development institution to reach ecstasy and encounter with God, which is rooted in religious traditions, including Islam, individually and immediately grows into an institution that is open and able to adapt itself in any period. Abdurahman (2018) defines *thariqah* as a way of practicing a religion that focuses on the teachings of the *wirid* system (recite or remember the names of Allah) and dhikr rituals that aim to position oneself closer to God.

Based on some of the opinions, the researchers have put forward, *suluk* can be interpreted as an attempt by the seeker to improve his quality by doing rigorous and disciplined spiritual practice and controlling himself by reducing negative traits through fasting, obligatory worship, and sunnah worship dhikr and self-reflection, with the primary aim of drawing closer to Allah.

2.4. Rational of Current Study

Formal character education in schools or colleges is seen as a model that will give birth to false characters because it is not carried out through a deep internalization process within students. The model of character education is only about theoretical ideas and ways of thinking at the cognitive level. So, the researchers need a method or approach that can unite heart training (dhikr) and mind training (mindset), which will produce stability, broad-mindedness, consistency, and commitment in action to create a broad-minded personality character that is firmly rooted in students or students through a planned process of internalizing spiritual values. *Suluk* is one of these models that students who practice *thariqah* can use to build a religious personality.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Researchers used the Case Study method with a qualitative approach with a naturalistic paradigm. The case study method is used to investigate the phenomenon of the implementation of the *suluk* method in shaping the religious character of students. The analysis of this study is that of

individuals or groups of Muslim student member of *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* in West Kalimantan. The researchers hope to reveal the phenomena and symptoms, find them thoroughly and thoroughly, and describe the character education model for Indonesian Muslim students of *Thariqah* Al-Mu'min. This research was conducted at the *suluk Thariqah Al-Mu'min* Indonesia House, located at the Nur *Al-Mu'min* Mosque complex, Jl. Parit Haji Mukhsin 2, Gg. Al-Mu'min, Sungai Raya District, Kubu Raya District, West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The researchers selected participants with a purposive technique based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria are [1] Students practicing *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* who have attended the *suluk* program in West Kalimantan and are willing to be the subject of observation, [2] *suluk* Supervisors, and [3] *suluk* housekeepers who can provide comprehensive information regarding the implementation of *suluk Thariqah Al-Mu'min*.

The exclusion criteria are students who practice *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* but have never participated in the *suluk* program or are unwilling to be the subject of observation. Participants in this study were divided into four categories: [1] Murshid, or the highest leader in the *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* hierarchy, [2] *Suluk* House caretakers, namely several people who are in charge of guarding the *suluk* house, providing food and drink and guarding or supervising the participants of the *suluk* (*Salik*) event day and night, [3] Participants of *Suluk*, The participants of *suluk* in this study were limited to the participants of *suluk* who came from students and students, and [4] *Ustadz*, namely supervisors or supervisors appointed by the teacher Murshid to help direct the process of implementing *Suluk*. Overall, 11 participants became subjects in this study, consisting of 6 main participants (students), four key participants (Supervisors or *suluk* mentors), and one supporting participant (guarding the *suluk* House).

The primary data source was used to obtain information in the form of participants' perceptions about the preparation of *Suluk*, its implementation, and the benefits of *suluk* in internalizing Islamic values, ethics, and morals as a follow-up after *Suluk*. Primary data sources are *suluk* Guidance Teachers (Murshid), *suluk* house administrators, and *suluk* participants from students, as well as ustadz appointed by the supervising teacher. Secondary data sources are used to obtain additional information. Secondary data in this study were data on *suluk* participants, data on *suluk* administrators, data on ustadz who were appointed to direct the implementation of *suluk*, and other documentation related to *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* and Nur *Al-Mu'min* Foundation, including vision, mission, goals, and work programs.

3.3. Instruments

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth and repeated interviews with the main participants. In-depth interviews were supported by direct observation during and after the implementation of *Suluk*. The instruments used consisted of Observation Guidelines, Interview Guidelines, Field Notes, Photos and Audio-Visual Recordings, and researchers acted as participant observers because researchers were also part of the congregation, practitioners, and supervisors of *suluk* at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. Data collection through in-depth interviews with the main participants has been started in stages over one year, starting from November 27, 2021, to December 13, 2021; data collection was strengthened through direct observation methods from December 13, 2021, to November 20, 2022, followed by interviews in depth and source triangulation to key participants

and supporting participants on November 21, 2022. Researchers wrote research reports in stages during the research process until they obtained complete and saturated data on December 19, 2022. The researchers maintain communication with participants, key participants and supporters while supplementing the data the researchers can explore during the observation period.

3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using the analysis interactive model technique from Miles and Huberman, which divided the analysis into four parts: data collection, condensation, data presentation, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). The analysis tool uses the NVIVO 12 software with a free and limited 14-day license. Through the NVIVO 12 software, researchers can condense interview transcripts for all participants (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Woolf & Silver, 2017). Before interpreting the data, The researchers first check the validity data. The researchers use two data validity-checking techniques: extended observations and triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). First, extend the observation time for Muslim students of member *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. This technique is used to obtain comprehensive data because a short time is not enough to capture cases, symptoms, and messages in practicing Muslim students of *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. Second, the researchers use two types of triangulations: source and method. Source triangulation is carried out by confirming data obtained previously with data obtained from other sources. Furthermore, the researchers triangulate the method using different methods in one context by adjusting the results of observations, interviews, and documents to focus research.

4. Results

The results of this study include data presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data from interviews and observations. The researchers interviewed and observed the main participants. Their initials present them, MAR, ZA, RM, NS, AA, and RH. Key participants with the initials ASM, ES, JL and SMN, and supporting participants with the initials NA. Based on the results of in-depth interviews and direct observations, the researchers explored several essential points related to implementing *suluk* as an alternative method of forming religious character in students practicing *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* in West Kalimantan. These points include preparation for *Suluk*, execution of *Suluk*, participants' goals for participating in the *suluk* program, benefits felt by students, religious character internalized by students, participants after participating in *Suluk*, feasibility and relevance of *suluk* as a method of forming religious character, and weaknesses and strengths of *suluk* as an alternative method of religious character building.

4.1. Preparation of *Suluk*

Suluk in *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* has requirements, rules and procedures that must be followed strictly by every *Salik*. If one of the obligatory rules is not fulfilled (for example, *suluk wirid*, fasting, khalwat and five daily prayers), *suluk* is considered null and void. If there are additional rules such as blessings, reading of the Holy Qur'an and wirid not being implemented, then because of the values, the values of *suluk* become imperfect. Almost all the leading participants provided the same information about the preparation and requirements that must be met by the participants of *suluk* at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. The researchers present the results of this interview as Explorer Diagram in Figure 1.
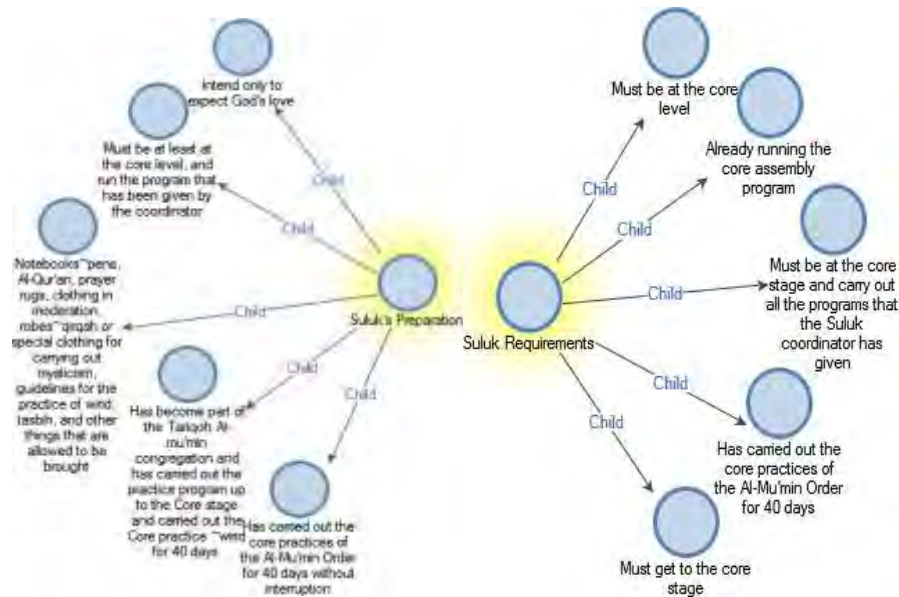
Figure 1. Explorer Diagram of *Suluk* Preparation

Figure 1 shows the preparation of *suluk* for students who practice *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. We group them into two categories: mental preparation and physical preparation. Mental preparation can be done by strengthening the intention only to get Allah's love and compassion, getting closer to Allah, and making sure the candidate for *suluk* has been said in the core dhikr by the Murshid and has practiced the wirid at the "core" stage for a minimum of 40 continuous days. Physical preparation, among others; prepare money for consumption during the ten days of *suluk* events, medicines, clothing, books, stationery, *suluk* guidebooks, prayer equipment, Holy Qur'an, and Shalawat Basya'irul Khairat books recommended by the Murshid. In principle, mental and physical preparation is part of the mandatory or special requirements to participate in the *suluk* program with a little extra. According to the coach and coordinator of *Suluk*, participants must have officially received talqin dhikr in *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* and be at the "core" dhikr level, have practiced *suluk* rituals for 40 days, be physically and mentally healthy, and have been told by the *suluk* Coordinator about the *suluk* discipline at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*.

4.2. *Suluk* Implementation

Information related to the implementation of *suluk* for students at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* includes two activities: activities of *suluk* participants at night and activities of *suluk* participants at night. The researchers know how *suluk* is being implemented because key participants and supporters told us. The researchers present the results in Explorer Diagram form in Figure 2.
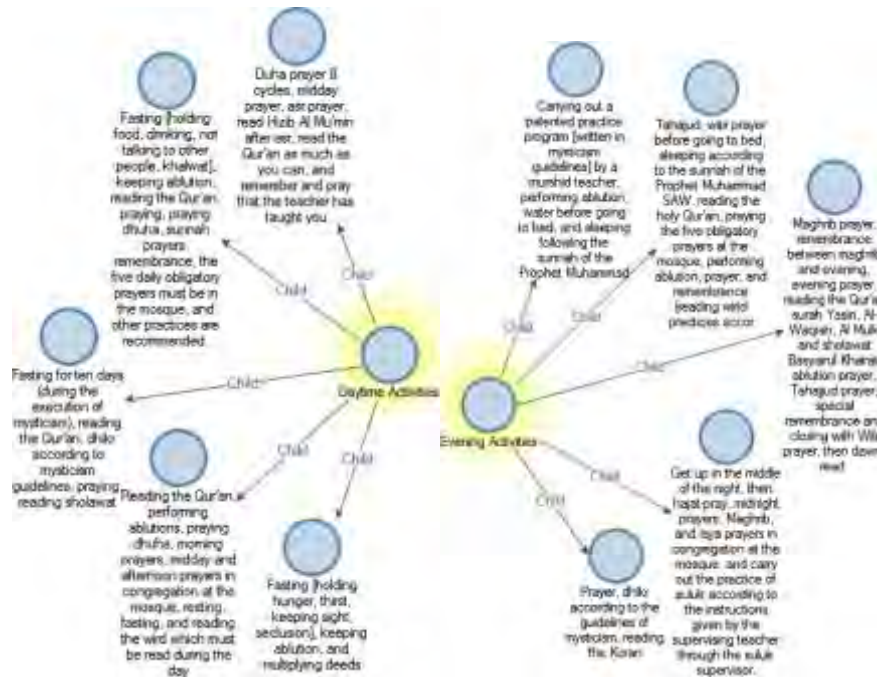
Figure 2. Activities carried out by participants during the *suluk* procession.

Based on Explorer Diagram in Figure 2, the activities carried out by the participants during the procession of *suluk* at night consisted of; It is obligatory praying in congregation at the mosque, reading of the Holy Qur'an, reading blessings, performing ablutions, sleeping according to the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, waking up at night starting with *hajat* prayer, midnight prayer, *wirid Suluk*, and pre-dawn meal. This information is relevant to comparative information from key and supporting participants that the series of activities of the participants of *suluk* at night consists of "breaking the fast (meal), obligatory prayers (*maghrib* and *isya'*) in congregation at the mosque, performing prayers *ba'da maghrib, qobliyah isya'* and *ba'da isya'*), read of the *ismu-zat* dhikr 5000 times between the maghrib and *isya'* prayers, after the evening prayer it is continued by reading of the Holy Qur'an, reciting *shalawat basya'irul khairat*, performing ablution completing with ablution prayer, sleeping according to the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad Saw., waking up at 02:00, sunnah *hajat* prayer, *tahajud* prayer, reading *wirid suluk* until 03:00, closing with *witr* prayer, and ending with pre-dawn meal (preparation for fasting *suluk*)."

The *suluk* activities that the participants of *suluk* must carry out during the day are fasting [keeping eyesight, seclusion or not communicating with anyone, keeping the heart from being negligent in remembrance of Allah], performing the dawn, midday and afternoon prayers at the mosque which are complemented by the sunnah rawatib prayer before the dawn prayer before the midday prayer, after the midday prayer, and before the 'asar prayer. After the sunnah dawn prayer, the morning prayer is continued by reading the *hizb* and increasing the blessings and *wirid*. After dawn, it is continued with the sunnah *syuruq* prayer, the sunnah *dhuha* prayer, and the *wirid* and prayer. During the day, you must read the Holy Qur'an, followed by reciting *shalawat Basya'irul khairat* repeatedly. The researchers obtained identical information between key and supporting participants regarding the *suluk* activities participants had to do during the day.

4.3. Purpose of Participating in the *suluk* Program

The purpose of the *suluk* participants' is an essential factor to be explored more deeply so that the researchers get sufficient information regarding the motivation of each participant to participate in the *suluk* program at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. The primary participants explained their goals for participating in the *suluk* program, which the researchers have presented as Explorer Diagram in Figure 3.
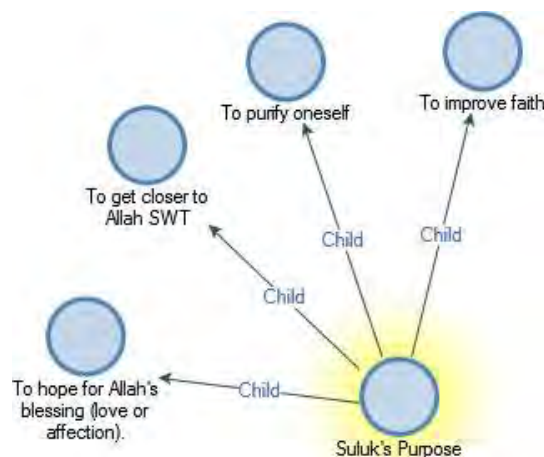

Figure 3. Purpose of Participating in the *suluk* Program

Based on Explorer Diagram in Figure 3, the participants in *suluk* who came from among students revealed that their purpose in participating in the *suluk* was to cleanse the soul, get closer to Allah (*taqarrub ilallah*), improve their hearts and morals, increase their worship and to strengthen their faith and to gain love, affection, and pleasure of Allah. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews regarding the motives behind their participation in the *suluk* "was it because there was coercion from other parties or on the basis of their own awareness?" All *suluk* participants' answered that; they carry out *suluk* based on their own will and awareness without coercion from any party. Every participant before entering the *suluk* house must fill out and sign a statement containing a statement of deep awareness, willingness to accept the consequences and all the risks that may occur during the procession of *Suluk*.

4.4. The Benefits Felt by *suluk* Participants

Suluk participants' hope that *suluk* will be spiritually beneficial for a better life (spiritual benefit). Every participant in the *suluk* program the researchers interviewed agreed they felt anxious because worship was not solemn, there was a lack of gratitude, people had terrible morals and manners, and worship was inconsistent. The results of in-depth interviews with the main participants regarding the benefits expected by the participants from participating in the *suluk* program are presented in the form of an Explorer's Gram in Figure 4.
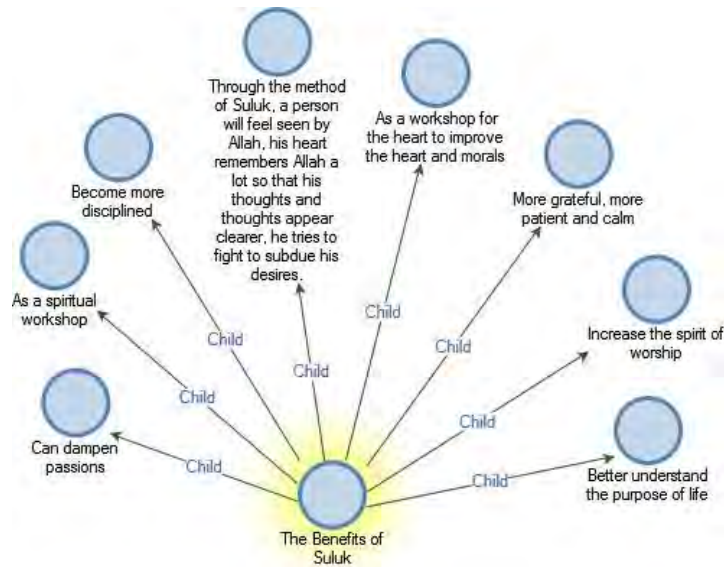
Figure 4. The benefits felt by participants after participating in the *Suluk*.

Using Explorer Diagram in Figure 4, the researchers can find some of the things participants expect from following *Suluk*. After participating in *suluk* for ten days repeatedly, the participants felt calmer, more disciplined in worship or doing other activities, enthusiastic in carrying out worship, became more grateful than before, put more trust in Allah, felt more honest, understood the purpose of life, felt close to Allah (*muraqabah*), felt more moral than before, felt more potent in controlling lust, and got rid of heart disease. The researchers found and confirmed that all the participants the researchers observed were relevant to their statements. They are more polite, friendly, and happy to greet and smile at strangers. They are also involved in "living" memorial assemblies and religious activities. Almost all participants actively participated in da'wah activities through dhikr assemblies (*Thariqah Al-Mu'min*).

4.5. Religious Characters Internalized by Participants through *Suluk*

While carrying out the *Suluk*, the *Salik* from among the students who practice *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* can absorb positive values and religious character. As the researchers explained earlier, *suluk* has requirements, rules, and procedures that must be followed strictly by every seeker. Every rule and procedure for *suluk* must be carried out with full awareness independently, without coercion from any party, because while entering the *suluk* house the *Salik* is not accompanied by anyone; he must assume that the murshid teacher, Rasulullah, and Allah are watching him. The participants can take in each *suluk* activity on their own and with full awareness until they leave the *suluk* house and return to the community. In Figure 5, the researchers show the information the researchers got from talking to the prominent people involved, backed up by what the researchers saw firsthand.
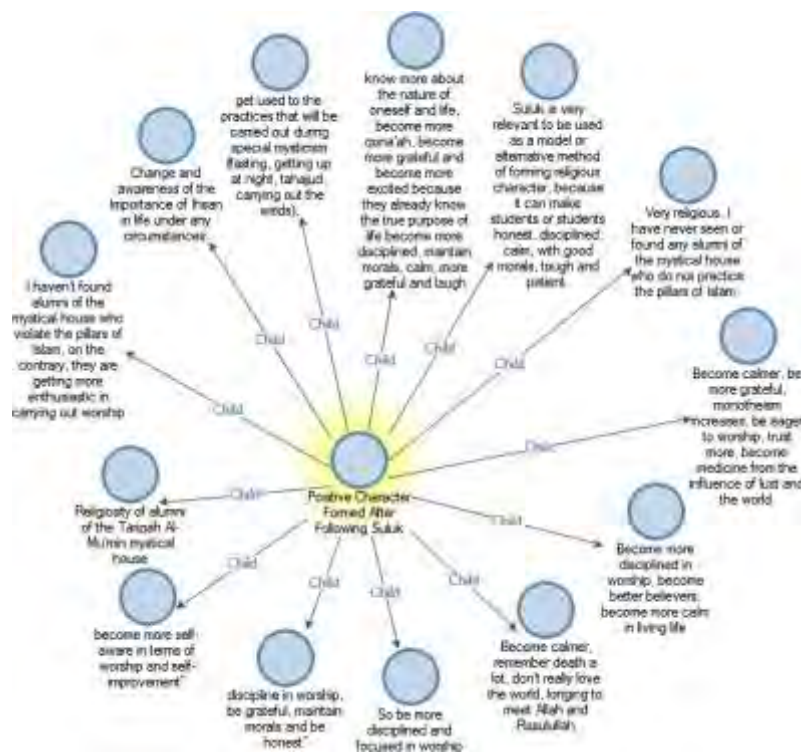
Figure 5. The positive characters that are formed after participating in the *Suluk*

Based on the results of in-depth interviews supported by direct observation for one year, participants can internalize several positive and religious characteristics through the *suluk Thariqah Al-Mu'min* program; these characteristics include; a calm attitude, good morals, discipline in worship, gratitude, trust in Allah, honesty, respect for others, remembering death a lot, not loving the world excessively, feeling the longing for Allah SWT and the Prophet Muhammad Saw, and worshipping with full awareness (not out of obligation, but out of love for Allah).

4.6. Participant Religiosity After Participating in the *Suluk*

The researchers got information about how religious students who had taken part in the *suluk* were by observing them directly for a year, from the first interview in November 2021 until the end of November 2022. For the primary data, the researchers got from in-depth interviews with key and supporting participants (guidance officers or *suluk* supervisors and the coordinator of the *suluk* house) confirmed the results of our direct observations. The processing results of the NVIVO software on interview transcripts and observation results are presented in the form of Explorer Diagram in Figure 6.
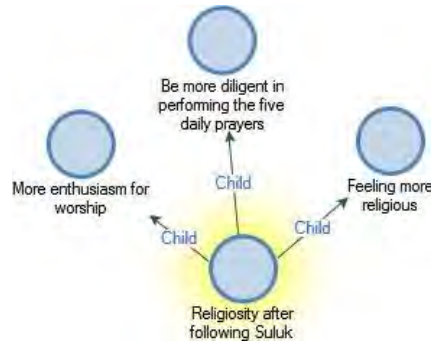
Figure 6. Religiosity of Students After Participating in the *Suluk*

The results of in-depth interviews with key and supporting participants in Figure 6 show that the participants who took part in the *suluk* more than once became very religious. They never skipped the obligatory prayers and always attempted to pray in congregation at the mosque, fasting according to sunnah and *infaq*. During the time that the six main participants were observing, they always went to the remembrance assembly held every Friday night. They also prayed the obligatory prayers at the mosque, said the sunnah prayers *of tahajud, dhuha, syuruq,* and sunnah cares, prayed, and did other things. The remembrance assembly and *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* carry out da'wah and coaching of Muslims. Throughout the observation period, the participants provided information regarding the daily behavior and religiosity of the students the researchers observed. The researchers did not find any of them violating the pillars of Islam or not being religious.

4.7. Feasibility of *suluk* as an Alternative Method for Forming Religious Character

In addition to exploring and analyzing the *suluk* procession at *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*, the researchers were also able to figure out if and how *suluk* could be used to help students develop a religious personality. The results of our data analysis are presented in Explorer Diagram in Figure 7.
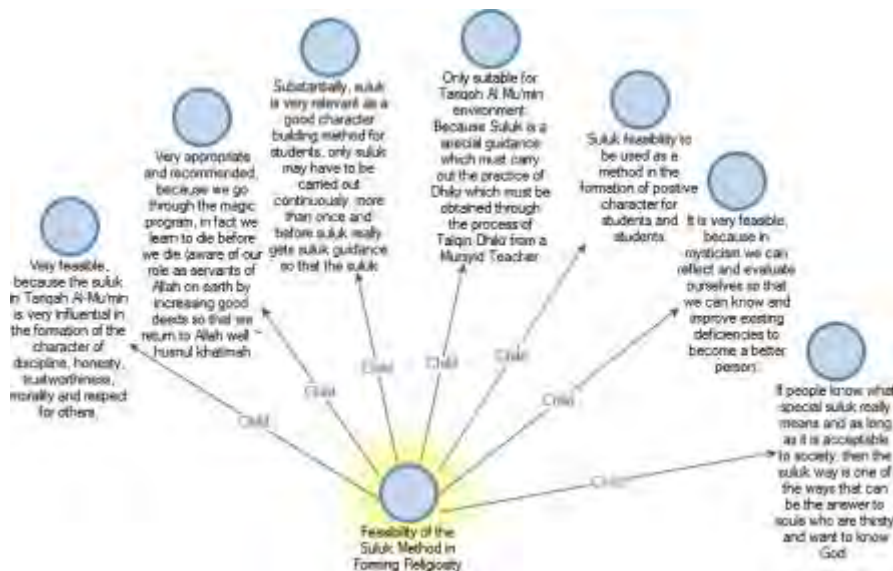

Figure 7. Feasibility of *suluk* as an Alternative Method for Forming Religious Character

The participants who have experienced direct benefits from the *suluk* in changing their religious attitudes and behaviors. They consider *suluk* appropriate or relevant as an alternative method of forming religious character. According to them, *suluk* activities can give a deep impression on the human soul and spirit so that they can significantly shape religious character and improve morals. *Suluk* can also be used to improve one's introspection and self-evaluation skills. The key and main participants agreed that *suluk* should be used as a model for character education because it effectively and profoundly touches the realm of the human heart.

4.8. The Strengths and Weaknesses of *Suluk* as an Alternative Method of Character Building

Through this study, the researchers found out what works and does not work about *suluk* as a way for students to build their character. The researchers obtained this information after extracting information from the key and supporting participants. Figure 8 is an Explorer Diagram that shows the strengths and weaknesses of *Suluk*.
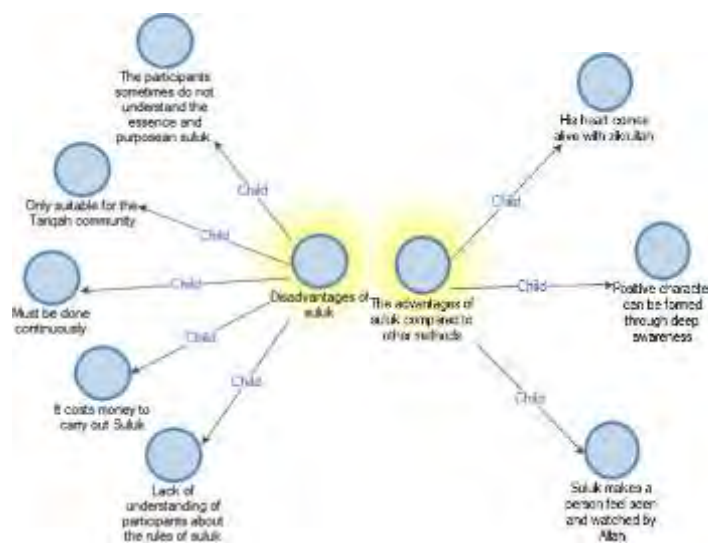

Figure 8. The Strengths and Weaknesses of *Suluk* as an Alternative Method of Character Building

Based on Figure 8, the participants agree that the *suluk* method significantly improves their morals, behaviour or religiosity because *suluk* can make the participants feel directly supervised by Allah in every behaviour (muraqabah). That results from the patience and profound responsibility of *Suluk*'s activities and discipline in reducing negative mental tendencies. The human soul, heart, and spirit are synchronized on the same frequency in a positive direction. However, like other models, *suluk* also has some weaknesses: [1] *suluk* is a method or model that belongs to the *thariqah* authorities, so not everyone can follow it. Only participants who have received talqin remembrance or have fulfilled the requirements and received permission from the Advisory Teacher (murshid) can participate. [2] Participants sometimes need help providing free time to leave all activities and routine work and prepare consumption costs as provisions for carrying out *Suluk*. [3] The *suluk* must also be carried out repeatedly, and the *Salik* must maintain worship during *suluk* in real life. Outside of *Suluk*, it takes struggle and sincerity if you want to have a significant impact on the participants.

5. Discussion

Based on the results of the analysis that the researchers have previously described , this study are relevant to Banks(2004), who says that multicultural education can help students understand and appreciate the perspectives and experiences of others, reduce prejudice and discrimination, and create an inclusive learning environment that embraces diversity. This relates to your research as it shows how education can be used to promote inter-ethnic understanding and respect. The results of this study also support the statement of Nucci and Narvaez (2014) that character education can contribute to the development of positive behavior and attitudes. This study also supports Lickona's (2004) statement that character education can help children develop positive behaviors and attitudes, including integrity, kindness, and wisdom.

Suluk as a method of non-formal education in the *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* has procedures, procedures, and manners that have been established by the Teacher Guide (Murshid) as the highest authority in the hierarchy in the *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. The traditions of *suluk* in the *Al-Mu'min thariqah* have similarities to *suluk* in the *Naqsabandiyah thariqah*, as revealed Rahmah's study (2012). The process includes getting ready physically and mentally, meeting the requirements, doing worship activities day and night, and continuing to do good works after the *suluk* program has been put into place. The preparation and requirements for *suluk* that the murshid teacher has set are crucial factors. They directly affect the quality of *riyadhah* (practice) and *mujahaddah* (seriousness) in carrying out *Suluk*. A murshid hopes that the *suluk* program will help students become more religious and moral. The murshid teacher is often analogized to a "doctor" who treats "heart disease," therefore a true murshid must have physical and spiritual knowledge originating from the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as inspiration obtained through facial expressions (opening of the sixth sense). According to Wirajaya & Sudardi (2020) that a murshid is a person who can show his students the right path, is a good person [devoted to piety], and knows *ma'rifat* (knowledge of knowing Allah). *Suluk* preparation for students practicing *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* can be grouped into two categories: mental preparation and physical preparation. This is in line with Maslahah's statement (2018) that "implicitly this *suluk* teaching teaches the importance of preparation for charity and worship before returning to God." Therefore, *suluk* requires careful preparation, both physically and spiritually.

According to Asari et al. (2021) *suluk* is a spiritual and physical training activity for a *Salik*. This is relevant to the *suluk* activities carried out by students practicing *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*. *Suluk* participants at night are guided to carry out the obligatory and sunnah worship, which consists of obligatory prayers in congregation at the mosque, reading the Holy Qur'an, reading blessings, performing ablutions, sleeping according to the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, waking up at night starting with the *hajat* prayer, midnight prayer, weaving *Suluk*, and pre-dawn meal. *Suluk* activities that *suluk* participants at night must carry out are fasting and performing the dawn, noon, and afternoon prayers at the mosque, which are complemented by the sunnah prayers of care before the dawn prayer, before the midday prayer, after the midday prayer, and before the midday prayer. After the dawn sunnah prayer in the morning, the *hizib* is read, and the number of blessings and *wirid* is increased. After dawn, the sunnah *syuruq* prayer and the sunnah *dhuha* prayer were said, along with the *wirid* and the prayer. During the day, you are required to read the Koran, followed by reciting *Shalawat Basya'irul Khairat* repeatedly.

Participants in the *suluk* program do so to purify their souls, get closer to Allah (taqarrub iallah), improve their hearts and morals, increase their worship, fortify their faith, and win Allah

SWT's love, adoration, and pleasure. In line with Maslahah studies (2018) which reveals that the purpose of *suluk* is "to change or shape one's character based on divine morals and ethics." After doing the *suluk* program for ten days repeatedly, the participants felt calmer, more disciplined, more excited about worship, more grateful, more honest, closer to Allah, more moral, and better able to control their passions. The results of this study are relevant to Abenante's (2017) This reveals that *suluk* can form good habits and discipline in everyone. The results of this study back up the results of a study that Sutatminingsih (2016) that "the practice of *suluk* is positively related to psychological happiness and all its aspects."

The religious characters obtained through the *suluk Thariqah Al-Mu'min* program are: a calm attitude, good morals, discipline in worship, gratitude, trust in Allah, honesty, respect for others, remembering death a lot, not loving the world excessively, feeling the longing for Allah Swt., and the Prophet Muhammad Saw, and worshiping with full awareness (not out of obligation, but out of love for Allah), which is relevant to the study of Jumriani et al. (2022) and Wisono & Khozin(2022). After following *suluk* more than once, the participants became very religious. They never miss obligatory prayers and always try to pray in congregation at the mosque. They are consistent to perform sunnah prayers, like sunnah fasting, are willing to spend money for social and religious needs and are eager to learn about Islam and spread it. The results of this study are relevant to Rahmah's studies (2012) that "the *suluk* tradition can be exegetically a means of forming personal and character as well as an ideal human figure in terms of behavior and attitude toward life." *Suluk* can make a deep impression on the participants' souls, which allows it to shape their religious character and increase the morale of the participants significantly. Therefore, *suluk* is very appropriate or relevant to be used as an alternative to building religious character. This study's findings align with research conducted by Maslahah (2018), which found that *suluk* can raise individual awareness in the process of carrying out religious teachings. As a result, it can be a solid motivation to practice religious teachings consistently in everyday life. Aside from being a means of improvement, *suluk* can also be used as a means of introspection and self-evaluation.

The *suluk* method significantly improves the morals, behavior, or religiosity of *suluk* participants in general because *suluk* can make its participants feel directly supervised by Allah in every behavior (muraqabah). However, *suluk* also has several weaknesses. First, *suluk* is a method or model that belongs to the *thariqah* authority, so not everyone can follow it. Only participants who have received talqin remembrance or have fulfilled the requirements and received permission from the Advisory Teacher (murshid) can participate. This is in line with Maslahah's (2018), that "people who practice *suluk* do not have to practice *thariqah*, but people who practice *suluk* can only do it through *thariqah*." Second, participants sometimes need help providing free time to leave all activities and routine work and must prepare consumption costs as provisions for carrying out *Suluk*. Third, the *suluk* program must also be carried out repeatedly, and *suluk* participants' (*Salik*) must maintain the worship carried out during *suluk* in real life outside of *Suluk*. *Suluk* will not be able to change students' behavior if they do not follow it with full awareness and sincerity.

In the context of multicultural education, the Mursyid, who holds the highest authority in the *Thariqah* organizational structure, can play a leading role in implanting the values of human degree equality in the eyes of God. Especially in the case of *Thariqah Al-Mu'min*, whose jamaah encompasses various ethnic groups, this can be an effective model for cultivating values and fostering a sense of interethnic fraternity. All this is done within the framework of belief and practice of religious commandments, showing that diversity does not hinder unity and solidarity.

This is synchronized with the principles of the Qur'an in Surah al-*Hujurat*, verse 13: "O people, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you with God is the most fearful of you. This principle affirms that the true value of a person is not determined by their race or ethnicity but by their level of fear. Thus, the *Mursyid* and the *Thariqah al-Mu'min jamaah* can be influential agents in promoting interethnic understanding and acceptance in the wider society.

6. Conclusion

The implementation of *suluk* to students who practice *Thariqah Al-Mu'min* is proven to help shape religious character. The religious characteristics created are peace of mind, discipline in worship, enthusiasm in prayer, gratitude, trust, honesty, understanding the purpose of life, feeling close to Allah, feeling more moral than before, and feeling stronger in controlling lust, respecting others, remembering death a lot, not loving the world excessively, longing for Allah Swt. and the Prophet Muhammad Saw. and being more sincere in worship.*Suluk* is very relevant to be used as an alternative method of forming religious character because it can give a deep impression on the human soul and spirit and significantly shape the religious character of the perpetrators. *Suluk* can also be used to improve one's introspection and self-evaluation abilities. *Suluk* can make the participants feel close to and watched over by God.

The religious character built through this method not only helps individuals in deepening their beliefs and fears but can also be an important capital in instilling a sense of interethnic fraternity. This brotherhood is built on the principles of Islamic teachings that emphasize the equality of degrees and value diversity. Furthermore, silk methods can be an effective tool in encouraging interethnic interaction and help in creating a harmonious and peaceful environment. With basic methods, the researchers can help communities to understand and appreciate diversity and, at the same time, promote unity and harmony among ethnic groups during such diversity.

The implication of this research emphasizes the urgency of using the *suluk* method in non-formal Islamic societies and formal Islamic education institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, boarding schools, or Islamic religious colleges because *suluk* can be used as an effective model in the formation of pious character for Muslim students in this community.

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Author Contribution Statement

The authors of this study contributed based on their areas of expertise. The main idea and the sense of urgency of writing are from the first author. The second author contributed to data analysis, interpretation, editing, and formatting. The third author helped by doing clerical and methodological checks, and the fourth helped by looking at the documents' grammar, methods, and structure to ensure they were correct.

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