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## Domestic Moral Agency among Elderly Learners through Al-Muhasibi's Practical Sufism

**Yogi Prana Izza**

([zherifzizi@gmail.com](mailto:zherifzizi@gmail.com))

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri

**Nur Fadhilah**

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri

([fadhil4nur123@gmail.com](mailto:fadhil4nur123@gmail.com))

**Tata Ilmi Ma'una**

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri

([maunailmitata01@gmail.com](mailto:maunailmitata01@gmail.com))

**Intan Nur Maulida**

([Intatan778@gmail.com](mailto:Intatan778@gmail.com))

Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sunan Giri

**Ziaulrahman Mushkalamzai**

([mashkalamzai@gmail.com](mailto:mashkalamzai@gmail.com))

Afghan Islamic International University

### *Article History*

Submitted: 19-12-2025; Reviewed: 26-05-2026; Approved: 29-05-2026

URL: <http://e-journal.uingusdur.ac.id/index.php/jousip/article/view/15156>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28918/jousip15156>

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### **Abstract**

*Amid increasing concerns over moral degradation within contemporary Muslim families, the educational role of elderly Muslims in transmitting Islamic moral values through everyday domestic life has received limited scholarly attention. Therefore, this study aims to explore how elderly learners internalize the ethical teachings of Haris al-Muhasibi's Risalah al-Mustarsyidin and transform them into forms of domestic moral agency within Muslim families. Employing a qualitative approach with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), this research involved elderly participants from the Saturday Morning Islamic Study (KISM), a non-formal Islamic learning community in East Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field notes. The findings reveal that practical Sufism operates as a form of domestic moral pedagogy through role modelling, worship supervision, peer mentoring, cultural da'wab, and ethical communication that collectively strengthen family religiosity and intergenerational moral transmission. Rather than functioning solely as personal spiritual discipline, muhasabah is interpreted as a pedagogical practice shaping everyday interpersonal ethics within the household. The study further identifies elderly learners as "micro-mursyid" figures who exercise informal religious authority by transmitting Islamic values through ordinary family interactions. These findings contribute to contemporary discussions of practical Sufism by*

*extending its significance beyond individual spirituality toward domestic moral agency and informal Islamic education in contemporary Muslim society.*

**Keywords:** *Practical Sufism; Domestic Moral Pedagogy; Elderly Learners; Informal Islamic Education.*

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Muslim families increasingly face challenges in preserving religious values amid rapid social change, technological disruption, and weakening intergenerational interaction. These transformations have reduced opportunities for everyday moral transmission within the family, making informal Islamic education increasingly important as a space where religious values are cultivated through daily relationships rather than formal instruction alone. Despite these challenges, elderly family members remain influential moral figures whose religious experiences, cultural authority, and life wisdom enable them to guide younger generations through daily ethical practices. Their active participation in non-formal Islamic learning communities demonstrates that religious learning in later life extends beyond personal spiritual development and contributes significantly to strengthening family religiosity and domestic moral education (Ni'mah et al., 2024).

Unlike formal education, informal Islamic education develops through continuous interaction, moral exemplification (*uswah hasanah*), and habitual religious practice within everyday family life (Nata, 2014). In this educational setting, elderly individuals occupy a distinctive position because emotional proximity and accumulated life experience enable them to transmit Islamic values naturally through role modelling, worship supervision, and interpersonal communication. This educational role becomes increasingly significant in later life, as accumulated religious experience enables elderly learners to transform personal spirituality into everyday moral guidance. Consequently, elderly learners should not be viewed merely as recipients of religious instruction but also as active moral educators who cultivate family religiosity through role modelling, ethical communication, and everyday religious practices, thereby influencing children, grandchildren, and the wider family environment.

The pedagogical role of elderly learners can be better understood through the ethical framework of practical Sufism (*tasawwuf amali*), which emphasizes the cultivation of moral character through everyday conduct rather than withdrawal from social life (Harisuddin, 2021; Saputra et al., 2021). Among classical Sunni Sufi scholars, Haris al-Muhasibi offers one

of the most influential formulations of this ethical tradition through Risalah al-Mustarsyidin. His teachings on *mubasabah* (self-accountability), *adab* (proper conduct), and *muraqabah* (spiritual vigilance) present spirituality as a continuous process of moral self-discipline that is reflected in interpersonal relationships and social behaviour rather than ritual observance alone (Al-Muhasibi, 2014). Within family life, these ethical principles provide an important foundation for nurturing patience, emotional restraint, ethical communication, and exemplary conduct, all of which are essential components of informal Islamic education in contemporary Muslim families.

Previous studies on elderly religiosity have predominantly examined psychological well-being, spiritual therapy, anxiety reduction, and healthy ageing through religious participation (Nida, 2014; Syukur, 2012). Other studies have explored elderly Islamic education primarily from the perspective of Qur'anic literacy, religious participation, or lifelong learning (Affandi et al., 2024; Ni'mah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research on practical Sufi ethics has largely emphasized individual spirituality and personal ethical transformation. Consequently, little is known about how elderly learners transform practical Sufi ethics into domestic moral practices that sustain family religiosity and intergenerational Islamic education.

Beyond addressing this empirical gap, this study also contributes to broader discussions on lived religion, informal religious authority, and moral agency. Previous scholarship has demonstrated that religious authority increasingly emerges through everyday practices and ordinary social relationships rather than exclusively through formal religious institutions (Ammerman, 2016; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; McGuire, 2008). Nevertheless, these perspectives have rarely been connected with practical Sufism to explain how elderly Muslims exercise moral authority within family life. Building upon this conceptual gap, this study argues that Al-Muhasibi's practical Sufism provides an important framework for understanding elderly learners as domestic moral agents who transmit Islamic values through informal education, everyday interaction, and intergenerational relationships. Accordingly, this study aims to explore how elderly learners internalize the ethical teachings of Risalah al-Mustarsyidin and transform them into forms of domestic moral agency within Muslim families. The novelty of this study lies in conceptualising elderly learners as *micro-mursyid* to explain how elderly learners exercise informal religious authority through everyday

domestic interaction, thereby extending contemporary discussions on practical Sufism, domestic moral pedagogy, and informal Islamic education.

To address these objectives, this study employed a qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2022). The research was conducted within the Saturday Morning Islamic Study (KISM), a non-formal Islamic learning community in East Java consisting predominantly of elderly participants studying the Qur'an and Risalah al-Mustarsyidin. Five elderly participants were purposively selected because they consistently demonstrated educational and moral agency within their families and communities. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field notes. The data were analysed interactively by identifying recurrent themes concerning how elderly learners interpreted Al-Muhasibi's ethical teachings and embodied them through domestic moral practices (Huberman, 2014).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. Muhasabah as Domestic Moral Pedagogy**

The findings reveal that elderly learners no longer interpret muhasabah merely as an individual practice of spiritual self-reflection. Instead, they understand it as a form of domestic moral pedagogy that continuously shapes interpersonal relationships, ethical communication, emotional self-regulation, and religious habituation within family life. Participants consistently described that the self-evaluative practices learned through Risalah al-Mustarsyidin encouraged them to examine not only their relationship with God but also the way they interacted with spouses, children, and grandchildren in everyday situations. Rather than remaining a private spiritual exercise, *muhasabah* became an educational process through which personal spirituality was translated into everyday moral responsibility within the household. This finding indicates that practical Sufism operates not only as an inward spiritual discipline but also as an educational framework through which Islamic moral values are embodied and transmitted within the family.

Accordingly, the participants' experiences suggest that moral transformation begins with the internalisation of practical Sufi ethics through muhasabah before being expressed in everyday family life.

This phenomenological interpretation is consistent with Al-Muhasibi's ethical framework in Risalah al-Mustarsyidin, where muhasabah is understood as a continuous

discipline of self-accountability rather than an occasional act of repentance. He advises, "وحاسب نفسك في كل خطوة" ("Hold yourself accountable for every passing thought") and cites the well-known saying of Umar ibn al-Khattab, "Hold yourselves accountable before you are held accountable." These teachings demonstrate that self-examination encompasses speech, emotions, intentions, and everyday social conduct (Al-Muhasibi, 2014, p. 78). Viewed through the participants' lived experiences, muhasabah therefore functions not only as spiritual discipline but also as the ethical foundation of domestic moral education. Rather than separating inner devotion from everyday family life, Al-Muhasibi's ethical vision illustrates how sustained self-accountability gradually produces the moral dispositions necessary for educating others through ordinary domestic interaction.

Participants explained that regular muhasabah gradually transformed the way they educated family members. Rather than relying on the authority traditionally associated with old age, they sought to cultivate patience, emotional restraint, and gentle communication before advising others. Several participants acknowledged becoming more careful in choosing words, controlling anger, and maintaining harmony within the household after consistently practising self-reflection. These lived experiences suggest that moral authority within the family is strengthened not by age itself, but by ethical consistency that emerges through continuous self-discipline. In this sense, *muhasabah* functions as the pedagogical process through which personal spiritual transformation becomes visible in everyday family relationships, enabling elderly learners to educate others through moral credibility rather than formal authority.

These findings support the view that the family functions as the primary educational environment (*madrasah ulla*), where moral values are transmitted through everyday interaction rather than formal instruction (Ridwan et al., 2024). Within this context, muhasabah provides the ethical mechanism through which elderly learners regulate themselves before guiding other family members. This finding also resonates with Al-Attas' concept of *ta'dib al-nafs*, which emphasises that effective moral education begins with self-discipline before extending to the education of others (Al-Attas, 1999). Rather than functioning solely as an individual spiritual discipline, muhasabah becomes the moral foundation of domestic pedagogy by integrating inner spiritual refinement with observable ethical conduct. This integration explains why participants were increasingly perceived as trusted moral references within their families, not because of hierarchical authority, but because their everyday behaviour

consistently reflected the values they sought to transmit. In this process, *mubasabah* not only strengthens domestic moral pedagogy but also enables elderly learners to exercise ethical leadership within everyday family life.

Beyond emotional self-regulation, participants consistently explained that family members learned Islamic values primarily by observing everyday behaviour rather than listening to repeated verbal advice. They intentionally maintained congregational prayer, regular Qur'anic recitation, respectful interaction, and gentle reminders about religious obligations as practical forms of moral education within the household. Participants also described gently supervising congregational prayer, encouraging family members to maintain regular worship, and reminding children and grandchildren about prayer times as part of their everyday educational responsibility. Rather than imposing religious discipline through authority, participants sought to cultivate *adab* by demonstrating it in ordinary family life. These findings indicate that moral learning occurred through sustained observation and habitual interaction, allowing children and grandchildren to internalise Islamic values naturally without experiencing coercion. Such experiences illustrate how *tarbiyah bil-hal* functions as an implicit educational process in which ethical example becomes a more persuasive form of teaching than verbal instruction alone, reinforcing previous discussions on exemplary education in Islamic pedagogy (Nata, 2014; Tambak, 2011).

The participants' experiences closely reflect Al-Muhasibi's ethical teaching: "وكن قائلاً وبالحق عاملاً به" ("Speak the truth and act upon it") (Al-Muhasibi, 2014, p. 102). For Al-Muhasibi, moral authority is established through consistency between words and actions rather than through verbal persuasion alone. Viewed phenomenologically, participants interpreted this principle by striving to embody the values they wished to transmit before expecting them from other family members. This finding reinforces the Islamic educational principle that *adab* is cultivated through lived example rather than abstract instruction (Nata, 2014). Consequently, practical Sufism becomes visible in everyday domestic life through ordinary acts of patience, worship, compassion, and ethical consistency, demonstrating that exemplary conduct constitutes the central mechanism of domestic moral pedagogy.

Beyond shaping individual spirituality, the findings demonstrate that *mubasabah* establishes a close relationship between inner moral refinement and outward ethical conduct. Participants consistently understood that efforts to purify the heart from arrogance, envy,

ostentation (*riya'*), and excessive worldly attachment were inseparable from the way they interacted with other family members. They believed that sincere self-discipline gradually transformed their communication, emotional responses, and daily behaviour, allowing religious values to be expressed through ordinary domestic interaction. This phenomenological understanding closely reflects Al-Muhasibi's ethical teaching that inner spiritual cultivation (*tazkiyat al-nafsi*) must always be manifested in outward conduct (*alaniyyah*), thereby integrating personal piety with social responsibility (Al-Muhasibi, 2014, p. 195).

Overall, the findings indicate that muhasabah in this study extends beyond its classical understanding as an individual practice of spiritual introspection. Through continuous self-reflection, ethical communication, emotional self-regulation, and exemplary conduct, muhasabah becomes a dynamic form of domestic moral pedagogy that enables elderly learners to cultivate family religiosity through everyday interaction. Through this pedagogical process, elderly learners gradually develop domestic moral agency by translating practical Sufi ethics into concrete educational practices within the family. These findings address the empirical gap identified in previous studies by demonstrating how practical Sufi ethics are translated into concrete domestic moral practices within Muslim families. More importantly, this pedagogical process gradually positions elderly learners as trusted moral references whose ethical credibility emerges from lived spiritual consistency rather than formal religious authority. In other words, domestic moral pedagogy provides the experiential pathway through which elderly learners progressively develop domestic moral agency within everyday family life. Rather than exercising authority through institutional position or formal religious status, they cultivate moral influence through consistent ethical practice, interpersonal care, and embodied religious values. This transformation provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the emergence of the micro-mursyid, discussed in the following section, as an expression of informal religious authority grounded in everyday domestic life.

## **B. The Emergence of Micro-Mursyid in the Domestic Sphere**

### **B.1. The Emergence of Micro-Mursyid as Informal Religious Authority**

The findings reveal that continuous engagement with Risalah al-Mustarsyidin gradually transformed elderly learners from recipients of religious instruction into informal moral educators within their families. Rather than exercising authority through formal religious status or institutional recognition, participants demonstrated moral leadership through

everyday interaction, emotional maturity, consistent religious practice, and ethical example. This transformation emerged as participants increasingly became trusted sources of guidance for children, grandchildren, and other family members in matters of worship, interpersonal relationships, and everyday moral decision-making. Building upon the domestic moral agency developed through muhasabah, elderly learners progressively assumed broader educational responsibilities within their families. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences represent the emergence of what this study conceptualises as the micro-mursyid—elderly learners who exercise informal religious authority by embodying practical Sufi ethics within ordinary domestic life. Their educational influence became visible not primarily through formal teaching, but through the consistency of everyday moral practice within the family.

Participants consistently explained that family members increasingly sought their advice not because they possessed formal religious credentials, but because they had earned moral credibility through everyday conduct. They described becoming trusted figures in matters of worship, family conflict, child-rearing, and ethical decision-making after years of practising muhasabah, emotional restraint, and exemplary behaviour. Their authority therefore developed gradually through lived experience rather than institutional appointment. These findings demonstrate that informal religious authority within the family is socially constructed through sustained ethical consistency, allowing elderly learners to become moral mediators who preserve Islamic values across generations through ordinary domestic interaction. This interpretation is consistent with previous discussions of lived religion and informal religious authority, which emphasise that religious influence increasingly develops through everyday social relationships rather than institutional religious positions (Ammerman, 2016; McGuire, 2008).

The participants' experiences further indicate that the emergence of the micro-mursyid reflects a gradual transformation of religious authority from institutional recognition to everyday moral influence. Rather than deriving legitimacy from formal religious office, participants exercised authority through sustained ethical consistency, emotional maturity, and continuous involvement in family religious life. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences illustrate that practical Sufi ethics, once internalised through muhasabah, become embodied in ordinary domestic interaction, enabling elderly learners to guide family members through ethical communication, worship supervision, and exemplary conduct. This

interpretation resonates with broader discussions on the democratisation of religious authority and the domestication of Sufism, where religious influence increasingly emerges through everyday social relationships rather than exclusively through formal religious institutions (Howell, 2001; Ni'mah et al., 2024).

These findings further demonstrate that practical Sufi ethics extend beyond personal spiritual cultivation to become a form of informal moral leadership within Muslim families. Participants did not guide their families through institutional authority or coercive control, but through emotional closeness, behavioural consistency, and everyday religious practice that gradually earned the trust of other family members. In the context of Islamic education, this finding highlights the capacity of the family to cultivate informal moral educators who preserve Islamic values through everyday interaction rather than formal instruction. Consequently, the concept of the micro-mursyid proposed in this study expands contemporary discussions of informal religious authority by demonstrating that informal religious authority constitutes an important foundation for intergenerational Islamic education and the continuity of family religiosity in contemporary Muslim society. This informal religious authority is enacted primarily through role modelling and everyday educational interaction rather than through formal instruction or institutional authority. The following section therefore examines how role modelling functions as the principal mechanism through which micro-mursyids transmit Islamic values within everyday family life.

## B.2. Role Modeling and Informal Education

The findings demonstrate that role modelling constitutes the primary educational strategy through which micro-mursyids transmit Islamic values within everyday family life. Participants consistently explained that religious education became most effective when conveyed through ordinary domestic interaction rather than formal instruction. This experience is clearly illustrated in the narrative of Mr. Mustafa S. (70 years old), who described dedicating much of his retirement to accompanying his grandchildren in their daily educational activities. He routinely drove them to school, Qur'anic learning centres, and tutoring sessions while continuously encouraging them to remain *istiqamah* in learning the Qur'an. For Mr. Mustafa, the religious knowledge acquired through the Islamic study community should not remain confined to personal piety but should be translated into everyday educational responsibility within the family.

Viewed phenomenologically, Mr. Mustafa's narrative illustrates that role modelling extends beyond visible religious behaviour to encompass continuous affective engagement with younger family members. Everyday activities, such as accompanying grandchildren to school or Qur'anic classes, become meaningful pedagogical encounters through which moral values are communicated naturally within close interpersonal relationships. Rather than relying on direct instruction or repeated moral advice, participants embodied Islamic values through consistent presence, emotional closeness, and everyday care. This interpretation reflects the principle of *tarbiyah bil-hal*, in which education is transmitted primarily through lived example rather than verbal instruction. Contemporary educational research similarly emphasises that moral values are most effectively internalised through sustained role modelling, observational learning, and habitual practice within meaningful social relationships (Lickona, 2022; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Mr. Mustafa's narrative further illustrates that ordinary domestic activities may function as implicit educational spaces where Islamic values are transmitted through sustained interpersonal interaction. Rather than representing routine family responsibilities alone, accompanying grandchildren to school and Qur'anic learning centres became opportunities to cultivate trust, emotional attachment, and religious commitment within everyday life. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences demonstrate that moral education is embedded in ordinary social practices, allowing children and grandchildren to internalise ethical values through continuous observation of significant family figures. This finding resonates with contemporary discussions of the hidden curriculum, which emphasise that values are often transmitted through everyday social interaction and behavioural consistency rather than formal instruction alone (Margolis, 2001).

These findings demonstrate that role modelling constitutes the central mechanism through which informal Islamic education is enacted within Muslim families. Through consistent religious practice, emotional closeness, and everyday interaction, micro-mursyids create educational experiences that occur naturally, persuasively, and continuously without relying on formal classroom instruction. Rather than separating religious learning from ordinary family life, participants integrated Islamic values into routine domestic activities, enabling younger family members to internalise *adab* through lived experience. Consequently, role modelling functions not merely as an educational technique but as the

practical expression of domestic moral pedagogy, providing the foundation for the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values discussed in the following section.

### B.3. Intergenerational Value Transmission and Family Adab

The findings demonstrate that the educational practices performed by micro-mursyids ultimately culminate in the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values within the family. Participants consistently explained that everyday religious habituation, ethical communication, and continuous moral guidance gradually shaped the religious character of children and grandchildren. Rather than relying on formal instruction, Islamic values were transmitted through repeated domestic practices that became part of everyday family life. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences indicate that value transmission is not a single educational event but a continuous process of cultivating family adab through sustained interaction and religious habituation.

This process is clearly reflected in the experience of Mrs. Siti Djamilah T. (65 years old), who consistently reminded her grandchildren to stop their activities immediately and perform prayer as soon as the call to prayer was heard. For the participant, reminding family members to pray was not merely an effort to fulfil ritual obligations but a continuous educational practice aimed at cultivating discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness from an early age. Through repeated religious habituation, everyday reminders gradually became part of the family's moral culture rather than external religious obligations.

Viewed phenomenologically, Mrs. Siti Djamilah's experience illustrates that repeated religious habituation (*ta'wid*) functions as a gradual process of character formation rather than merely reinforcing ritual compliance. Consistent reminders about prayer, respectful communication, and everyday religious routines were interpreted by participants as educational practices through which children and grandchildren progressively developed *adab*, self-discipline, and spiritual responsibility. These findings reinforce the understanding that family-based Islamic education is sustained through continuous habituation embedded in everyday interaction rather than through isolated acts of formal instruction (Ridwan et al., 2024). Consequently, *ta'wid* operates not simply as behavioural repetition but as a pedagogical process that nurtures enduring moral dispositions within the family.

The participants' experiences further demonstrate that the cultivation of family adab is closely associated with the process of *tazkeiyat al-nafs* emphasised in Al-Muhasibi's practical Sufi ethics. Participants understood that efforts to regulate emotions, cultivate sincerity, and

practise continuous *mubasabah* gradually transformed the moral atmosphere of the household. Viewed through Al-Muhasibi's ethical perspective, inner spiritual refinement becomes inseparable from outward educational practice, allowing the family to function as a space where spiritual discipline is embodied through everyday relationships. Rather than serving merely as a place of residence, the household becomes a moral ecosystem in which religious values are cultivated collectively through shared practice, ethical communication, and consistent moral example.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that the educational role of elderly learners extends beyond personal spiritual development to encompass the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values within contemporary Muslim families. Through *mubasabah*, role modelling, religious habituation, and the cultivation of family adab, elderly learners progressively exercise domestic moral agency that strengthens family religiosity through everyday interaction. More importantly, this study shows that practical Sufi ethics are translated into a coherent process of informal Islamic education in which the emergence of the micro-mursyid, exemplary conduct, and continuous value transmission collectively sustain the moral continuity of Muslim family life. These findings therefore extend contemporary discussions of practical Sufism by demonstrating its educational significance as a framework for domestic moral pedagogy and informal Islamic education in contemporary Muslim society.

### **C. Community Moral Agency through Cultural Da'wah and Peer Mentoring**

The findings reveal that the domestic moral agency developed by elderly learners gradually extends beyond the household into wider community life through cultural da'wah and peer mentoring. Participants consistently described that the ethical values internalised through Risalah al-Mustarsyidin encouraged them to participate more actively in supporting fellow elderly Muslims, strengthening communal solidarity, and promoting lifelong Islamic learning within their local communities. Rather than understanding da'wah solely as formal religious preaching, participants interpreted it as the everyday practice of embodying Islamic values through ordinary social interaction, mutual care, and compassionate engagement. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences demonstrate that practical Sufi ethics cultivate a broader form of community moral agency, whereby domestic moral commitments are progressively extended into wider social relationships.

This expansion of moral agency is reflected in participants' creative use of everyday communication to sustain religious encouragement among fellow elderly learners. One participant explained that, after joining the Islamic learning community, she increasingly devoted her free time to reading the Qur'an, performing *dhikr*, and sharing short religious reflections and words of encouragement through WhatsApp. She perceived these activities not simply as personal devotional practices but as meaningful opportunities to continue serving others through everyday acts of worship and moral support. Viewed phenomenologically, this experience illustrates that digital communication functions as an extension of cultural *da'wah*, enabling practical Sufi ethics to be expressed through continuous spiritual companionship and mutual encouragement among peers despite the physical limitations associated with later life.

These findings further indicate that digital media should not be understood merely as communication technologies but also as educational spaces through which elderly learners sustain religious relationships and collective moral responsibility. Rather than replacing face-to-face interaction, digital communication enabled participants to maintain continuous spiritual companionship, encourage religious commitment, and strengthen communal solidarity beyond the physical boundaries of the study group. This finding is consistent with recent discussions of digital religious engagement, which suggest that digital platforms increasingly function as spaces for everyday religious practice, informal learning, and moral communication within contemporary Muslim communities (Lundby & Evolvi, 2022; Tsuria & Campbell, 2021). Consequently, cultural *da'wah* in this study represents not only the dissemination of religious messages but also the extension of practical Sufi ethics into everyday digital interaction, thereby expanding the educational influence of elderly learners beyond their immediate family environment.

The expansion of community moral agency was further reflected in participants' engagement in peer mentoring within non-formal Islamic learning communities. Participants described that, after overcoming their own initial struggles in learning the Qur'an, they became increasingly motivated to accompany and encourage fellow elderly learners who experienced similar difficulties. One participant, a retired electricity company employee, explained that his previous experiences of embarrassment and lack of confidence when learning Qur'anic recitation enabled him to better understand the emotional challenges faced by his peers. Rather than positioning himself as an instructor, he gradually assumed the role

of a supportive learning companion who patiently guided other retirees in improving their Qur'anic recitation and religious confidence. Viewed phenomenologically, these experiences demonstrate that peer mentoring emerged through shared vulnerability, empathy, and mutual encouragement rather than formal educational authority.

These findings highlight the importance of a humanistic approach to adult Islamic education, particularly within later-life learning communities. Participants' experiences suggest that the principal barriers to religious learning in old age are not merely cognitive decline but also psychological factors such as embarrassment, fear of making mistakes, and diminished self-confidence. Peer mentoring therefore functioned as a supportive educational strategy that reduced these psychological barriers through empathy, shared experience, and reciprocal encouragement. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary perspectives on adult learning and communities of practice, which emphasise that meaningful learning is fostered through collaborative participation, mutual trust, and shared lived experience rather than hierarchical instruction (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2020).

Overall, these findings demonstrate that practical Sufi ethics possess not only personal and domestic significance but also an important communal dimension. Through cultural *da'wah*, digital religious engagement, and peer mentoring, elderly learners progressively transformed personal spiritual development into collective moral participation that strengthened religious learning and social solidarity within their communities. This study therefore extends contemporary discussions of practical Sufism by demonstrating that the educational influence of elderly learners develops through an interconnected process encompassing domestic moral pedagogy, informal religious authority, intergenerational value transmission, and community moral agency. Taken together, these findings illustrate that practical Sufi ethics provide a meaningful framework for understanding informal Islamic education as a continuous moral process that begins within the household and expands into the wider Muslim community.

#### **D. Integrating Practical Sufism into Family Religiosity and Intergenerational Ethics**

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the internalisation of Al-Muhasibi's practical Sufi ethics generates an interconnected pedagogical process that strengthens family religiosity and intergenerational ethics within contemporary Muslim families. Rather than functioning solely as a form of personal spiritual discipline, practical Sufism progressively shapes domestic moral pedagogy, informal religious authority, intergenerational value

transmission, and community moral agency into a coherent framework of informal Islamic education. This integrative process illustrates that moral transformation begins with the cultivation of the self through *muhasabah*, develops through everyday educational practices within the family, and ultimately expands into wider forms of social participation that reinforce both family and community religiosity.

This integrative process also redefines family religiosity as a dynamic educational culture rather than merely the observance of individual religious practices. The findings indicate that family religiosity is strengthened through the interaction of spiritual discipline, exemplary conduct, ethical communication, religious habituation, and mutual care, all of which are embedded in everyday domestic relationships. Consequently, intergenerational ethics are not transmitted through authority or coercion but through continuous moral interaction that nurtures respect (*ta'zhim*), compassion (*rahmah*), and shared responsibility across generations. Viewed from the perspective of informal Islamic education, the family therefore functions not simply as a place where religious values are inherited but as a living pedagogical environment in which Islamic ethics are continuously cultivated, negotiated, and embodied through everyday life.

From the perspective of Islamic education, these integrated findings suggest that practical Sufism should be understood not merely as a tradition of personal spiritual refinement but also as a pedagogical framework for strengthening family religiosity through informal education. The interrelationship between *muhasabah*, domestic moral pedagogy, role modelling, religious habituation, cultural *da'wah*, and peer mentoring demonstrates that Islamic moral formation develops through continuous participation in everyday life rather than through isolated instructional activities. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary perspectives that view the family as the primary environment for moral education, where religious values are cultivated through sustained interaction, exemplary conduct, and shared educational responsibility rather than through formal teaching alone (Nata, 2014; Ridwan et al., 2024).

More importantly, the findings indicate that these educational practices form an interconnected pedagogical process through which elderly learners progressively transform personal spirituality into broader moral responsibility. The process begins with the internalisation of Al-Muhasibi's ethical teachings through *muhasabah*, continues through the enactment of domestic moral pedagogy and informal religious authority within the family,

develops through role modelling and intergenerational value transmission, and ultimately expands into community moral agency through cultural da'wah and peer mentoring. Rather than representing separate educational practices, these dimensions constitute a coherent pedagogical framework that explains how practical Sufi ethics are translated into informal Islamic education within contemporary Muslim society.

Overall, this study extends contemporary discussions of practical Sufism by demonstrating that Al-Muhasibi's ethical teachings possess significant educational implications beyond individual spirituality. The findings show that practical Sufism provides a coherent framework for understanding how informal Islamic education may strengthen family religiosity, cultivate intergenerational ethics, and encourage wider community participation through everyday moral practice. Accordingly, the contribution of this study lies not only in introducing the concept of the micro-mursyid as an expression of informal religious authority, but also in demonstrating how domestic moral pedagogy, intergenerational value transmission, and community moral agency collectively constitute an integrated framework for contemporary informal Islamic education.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the internalisation of Haris al-Muhasibi's practical Sufi ethics through *Risalah al-Mustarsyidin* enables elderly learners to transform personal spiritual discipline into forms of domestic moral agency within Muslim families. Rather than functioning solely as an individual practice of self-purification, muhasabah progressively develops into domestic moral pedagogy through which elderly learners exercise informal religious authority, cultivate family adab, and strengthen intergenerational value transmission. These findings indicate that practical Sufism operates not only as a spiritual tradition but also as a dynamic process of informal Islamic education embedded in everyday domestic life.

The principal contribution of this study lies in conceptualising domestic moral agency as an educational process through which elderly learners translate practical Sufi ethics into everyday moral practices within Muslim families. Beyond introducing the concept of the micro-mursyid as a form of informal religious authority, this study demonstrates that domestic moral pedagogy, role modelling, intergenerational value transmission, and community moral agency collectively constitute an interconnected pedagogical framework through which practical Sufi ethics are translated into informal Islamic education.

Accordingly, this study extends contemporary discussions of practical Sufism by demonstrating that its educational significance lies not only in individual spiritual refinement but also in its capacity to cultivate family religiosity, intergenerational ethics, and community moral engagement.

These findings have important implications for the development of informal Islamic education, particularly in responding to contemporary challenges facing Muslim families. Elderly learners should be recognised not merely as recipients of lifelong religious education but also as valuable moral educators whose accumulated spiritual experience contributes to family resilience, intergenerational ethical formation, and community religious engagement. The pedagogical framework identified in this study may therefore inform the development of family-based Islamic education programmes, community learning initiatives, and elderly religious education that emphasise moral exemplification, religious habituation, and compassionate intergenerational relationships.

This study is limited to elderly learners participating in a single non-formal Islamic learning community and therefore reflects the lived experiences of a relatively specific educational context. Future research may examine the applicability of the proposed pedagogical framework in different cultural settings, Islamic educational institutions, or intergenerational learning communities to explore how practical Sufi ethics contribute to informal Islamic education across diverse Muslim societies. Comparative studies involving different Sufi traditions or educational contexts may further enrich understanding of the relationship between spirituality, moral pedagogy, and family religiosity.

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