Sufistication of Social Welfare Policies in Contemporary Indonesia: Recalibrating Policy Ethics through Tasawuf-based Values

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Abstract. *Indonesia's social welfare system is structured in a very technocratic manner, adhering to legalistic frameworks that emphasize efficiency at the cost of the nation's moral and spiritual values. This form of imbalance exacerbates governance failures, including rampant corruption, nepotism, and a decline in public trust, resulting in an ethical vacuum in the welfare policymaking process. This article presents Sufistication: a spiritually informed, void-filling framework that draws from Sufi teachings. This study, through principles of ihsan (spiritual excellence), adab (ethical comportment), and tazkiyah (inner purification), proposes an alternative model of welfare governance incorporating moral consciousness. Through conceptual analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis, this article examines policy documents, public debates, and community initiatives rooted in Sufism to show how Sufistication reinterpret welfare governance. The analysis demonstrates the ability to transcend purely instrumental rationality, granting space for spiritual intentionality and moral reflexivity, thereby recalibrating policy intent to the higher purposes of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah). Sufistication relocates welfare within the framework of an ethnically constructive paradigm, thus offering responsive policy-making that is effective and infused with compassion, humanitarian.*

Keywords: *Sufistication, Welfare Governance, Tasawuf Value, Ethical Paradigm, Social Walfare.*

Abstrak. *Sistem kesejahteraan sosial di Indonesia selama ini banyak dibentuk oleh model teknokratis dan prosedural yang menekankan efisiensi serta legalitas, namun kerap mengabaikan fondasi etis dan spiritual bangsa. Ketimpangan ini telah memicu kegagalan tata kelola, seperti korupsi, patronase birokratis, dan menurunnya kepercayaan publik, sehingga tercipta kekosongan etika dalam perumusan kebijakan kesejahteraan. Artikel ini memperkenalkan konsep Sufistikasi—sebuah kerangka spiritual yang terinspirasi dari ajaran tasawuf—untuk menjawab kekosongan tersebut. Dengan mengacu pada prinsip ihsan (kesempurnaan spiritual), adab (perilaku etis), dan tazkiyah (penyucian batin), studi ini mengajukan model alternatif yang mengintegrasikan kesadaran moral dalam tata kelola kesejahteraan. Melalui analisis konseptual dan Critical Discourse Analysis, artikel ini menelaah teks kebijakan, wacana publik, dan inisiatif sosial berbasis sufistik untuk menunjukkan bagaimana Sufistikasi dapat mengarahkan kembali tata kelola kesejahteraan. Temuan penelitian menegaskan potensi konsep ini dalam menggantikan rasionalitas instrumental dengan intensionalitas spiritual dan refleksivitas moral, sehingga kebijakan selaras dengan maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (tujuan-tujuan luhur syariat Islam). Dengan menempatkan kesejahteraan dalam paradigma yang berakar pada budaya sekaligus transformatif secara etis, Sufistikasi menawarkan jalan menuju kebijakan yang tidak hanya efisien, tetapi juga manusiawi, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan.*

Kata Kunci: *Sufistikasi, Tata Kelola Kesejahteraan, Nilai-Nilai Tasawuf, Paradigma Etis, Kesejahteraan Sosial.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's social welfare landscape is shaped by a paradoxical tension: on the one hand, technocratic and instrumentalist policy frameworks that privilege efficiency, legality, and quantifiable outputs; on the other, a deeply spiritual and culturally embedded ethos that defines the lived realities of its people. Over the past two decades, significant advances have been made in institutionalizing welfare mechanisms—ranging from the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) to the national health insurance system (BPJS Kesehatan). Yet these initiatives remain largely bound by a technocratic rationality that measures success through numbers—beneficiary counts, budget disbursements, and fiscal indicators—while neglecting the substantive dimensions of ethical governance and spiritual well-being (Dharma, 2024; Midgley, 1995).

This disjunction is striking in a nation whose constitutional identity as a welfare state is enshrined in Article 34 of the 1945 Constitution and elaborated in Law No. 11/2009 on Social Welfare. In practice, however, the operationalization of welfare policies often sidelines the moral and cultural fabric of Indonesian society. The result has been an ethical vacuum: welfare governance that is procedurally robust yet spiritually hollow. The recurring misappropriation of social assistance funds—most notably during the COVID-19 pandemic—as well as manipulation of PKH allocations are not merely administrative failures but symptoms of deeper moral hazards within bureaucratic structures (Lukito et al., 2025; Putra, 2022). Even the most sophisticated institutional safeguards cannot substitute for the intrinsic moral compass of governance actors. Without an ethical foundation, transparency mechanisms risk becoming instruments of exploitation rather than integrity (Banerjee et al., 2013; Dimyati, 2021).

Existing discourses on Islamic Social Welfare in Indonesia have long centered on Zakat, Infaq, and Sadaqah (ZIS). These mechanisms have indeed addressed poverty and economic inequality, but their reach remains transactional, largely confined to resource redistribution (Widiastuti, 2022). Framed within fiqh-based compliance, ZIS policies emphasize legality and ritual correctness, yet insufficiently engage with the deeper spiritual-ethical resources of tasawuf—inner purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), moral excellence (*ihsan*), and compassionate service (rahmah) (Canda & Furman, 2010; Zulkifli, 2013). Consequently, while technically sound, such welfare models lack the ethical-substantive grounding required for sustainable and humane development (Hermansen, 2013; Nasr, 2007).

This neglect of tasawuf has critical consequences. Welfare policies designed through technocratic logics often fail to resonate with communities whose aspirations of well-being extend beyond material sufficiency toward spiritual contentment and ethical harmony (Olken, 2006). Scandals of corruption and bureaucratic clientelism, far from isolated cases, illustrate the erosion of what might be called "ethical-substantive rationality." What is missing is not another policy instrument but a framework that can nurture integrity from within, grounding welfare governance in values that foster sincerity, humility, and moral accountability.

To address this conceptual and practical lacuna, this study introduces the paradigm of Sufistication. Unlike conventional Islamization frameworks that emphasize external compliance, Sufistication is envisioned as the systematic integration of tasawuf-based values—*ihsan* (spiritual excellence), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *adab* (ethical comportment), and tazkiyah (self-purification)—into the design and implementation of welfare policies. Its core premise is that ethical integrity in governance cannot be secured solely by procedural safeguards or external regulation; it requires the internalization of ethical consciousness by policymakers, implementers, and beneficiaries alike (Becker, 2017; Hikmat, 2022).

Sufistication is not a cultural ornament or rhetorical device but a profound epistemological shift: from perceiving welfare governance as a mechanistic process of redistribution to conceiving it as an ethical and spiritual endeavor that safeguards human dignity, nurtures compassion, and fosters social trust. It re-centers welfare policies on the spiritual-ethical principles of tasawuf, thereby bridging the divide between technocratic efficiency and ethical-substantive rationality. In

doing so, it seeks to reorient welfare governance toward an *ihsan*-oriented ethos at both individual and systemic levels.

The structure of this article reflects these aims. Following this introduction, the Literature Review critically examines theoretical perspectives on welfare policy, highlighting the limitations of Western welfare regime models (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Midgley, 1995) and the inadequacy of ZIS-centric paradigms in Indonesia. It then turns to the emerging discourse on Sufi Social Work, situating tasawuf as a transformative resource for reimagining welfare governance. The Methodology outlines the dual design of conceptual inquiry and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), applied to policy texts, governance failures, and Sufi social practices. The findings and discussion are presented in four parts: (1) analysis of governance failures and ethical vacuums in Indonesian welfare policies; (2) articulation of Sufistication as a framework for ethical recalibration; (3) construction of a Sufi Social Policy Model for the Indonesian context; and (4) implications and challenges for integrating Sufistication into governance systems. Finally, the Conclusion synthesizes key arguments, theoretical contributions, and policy recommendations, underscoring the urgency of embedding tasawuf-based ethics into Indonesia's welfare governance.

Through this conceptual intervention, the article seeks to enrich scholarly and policy discourses by positioning Sufistication not simply as an Islamic alternative but as a universal ethical paradigm. It argues that Indonesia, with its rich Sufi heritage and plural religious culture, is uniquely poised to lead in developing welfare policies that are not only economically efficient but also ethically transformative and spiritually grounded—policies that resonate with the lived realities and moral aspirations of its people.

2.   METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a dual design, combining conceptual inquiry and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The dual strategy was chosen to ensure that the research not only develops a new ethical framework—Sufistication—but also critically examines the discourse of social welfare policy in Indonesia. Data were drawn from three sources: official policy documents, reports on governance failures, and the social practices of Sufi orders. Analysis was carried out by mapping core Sufi ethical values such as *ihsan*, *ikhlas*, *adab*, *tawadhuʿ*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and then applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework, which dissects policy discourse at the textual, discursive, and socio-cultural levels. To maintain rigor, the study employs data triangulation, both deductive and inductive coding, and continuous researcher reflexivity. The entire process is conducted with ethical sensitivity, ensuring transparency of sources and confidentiality of field-based materials. Through this methodology, the study aims to achieve two outcomes: first, a critical diagnosis of ethical vacuums within social welfare discourse; and second, the conceptual construction of Sufistication as a value-based framework for a more humane and sustainable welfare governance.

Table 2.1 Methodological Framework of the Study

Component	Description
Research Design	Qualitative with two approaches: (1) **Conceptual inquiry** → to construct the *Sufistication* paradigm grounded in Sufi values. (2) **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** → to uncover ethical logics, power relations, and ideological underpinnings in welfare discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).
Research Procedures	1) **Data collection:** Policy documents (Law No. 11/2009, PKH, BPJS). - Governance failure reports (COVID-19 relief scandal, PKH manipulation). Sufi social practices (TQN Suryalaya, Idrisiyyah). 2) **Data analysis:** a. Mapping Sufi ethical constructs (*ihsan, ikhlas, adab, tawadhuʿ, tazkiyah al-nafs, maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*). b. Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA: micro (text), meso (discursive practice), macro (socio-cultural practice).
Data Sources	**Primary:** Legal and policy documents. **Secondary:** Academic studies, investigative reports, scholarly articles. **Field-based:** Case studies and institutional documents from Sufi orders in Indonesia.
Research Rigor	Data triangulation across sources. Deductive coding (based on Sufi ethics) and inductive coding (emerging patterns). - Researcher reflexivity to minimize bias.
Ethical Considerations	Transparency of sources, confidentiality for field data, and clear distinction between empirical observations and normative critique.
Expected Outcomes	**Critical diagnosis:** Revealing ethical vacuums and technocratic biases in welfare policy discourse. **Conceptual construction:** Offering *Sufistication* as a new ethical paradigm for humane, inclusive, and sustainable welfare governance.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Governance Failures and Ethical Gaps in Indonesia's Welfare Policies

Even with Indonesia having a welfare governance system with extensive legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms, it still faces certain ethical and structural weaknesses. The welfare programs, such as Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) and BPJS Kesehatan, showcase advanced administrative designs. However, these systems face rampant corruption, political patronage, and a moral void which strips them of their effectiveness as tools of social justice. This part analyzes these inadequacies and maintains that the crisis is not only procedural but, more importantly, ethical in nature. This is a shift from technocratic rationalization towards ethical-substantive governance.

Consider for instance the shocking case of the COVID-19 social assistance scandal, where Juliari Batubara, the Social Affairs Minister, was arrested in 2020 for embezzling funds set aside for vulnerable citizens during the pandemic. It is not the only case of its kind, as it also revealed a deeper and systematic form of clientelism and elite capture that has for years undermined welfare distribution. Welfare became political currency as programs became available only to individuals who pledged loyalty to the ruling aides rather than through a systematic, transparent, and needs-based process. (Gaduh et al., 2023). This entrenched clientelism erodes public trust and distorts the redistributive logic of welfare interventions.

The damaging effects of corruption have been confirmed by empirical studies, as it lowers the public's perception of services provided. Perceived corrupt intent implementation of welfare programs lowers citizen's welfare trust by more than 25% regardless of the aid provided (J-PAL, 2022). This shows that the tangible result does not matter here. Rather, public trust is anchored to how ethical the actions were taken. In these regards, policies do not fail because of poor design, but rather lack of moral alignment.

These ethical failures are compounded by Indonesia's political economy. Welfare governance is often captured by a network of patronage systems that are rife with vote-buying, nepotism, and rent-seeking. Local elites undermine the principle of universality by tampering with beneficiary lists for electoral advantage (Mietzner, 2018). These dynamics show the social protection systems are malleable to political manipulation resulting in alternative access systems that are politically connected and strategically exclude the disadvantaged.

From a welfare perspective, Indonesia implements poverty alleviation programs using poverty targeting indices, eligibility criteria, and digital auditing, which is comparatively advanced. Nonetheless, this technocratic sophistication reveals a moral gap. Social welfare laws and guidelines 11/2009 and PKH set forth detailed operational frameworks, funding, and strict financial oversight, yet remain devoid of ethics, sincerity (*ikhlas*), and moral responsibility. Welfare becomes purely logistically orchestrated and devoid of empathy, and is reduced to metrics void of moral compass.

Such rational void reveals a substantive gap of moral reasoning more prominently in the behavior of bureaucrats. During election periods, civil servants (aparatur sipil negara, ASN) tend to be biased and partisan as welfare programs drive populist agendas. The bureaucratic system overly emphasizes adherence to policy at the expense of ethical reasoning, which, in the spirit of Max Weber, leads to the "value-rational disenchantment" of public service (Weber, 1978). In the absence of ethical grounding, a system—no matter how well designed—suffers from the risks of exploitation and disconnection.

The problems that arise are both systematic and sociological. Distrust grows, and confidence turns into cynicism when welfare is viewed as a political tool rather than a public right. As program resources are diverted to political bureaucrats, operational inefficiency increases, resulting in the most marginalized populations being underserved. The gravest harm is inflicted by elite capture diverting resources to powerful networks, which fuels inequality and thwarts attempts at redistributive equity. Welfare systems create and deepen the inequalities that they are intended to resolve. This creates a feedback

loop of self-reinforcing dynamics, perpetually compounding the systemic inequality experienced.

The deeper ethical reflection stems from the Sufi worldview and reveals that the institutional frameworks of policy actors is an ineffective disposition. Bureaucratic practices lack the virtues of Sufi ethics such as *ihsan* (excellence), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *tawadhuʿ* (humility). Welfare becomes a site of instrumental calculation rather than a vocation of service due to the absence of these dimensions. Policy actors are rule compliant but morally disengaged which leads to ethical anaesthesia in which legal frameworks take the place of moral foundations.

To summarize, Indonesia's welfare policies exemplify a paradox devoid of spirit—ethically empty yet functionally complete. Blunders in governance do not arise only from bad-organizational architecture; they arise from a moral infrastructure vacuum. Fixing this imbalance requires more than policies or governance frameworks; it requires a radical reimagining of the purpose and practice of governance. The model of Sufistication, proposed in this study, fills this vacuum and serves welfare governance devoid of sincerity, humility, and ethical excellence.

3.2 Sufistication as a Framework of Ethical Recalibration

As discussed in the previous section, Indonesia's relentless welfare shortcomings are not the outcome of administrative sloppiness or procedural failures; they are deeper, a symptom of a moral void at the core of policy practice. To fill this gap, we introduce Sufistication, a theoretical framework of ethical recalibration based in Sufi inner sciences, as a socially transformative framework in welfare policy design and implementation. Sufistication demands a shift from the technocratic rationalization to ethical governance from within the organization, grounded in spiritual consciousness, moral intention, and service to the public good. It shifts the policy compliance definition of integrity as a loss of freedom.

Where dominant policy frameworks rely on external control mechanisms—auditing protocols, budgetary oversight, performance quotas—Sufistication insists on ethical-substantive rationality (Hermansen, 2013), where the source of accountability stems not only from regulations but from the actor's moral compass. This distinction is more than theoretical: it reflects a growing consensus in public ethics literature that externally imposed governance measures are insufficient without the presence of internalized moral convictions (Becker, 2017; Olken, 2006). In the Indonesian context, where bureaucratic conduct is too often shaped by transactional interests or political expediency, the need for an inner moral revolution is both urgent and overdue.

At the center of Sufistication is the concept of iḥsān, the Qur'anic teaching of discharging obligations "as if seeing God" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī). When translated into governance, iḥsān policy encourages policy actors to be moved by excellence beyond the output of procedures to intention and spiritual bearing. Program planners motivated by iḥsān do not seek to merely achieve targets; they strive to preserve human dignity, avert unintended harms, and provide thoughtful policies. Iḥsān commands preservice personnel to do more than meet service quota; they are to exercise presence and genuine attentiveness.

This inner compass reflects *adab*, which encompasses humbleness, discipline, and respect. It includes ethics and etiquette. In the *adab* of bureaucracy, workplace culture changes from top-down disdain to reciprocal responsibility. *Adab* fosters understanding and ethical conversations across cultures and fields. It requires the state to treat citizens with respect, focusing on the human dimension instead of treating them as mere "cases" devoid of humanity. This form of bureaucratic *adab* is particularly important in post-authoritarian countries such as Indonesia, where the state-citizen relationship is under strain due to a history of authoritarian governance and enduring coercive governance frameworks alongside depersonalized systems. Ethics-based administration research shows that in social and civic service delivery, culturally rooted systems and a culture of trust outperform bureaucratic systems and cultures of suspicion. (Ali, 2015; Dwiyanto, 2011).

Aside from dealing with personal or social ethics, Sufistication is teleological in nature through the incorporation of *maqāṣid al-*

sharīʿah—meaning the higher objectives of Islamic moral law. This aspect makes sure that social welfare policy is not only about its materialist benefits or is just a welfare-state mechanism but is concerned with genuine human thriving. The classical five maqāṣid— ḥifẓ al-dīn (preservation of religion), ḥifẓ al-nafs (life), ḥifẓ al-ʿaql (intellect), ḥifẓ al-ʿirdh (dignity), ḥifẓ al-māl (wealth)—serve as a normative framework for the underlying spiritual-ethical welfare rationale. For example, policy that surveils or humiliates the poor, while adhering to policy form standards, is a violation of ḥifẓ al-ʿirdh. Cash transfer programs which do not support mental well-being are in breach of ḥifẓ al-nafs. Thus, maqāṣid facilitate a shift from economic narrowly defined efficiency to a wider moral construction.

Sufistication is not solely an examination of secularism or technocracy. It is an integrated reinterpretation of political philosophy that shows how institutional frameworks can integrate spiritual purpose without descending into theocracy or moralism. This form of and redefinition is within the bounds of the Sufi-influenced philanthropic networks in Pakistan (under Chishtiyya lineages), the ethical brotherhoods of Ottoman Turkey (Akhī tradition), and certain holistic spiritual welfare models in Egypt, such SEKEM. These examples are a testament to the possibility of infusing ethical-spiritual dimensions into welfare state governance, while still retaining the effectiveness of modern policies. (Hermansen, 2013; Nasr, 2007).

In essence, Sufistication reframes social welfare policy not merely as an exercise in surface statistical coverage, but as an sacred trust (amānah). With Sufism comes the idea that governance integrity does not come from stricter rules, but an ethical awakening. Iḥsān is the moral compass that embodies sincerity in design and action. *Adab* reshapes institutional culture towards respect and compassion. *Maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* grounds policy direction in moral universality. These elements collectively articulate a cohesive paradigm of internal ethical governance, not only addressing Indonesia's policy dilemmas, but also the global acute need for more spiritual depth in public ethics.

This next section seeks to explain how these theoretical tenets are implemented into a visual framework of Sufi Social Policy, thereby providing actionable models for ethical governance innovation in the Indonesian context.

3.3 Building a Sufi Social Policy Model for Indonesia

In this part, we will develop the Sufistication framework further into an operational policy model designed for the Indonesian welfare system. While prior sections have explained the Sufi Social Work principles, this section aims to present a design that embodies Sufist social ethics into suitable framework for governance. The Sufi Social Policy Model suggests three seminal components which forms a cohesive triangular framework: translating ethical values into policy mechanisms, social governance through social-based tarekat umbrella, authentic ethical-spiritual recalibration of ethics void of performative religiosity.

The initial premise which this model is built on, is that spiritual ethics do not exist in the realm of ideals, otherworldly or reserved for the private sphere of life, ritual devotion, or individualistic expressions. Instead, these ideals can ground systems of governance that dictate the design, implementation, as well as the evaluation of public policies. The Sufist ethical principles, or lexicon can be taken these values: *ikhlas* (sincerity), *ihsan* (excellence in conduct), *adab* (relational ethics), *tawadhuʿ* (humility), and *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification).

As an example, ethical self-governance mechanisms can be incorporated into bureaucratic processes through spiritual interventions like reflection sessions centered on dhikr or ethical briefings motivated by tazkiyah before policy meetings. These cannot be dismissed as mere formal embellishments. They are genuine attempts aimed at fostering humility and sincerity among policy-makers. Evaluation and appraisal systems can be expanded to include peer and beneficiary reviews that evaluate relations, attitudinal comportment to colleagues, and kindness alongside the sociocratic productivity metrics. Hence, *adab* becomes not only a by-product of bureaucratic practice, it can also be integrated

as a measurable concept. Moreover, policy audits can also include "ethical integrity metrics," which are Sufi-compliant, and therefore surpass simple compliance checking into the assessment of whether programs, including their implementation and operational phases, are executed in accordance with spiritual and moral responsibilities. This is a continuing line of reasoning described in the public ethics literature concerning "virtue-based audit frameworks" for public administration. (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003; Ebrahim, 2020).

Importantly, the maqāṣid al sharī'ah provides the telos of these mechanisms, making sure welfare policy does not get reduced to mere bureaucratic efficiency or narrow fiscal equilibriums. A welfare policy shaped within maqāṣid al sharī'ah would give greater importance to the spiritual wellness of the people (hifz al-dīn), humane dignity (hifz al-'irdh), and social equity (hifz al-māl) not as peripheral compliments, but as core design principles. Enabling the state to transcend provisioning to ethical stewardship of the people is the goal of the spiritually anchored social contract framework emerging within contemporary Islamic social theory. (Kamali, 2019; Nasr, 2007).

Drawing from the lived praxis of the Sufi Indonesian, the second pillar of the model is concerned with the Sufi Indonesian TQN Suryalaya and Tarekat Idrisiyyah, who have for decades practiced socio-economic engagement alongside their spiritual functions. They function as self-regulating ethics-based welfare and socio-economics systems. Their self-initiated programs such as the spiritual rehabilitation programs, Pondok Inabah, and other community economic cooperatives show the process of tazkiyah through self-improvement vis-a-vis mutual welfare. These communities model what scholars have termed "organic social governance." (Tucker, 2018), in which spiritual authority is directly linked to community care and distributive ethics. Urban Sufi networks, meanwhile, demonstrate the relevance of Sufi social entrepreneurship, offering adaptive models of ethical governance amid the complexities of modern urban life (Dickson & Woodward, 2016).

From a policy design standpoint, these examples suggest a clear pathway: establish pilot initiatives in collaboration with existing tarekat hubs—whether rural pesantren or urban Sufi associations—and use them as "laboratories" for Sufi-infused governance models. This allows for iterative learning and context-specific refinement before institutional scaling. Such piloting aligns with recent advocacy for community-based policy experimentation in social innovation frameworks (Mulgan et al., 2017).

However, the model warns us against performative religious devotion, which lacks substantive ethical governance. Compared to tokenistic Islamization efforts—where policy is adorned with religious vocabulary or overt symbolic compliance—Sufistication focuses on the need for inner ethical change. The focus is not on the volume of religious mention within state discourse, but whether policy actors appreciate the ethical telos of their roles. As such, the model measures success with the presence of diminished but heightened beneficiary dignity, trust and regard in the citizen-state relationship, and ethical congruence within the dominant culture of the institutions.

Where the use of religion for political purposes tends to dominate in governance, this differentiation becomes crucial. (Peletz, 2020). By embedding ethical-spiritual consciousness into the architecture of public institutions, the Sufi Social Policy Model aims to cultivate governance actors who embody *ikhlas*, rather than simply perform piety for political gain.

The model provides an Indonesian welfare policy reassessment both conceptually and practically by moving from a disunited and compliance-based system to a more ethically aligned, spiritually infused system. It provides not only institutional innovation but also moral innovation, indicating that welfare governance in Indonesia may need to innovatively fuse inner moral change with outer structural change.

This section will illustrate the described integration with an operational proposal—the Sufi Social Work Framework (SSWF)—and map its elements at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of welfare engagement. This is where the

concepts of Sufistication will be fully expressed in a multiphase praxis model.

3.4 Strategic Implications and Challenges of Implementing Sufistication

The Sufi Social Policy Model, based on ethics of Sufistication, presents both imaginative and realistic recalibrations of Indonesia's welfare governance system. Moving from a conceptual approach to an institutional framework involves a multi-layered web of strategic options and challenges concerning actualization. Both these aspects must be examined to anchor Sufistication not as a whimsical dream but as a practical plan calling for ethics-centered change in the administration of public affairs.

From the promise perspective, the greatest potential lies in ethical governance reform. Integrating key Sufi concepts such as *ihsan* (excellence), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *adab* (ethical behavior) into policies and state governance rejuvenates the sultanic state ethos and breathes moral life into the engines of state machinery, as it infuses legitimacy. Amid widespread public disillusionment and fatigue from technocratic governance, the ethical foundation reinforces a framework of governance and builds confidence because it aligns moral intention with formal procedures. (Ali & Zain, 2021; Hummel, 2008). As a result, Indonesia's bureaucratic culture is continually burdened with obligations trying to ensure moral responsiveness, compassion, and ethically rational bureaucratic culture. In turn, Sufistication is a form of ethical response to institutional inertia.

The focusing of moral leadership is here also refined. By Sufi valued leadership, leaders with *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification), and humility with spiritual accountability, are able to better angle and reshape the welfare state's mind. Such leaders transform the welfare state from a transactional Provisions provider to an ethical servant. Thus, leadership is redefined beyond charisma or populist performance and refined to rooted in internal spiritual discipline. Ethical leadership under this frame is ontological, and is a nature of change on how leaders transform, perceive power, claim

responsibility and public duty. (Gumusluoglu et al., 2019).

These transformative potentials are further strengthened by their cultural resonance. In Indonesia, the social landscape, especially in Java, parts of Sumatra, and Sulawesi, has long been rooted in Sufi traditions. The spiritual disposition of the people makes them amenable to values like *ikhlas* and *tawadhu'*, which makes it easier to infuse Sufi ethics into the culture of governance. Sufistication adapts to the lived epistemology of Islam in Indonesia, unlike Western models of virtue ethics. As such, ethical policies can manifest not as top-down mandates, but as the natural result of the collective ethos.

In addition, the need for institutional change is becoming more apparent. Agencies like KEMITRAAN (Partnership for Governance Reform) have consistently advocated for integrity-based governance, opening space for multisectoral innovation. Their collaborative model—bringing together civil society, government, and academic stakeholders—parallels the collaborative spirit inherent in Sufistication, making integration practically feasible.

However, translating this ethical framework into policy architecture confronts considerable obstacles. Institutional resistance is perhaps the most persistent. Bureaucracies, especially those entrenched in performance metrics and compliance culture, may dismiss Sufistication as ideologically foreign or operationally irrelevant. The spiritual and ethical dimensions are often perceived as 'soft'—unquantifiable, non-prioritizable, and incompatible with outcome-based governance (Ebrahim, 2010). This resistance reflects a broader global tension between moral intuition and managerial rationality in policy work (Brodkin, 2011).

Another critical challenge lies in measuring the intangible. Spiritual and ethical values such as sincerity or humility resist standardization and quantification. While instruments like the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) or FICA exist, they operate predominantly at the individual level and are poorly suited for assessing institutional culture or policy impact (Daaleman & Frey, 2004).

Moreover, scholars have cautioned against overextending such metrics into organizational evaluations, noting that spiritual states are contextually situated, deeply subjective, and culturally mediated (Moberg, 2010; Oman & Thoresen, 2002). Developing valid indicators of ethical governance that remain faithful to the spirit of Sufism remains a complex methodological frontier.

Perhaps most concerning is the risk of spiritual commodification. Without deep institutional integration, there is a danger that Sufi concepts become symbolic ornaments—deployed in speeches, logos, or token rituals—without effecting moral change. This phenomenon, what Adis-Batur (2021) terms "spiritual ornamentation," transforms profound ethical values into branding tools, undermining the authenticity of reform. In such cases, the vocabulary of Sufistication may be co-opted by the very institutional logic it seeks to reform.

To address these tensions, three strategic pathways are proposed. First, academic advocacy must play a catalytic role. Interdisciplinary collaborations across social work, Islamic ethics, and public administration can generate compelling theoretical foundations and empirical evidence to legitimize Sufistication as a rigorous policy paradigm. Journal publications, policy briefs, and capacity-building initiatives targeting state officials can help translate spiritual concepts into intelligible governance terms.

Second, systematic pilot programs are crucial. The application of the Sufi Social Policy Model in settings such as TQN pesantren or urban Sufi networks, which already embed spiritual ethics into social practice, serves as operational testbeds. These pilots can evaluate performance through *adab*, ethical audits, and dignity-based trust participatory evaluation frameworks. The outcomes from such contexts would provide practical understanding regarding the Sufi social model's feasibility, scalability, and adaptability.

Third, multi-stakeholder governance models facilitate shared ownership. Policymakers, academic researchers, tarekat leaders, and civil society can come together in strategic forums and collaboratively design and monitor ethical governance mechanisms. With this methodology, some legitimacy gaps and cross-sectoral accountability can be addressed.

In analytical terms, the strategic implementation of Sufistication demands a synthesis of symbolic transformation and institutional pragmatism. Ethical intentions must be anchored in operational mechanisms, supported by champions of moral leadership who are both spiritually grounded and administratively literate. The path to policy transformation is neither immediate nor linear; it requires persistent symbolic articulation, iterative piloting, and inclusive deliberation.

Ultimately, the promise of Sufistication lies in its capacity to elevate welfare governance from managerial adequacy to ethical excellence. It offers not just a model, but a moral compass—reorienting public institutions toward social justice, inner integrity, and the common good. Whether that promise is fulfilled will depend on our collective ability to hold space for ethical imagination while attending seriously to the politics and pragmatics of reform.

Table 3.1 Strategic Mapping of Sufistication Implementation in Indonesia's Social Policy Context

Dimension	Strategic Opportunities	Key Implementation Challenges	Proposed Strategic Responses
Governance Reform	• Ethical governance renewal • Institutional trust-building • Alignment with Islamic values	• Bureaucratic resistance • Prioritization of numeric outputs over ethical inputs	• Academic policy advocacy through research-based policy briefs • Training for public officials on ethical policy
Leadership Development	• Emergence of morally accountable leadership • Internalization of spiritual discipline	• Difficulty in measuring sincerity, humility, and ethical motivation	• Implementation of *adab*-based leadership assessment tools • Pilot programs in spiritually grounded institutions
Cultural Resonance	• Sufi tradition embedded in Indonesian society • Shared moral vocabulary between policy and populace	• Risk of tokenistic or symbolic use of Sufi language in bureaucratic routines	• Co-governance with Sufi institutions and civil society • Community validation mechanisms for authenticity
Measurement Systems	• Growing global literature on spiritual metrics • Technological tools for value-based assessments	• Lack of institutional-level spiritual evaluation tools • Limited frameworks for intangible policy outcomes	• Development of hybrid indicators combining spiritual well-being and governance performance • Participatory monitoring systems

| Multi-Stakeholder Support | • Existence of reform platforms (e.g., KEMITRAAN)
 • Interest in integrative, collaborative governance models | • Fragmentation among policy actors
 • Limited inclusion of spiritual leaders in formal policymaking | • Strategic alliances with Sufi networks and think tanks
 • Institutionalization of interfaith and ethical policy councils |

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to address the ethical dissonance within Indonesia's welfare governance by asking whether the integration of tasawuf-based values could provide a corrective paradigm to the prevailing technocratic model. At its core, the research sought to construct and articulate the framework of Sufistication—a spiritually grounded and ethically reoriented approach to public policy.

The findings demonstrate that while Indonesia's welfare system is institutionally robust, its reliance on procedural efficiency and managerial rationality has produced policies that are structurally sophisticated yet ethically hollow. By drawing on Sufi ethical constructs such as *ihsan* (spiritual excellence), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *adab* (ethical comportment), and *tawadhuʿ* (humility), the concept of Sufistication reimagines governance as a moral vocation rather than a purely administrative task. This reorientation challenges both secular managerialism and juridical Islamization, offering instead a third epistemic pathway—one that embeds spiritual intentionality and moral consciousness into the very fabric of welfare governance.

The interpretation advanced here positions Sufistication as more than a philosophical abstraction; it is an applied normative framework that engages the motivations, mechanisms, and outcomes of policy practice. It reframes welfare governance not as a question of compliance, distribution, or an ethical concern of stewardship ʿubūdiyyah towards citizens and the Divine. The study validates the Sufi traditions of experiential knowledge and communal praxis, thereby situating Sufism as an applied moral formation science relevant to policy.

From these insights emerge several important implications. Practically, the study suggests the systematic integration of Sufi ethics into civil service training, leadership development, and bureaucratic culture. Institutionally, it recommends partnerships between state actors, Sufi institutions, and Islamic universities to create interdisciplinary hubs that can generate ethical assessment tools and policy guidelines. Conceptually, it proposes broadening welfare indicators beyond material sufficiency to include measures of spiritual well-being, communal harmony, and moral integrity. These implications underline the potential of Sufistication to transform welfare policy into a more humane, inclusive, and spiritually resonant system.

Nonetheless, the research is not without limitations. Its conceptual nature means that the framework has not yet been empirically tested across diverse institutional contexts. The measurement of intangible values such as sincerity or humility also poses methodological challenges, raising questions about how spiritual ethics can be operationalized without reductionism. These limitations highlight the need for validation that is grounded in real-world data and the development of new methods.

Thus, we propose ethnographic studies on the welfare activities of Sufi-led movements, like those of TQN Suryalaya or the Idrisiyyah order, to analyze the practical application of Sufi ethics in governance. Comparative studies in other Muslim-majority societies may further explore the scope of adaptability of Sufistication. Research on digital Sufism may address its impact on public virtue in an age of pervasive digital communication. Also, the creation of culturally attuned frameworks for ethical governance evaluation presents an unexplored scholarly in the ethical governance performance innovation.

As a finishing remark, this study emphasizes the fact that Indonesia's welfare governance stagnation cannot be overcome with a purely technocratic approach. It requires a systemic, radical, and spiritually deep reset that directs ethical willpower to public institutions and their leaders. Sufistication, as presented in this proposal, serves as an appropriate and contextualized paradigm for this kind of change, departing from procedural reform and advancing toward ontological renewal. Under the guidance of spiritual ethics,

governance as an administration functions and is meant to serve as the moral and spiritual embodiment of the nation.

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