

The Essence of Sufi Economics in Ethical Business Practices

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This study examines the economic thought and practices of Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman, a Murshid of Tarekat Idrisiyyah, who integrates Sufi principles with modern business management. Through qualitative methods, including interviews, field observations, and document analysis, this study explores the implementation of Sufi economic thought in business activities. The findings indicate that tarekat Idrisiyyah's business model successfully integrates Tawhid, Shariah, and Ihsan into economic activities, ensuring ethical wealth creation, financial sustainability, and community welfare. The study concludes that Sufi economics offers a viable alternative to conventional economic models by promoting spiritual consciousness, social responsibility, and sustainable development. This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on Sufi economics by positioning it as a viable framework for ethical entrepreneurship and sustainable business. Methodologically, it integrates Islamic economic principles with modern corporate strategies, demonstrating how structured Sufi economic models, such as Tarekat Idrisiyyah, can be effectively applied in contemporary business practices.

Keywords: ethical business; islamic economics; social responsibility; spiritual entrepreneurship; sufism; sustainable management

INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that there has been phenomenal growth in the economies of the world due to technological advancements in the field of Artificial Intelligence and digital transformation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Piketty, 2020). But at the same time, there exist several inequalities in economies in growth and degradation, primarily because of the rising issues of

hunger, poverty, and unemployment. Presently, the entire idea of the global economy rests on maximization of profits, competition, and material accumulation, which has caused social differences entre people and degraded the environment (Raworth, 2018). This creates a very compelling case for the emergence of new economic paradigms that blend values with financial viability into their transformation (Stiglitz, 2019).

Globally, wealth is distributed very unevenly, with the vast majority of the wealth concentrated in the hands of a very small minority of the global population. According to the Global Inequality Report (2024) from the World Bank, some 1% of the world population holds about 45% of the world's total wealth, while 50% of the world's population holds only 2% of the total wealth (Figure 1). This shows how the existing conventional economic systems have grossly failed in ensuring equitable distribution of wealth, raising concerns regarding the financial inclusivity of the economies and the sustainability of their future economic growth. Growing inequality has not only widened, but there is also a massive population everywhere across the world that has been left struggling for their economic security even after so much advancement and growth in technology and economy.

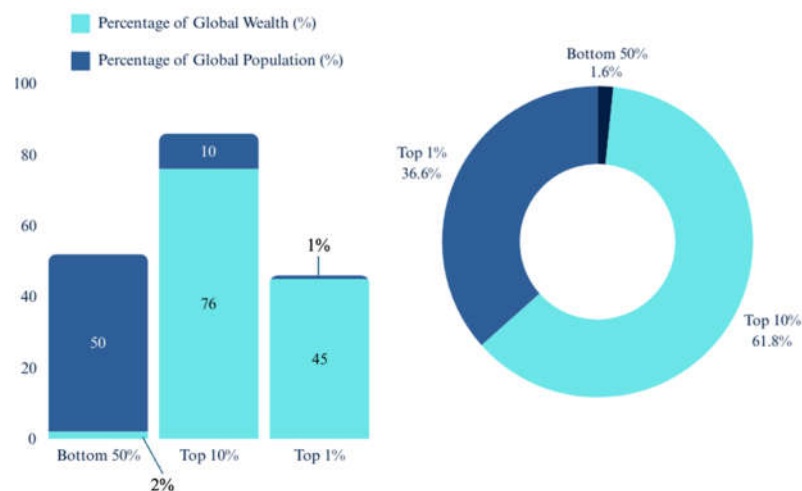


Figure 1. Global Inequality Report

Islamic economics, as a value-driven framework based on Shariah, has long provided a structured approach to ethical finance, social justice, and economic sustainability. However, a lesser-explored dimension of Islamic economics is Sufi economic thought, which emphasizes spiritual consciousness, ethical entrepreneurship, and sustainable wealth management (Zarka et al., 2018). Unlike conventional economic models that focus on profit maximization, Sufi

economics integrates moral and ethical principles into financial decision-making, ensuring that economic activities contribute to both material well-being and spiritual fulfillment (El-Ashker & Wilson, 2006). By embedding justice, community empowerment, and ethical resource utilization into its core framework, Sufi economics presents a compelling alternative that seeks to bridge the gap between economic growth and social equity (Hassan et al., 2021).

Sufism (Tasawuf) has traditionally been viewed as a spiritual discipline, primarily concerned with individual purification and devotion to Allah. As a result, its role in economic thought and business ethics has been largely overlooked. Historically, Sufi orders (Tarekat) have played a significant role in shaping global trade networks, financial institutions, and labor ethics, yet contemporary discourse on Islamic economics seldom acknowledges this contribution. This neglect has fueled misconceptions that Sufism promotes economic disengagement, asceticism, and passivity. Critics argue that Sufi teachings discourage material accumulation, fostering a weak work ethic and limiting economic participation. Some scholars further claim that Sufi practices contribute to economic stagnation within Muslim societies, as Sufi adherents allegedly focus on spiritual development at the expense of financial progress. Others contend that the concept of Zuhd (renunciation of worldly pleasures) is incompatible with modern entrepreneurship because it encourages detachment from economic activities (Chapra, 2016).

A critical question in Islamic economic thought concerns the distinction between mainstream Islamic finance and Sufi economics. While both frameworks adhere to Shariah principles, they differ in their philosophical foundations, approach to wealth, and economic priorities. A comparative analysis of Islamic finance and Sufi economics emphasizes their distinct yet complementary approaches to economic engagement. While mainstream Islamic finance primarily focuses on Shariah-compliant transactions, financial regulations, and risk-sharing mechanisms, Sufi economics extends beyond compliance, integrating spiritual consciousness, ethical entrepreneurship, and socio-economic justice into business practices as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Islamic Finance and Sufi Economics Approach

| Aspect | Islamic Finance | Sufi Economics |
|------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Core Focus | Shariah-compliant transactions | Spiritual and ethical business principles |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Wealth Perspective | Wealth as a tool for lawful investment | Wealth as a means to serve Allah and society |
| Ethical Considerations | Avoidance of riba, gharar, maysir | Emphasis on sincerity (ikhlas), humility (tawadhu') and fair trade |
| Business Approach | Profit-oriented with compliance mechanisms | Value-based business with ethical leadership |
| Corporate Governance | Compliance-driven with Shariah boards | Ethical leadership inspired by Murshid (spiritual guides) Integrated in all economic activity, focusing on long-term community empowerment |
| Social Responsibility | Zakat, CSR initiatives | |

Source: Rivai & Buchari, 2013; Mursal, 2016; Karim, 2007

Unlike conventional Islamic finance, which ensures that financial activities adhere to legal and contractual Shariah principles, Sufi economics emphasizes the internal moral and spiritual dimensions of wealth creation, management, and distribution. It promotes an ethically grounded economic system where business and financial decisions are driven by sincerity (ikhlas), humility (tawadhu'), and service to society (khidmah), rather than merely avoiding prohibited elements like riba (usury), gharar (uncertainty), and maysir (gambling).

Moreover, further illustrates this Conceptual Framework of Sufi Economics, presenting a Venn diagram that showcases the overlap of Sufi ethics, Islamic economic principles, and modern business practices (Figure 2). This framework challenges the misconception that Sufi economics is merely an alternative financial model, demonstrating instead that it is a holistic and transformative approach that embeds spiritual consciousness into modern economic and business practices. Figure 2 supports the argument that Sufi economics is not just about financial compliance but also about embedding ethical and spiritual values into business practices. Unlike conventional economic models, which separate profit-driven motives from ethical concerns, Sufi economics bridges this gap by ensuring that financial activities align with spiritual and moral principles. Unlike mainstream capitalism and conventional Islamic finance, which emphasize material success and Shariah compliance, respectively, Sufi economics integrates a deeper sense of spiritual responsibility into business decision-making. By incorporating faith-driven leadership,

holistic wealth management, and long-term community welfare, Sufi economics fosters a sustainable, socially responsible, and spiritually aligned economic system.

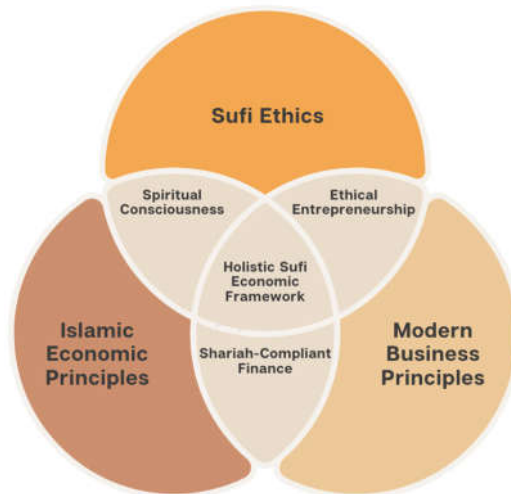


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Sufi Economics

Source: Chapra, 1999; Açıkgenç, 2014; Sholikhin, 2004

In recent years, Sufi-inspired economic models have gained attention for their emphasis on social impact, ethical finance, and inclusive economic participation. Research has shown that Sufi business ethics contribute to a unique model of sustainable economic development through entrepreneurial spirituality, Islamic corporate governance, and community-based economic models. Entrepreneurial spirituality encourages business activities rooted in sincerity, patience, and ethical wealth distribution (Ali, 2014). Islamic corporate governance ensures that leadership and stakeholder engagement are guided by Sufi ethical principles rather than purely profit-driven motives (Dusuki & Abdullah, 2007). Community-based economic models guarantee that wealth creation benefits not just individuals but the broader society through mechanisms such as zakat, waqf (Islamic endowments), and financial empowerment initiatives (Shirazi, 2014).

One of the most notable case studies of contemporary Sufi economics is Tarekat Idrisiyyah, a Sufi order that has successfully integrated Tasawuf with professional business management. Under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman, the Tarekat has established a structured economic model that balances Tawhid (faith-based values), Shariah compliance, and Ihsan (spiritual excellence) in business practices.

This study analyzes the economic philosophy of Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman and its alignment with Sufi economic thought. It examines the business strategies and governance model of Tarekat Idrisiyyah, assessing its integration of spiritual values with corporate management. Furthermore, it evaluates the broader implications of Sufi economics for sustainable business practices, financial ethics, and Islamic economic development, challenging misconceptions and demonstrating how Sufi principles can be applied to foster ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible economic systems.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, which is well-suited for exploring complex socio-economic phenomena within the context of Sufi economic thought and its implementation. A phenomenological approach is employed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, practices, and perspectives of individuals engaged in Sufi-based economic activities. This method allows for analyzing economic behaviors, business strategies, and management practices within a Sufi framework, offering insights into how spiritual values are integrated into real-world economic activities.

Data Collection

To ensure comprehensive and credible findings, this research employs a multi-faceted data collection strategy, incorporating both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data is obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman, the Murshid of Tarekat Idrisiyyah, alongside key administrative figures (khadim) and business managers responsible for overseeing the Tarekat's economic enterprises under ethical approval number of 022/BJM-Staidris/II/2025. These interviews provide first-hand insights into the Murshid's economic philosophy, strategic decision-making, and the operational framework of Sufi economic practices. Additionally, field observations are conducted at Tarekat Idrisiyyah's business units and social enterprises, allowing the researcher to directly examine how Sufi economic principles are applied in real-world business operations, financial management, and organizational culture. This method enables a contextual understanding of the integration of spiritual values within modern business structures.

To complement primary data, secondary data is sourced from academic publications, books, reports, and internal documents produced by Tarekat Idrisiyyah's publishing house, Mawahib Press, as well as other relevant Islamic economic literature. These sources provide historical, theoretical, and comparative perspectives on Sufi economic thought, enabling the research to situate Tarekat Idrisiyyah's economic model within the broader discourse of Islamic economics, business ethics, and socio-economic development. By triangulating interview findings, field observations, and secondary literature, this study ensures a robust and well-rounded analysis of the role of Sufism in contemporary economic practices.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and recurring themes related to Sufi economic thought, business ethics, financial strategies, and community development. The findings are correlated with existing theoretical frameworks from Islamic economics and business studies, ensuring a rigorous academic foundation and enhancing the validity of the study.

RESULTS

The empirical findings of this study reinforce that Sufi economics provides a structured, viable, and sustainable model for economic engagement. The research challenges the common misconception that Sufism is detached from financial and business activities by demonstrating how Tarekat Idrisiyyah, under the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman, integrates Islamic spiritual values with professional business management. The qualitative data from interviews, field observations, and document analysis reveal that Sufi economic principles are actively applied in various business sectors, promoting ethical entrepreneurship, financial sustainability, and social welfare.

The study identifies five key principles underlying Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman's economic philosophy: (1) Islam does not separate worldly and spiritual affairs, meaning that economic engagement should align with divine purpose; (2) ethical foundations are essential in economic activities, with core Sufi virtues such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *sabr* (perseverance), *shukr* (gratitude), and *tawadhu'* (humility) playing a central role in business success; (3) Sufism promotes active engagement in business and wealth creation, contrary to claims that it discourages economic

participation; (4) *zuhud* (asceticism) is redefined not as rejecting wealth but as mastering it, ensuring that material success serves as a means for worship and social benefit; and (5) the *Murshid* (spiritual guide) also plays the role of an economic mentor, demonstrating ethical leadership and professional business management for the community.

Moreover, the practical application of Sufi economic principles within *Tarekat Idrisiyyah* follows a structured, multi-phase process. The *Tarekat*'s economic mission is centered on three core objectives: (1) economic engagement as an extension of Islamic values (Shariah-based economics), (2) utilizing business as a platform for sustainable and practical *da'wah* (Islamic outreach), and (3) fostering economic self-sufficiency and community welfare through structured entrepreneurship programs.

The research also finds that *Tarekat Idrisiyyah* operates under a corporate governance model, ensuring a balance between spiritual integrity and professional business management. A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) oversees strategic business operations, while a Deputy CEO and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) handle financial planning, compliance, and risk management. Additionally, business units are managed by professional directors, ensuring accountability, transparency, and adherence to ethical business practices. Furthermore, the Sufi entrepreneurial mindset cultivated within the *Tarekat* encourages economic participants to view business as an act of worship. Employees are trained to prioritize ethical business practices, maintain patience and discipline, and balance material wealth with spiritual consciousness. Organizational culture is reinforced through daily *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), collective supplications before work, and structured spiritual development programs. From an economic impact perspective, *Tarekat Idrisiyyah*'s business model has demonstrated tangible success. The organization currently manages over \$8.5 million in assets, operates across 13 business sectors, and has established profitable ventures in finance (BMT *Idrisiyyah*), retail (*Qini Mart*), aquaculture (*Qini Vaname*), healthcare (*Idrisiyyah Medical Center*), and Islamic tourism (*Idrisiyyah Tour & Travel*). Additionally, wealth is redistributed through philanthropic programs, such as *KAIL* (*Kuatkan Ekonomi Kecil – Strengthening Small-Scale Economies*), which provides interest-free microfinance, mentorship, and business training to underprivileged entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION

The Fundamental Principles of Sufi Economics

Sufi economics is deeply rooted in the broader framework of Islamic economics, which is founded upon three fundamental principles: tawhid (monotheism), shariah (Islamic law), and ihsan (excellence and benevolence) (Mursyid of the Idrisiyyah Order). Tawhid represents the oneness of Allah and the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, including economic activity, under divine sovereignty. This principle establishes the ontological foundation of Islamic economics, ensuring that financial transactions, wealth accumulation, and business ethics remain aligned with divine purpose (Choudhury, 2020; Choudhury, 2018; Choudhury, 2021). Consequently, economic decision-making must prioritize moral integrity and ethical responsibility over mere material interests. This approach challenges conventional economic models, which often separate economic rationality from ethical imperatives, by incorporating a Tawhidi methodological perspective that integrates both material and spiritual dimensions (Choudhury, 2018; Choudhury, 2021).

The role of shariah in Sufi economics is critical, as it provides a structured legal and ethical framework derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, regulating economic interactions to ensure compliance with Islamic injunctions. Shariah prohibits *riba* (usury), *gharar* (excessive uncertainty), and *maysir* (gambling) while advocating for fairness, transparency, and social justice in economic transactions (Awais et al., 2024; Tahir, 2017). Moreover, shariah facilitates wealth redistribution and social equity through mechanisms such as *zakat* (almsgiving) and *waqf* (endowments), ensuring that financial prosperity contributes to collective well-being (Nugroho et al., 2020). The *maqasid al-shariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) framework further reinforces justice, economic stability, and ethical responsibility, ensuring that economic activities uphold religious and social values (Choudhury, 2021; Choudhury, 2016).

Beyond compliance with shariah, *ihsan* elevates economic conduct by emphasizing excellence, sincerity, and social responsibility. While shariah defines the minimum legal standard, *ihsan* encourages individuals and businesses to exceed legal obligations and adopt a more profound ethical commitment in their financial engagements (Awais et al., 2024; Al-Daghistani, 2018). This principle transforms economic transactions into acts of worship, urging business leaders to pursue financial success in ways that prioritize social justice, environmental responsibility, and spiritual well-being. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Sufi Economic framework integrates Tawhid, Shariah, and Ihsan, ensuring that material wealth serves as a means of ethical prosperity and divine fulfillment.

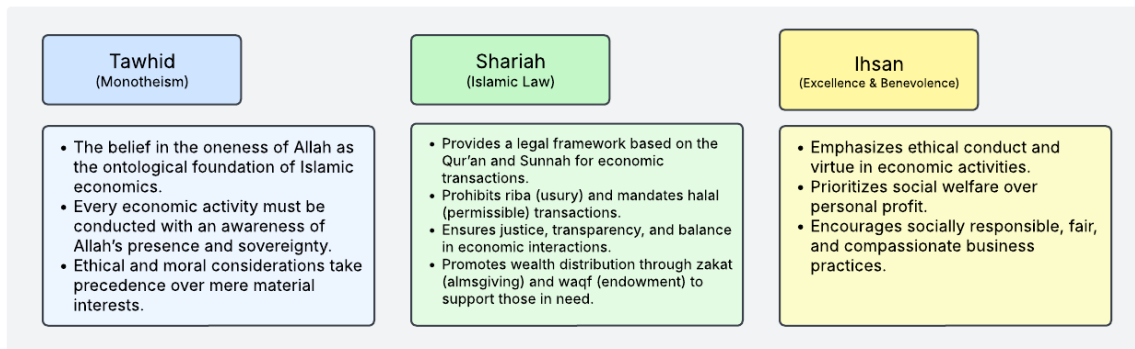


Figure 3. Sufi Economic Framework: Tawhid, Shariah, and Ihsan

Spirituality in Business: A Sufi Perspective

Sufi economics views business not merely as a profit-generating activity but as a spiritual endeavor that fosters closeness to Allah. From this perspective, every business transaction is a form of *suluk*, a spiritual journey of self-purification and ethical refinement through economic engagement (Mursyid of the Idrisiyyah Order). Accordingly, business practices must be conducted *lillāh* (for the sake of Allah), *fillāh* (in accordance with Allah's laws), and *billāh* (under Allah's guidance) (Mudir of the Majelis Ketarekatan).

Spirituality plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture, leadership ethics, and employee well-being. Research indicates that Islamic spirituality in business enhances employee commitment, ethical awareness, and workplace satisfaction (Asutay et al., 2022; Kurniady et al., 2021). In Sufi-oriented business environments, leadership is rooted in compassion, ethical responsibility, and holistic well-being, ensuring that economic sustainability is balanced with social equity and moral consciousness (Firdaus & Ahmad, 2023). Unlike conventional business models, which emphasize rigid contractual obligations, Sufi economic principles cultivate trust, mutual accountability, and long-term sustainability in business relationships (Nasution et al., 2021).

Moreover, Islamic spirituality influences corporate governance and strategic management. The concept of *halal* business in Sufi economics extends beyond product certification to encompass ethically sound financial practices, transparent business operations, and responsible supply chain management (Shahabuddin et al., 2020). However, despite its clear advantages, practical challenges remain in bridging Islamic economic ideals with contemporary business frameworks.

Addressing these gaps necessitates further research, policy development, and ethical leadership training to harmonize Islamic spirituality with modern economic demands (Faseruk & Hossain, 2017; Islam et al., 2024).

Compared to other economic systems, Sufi economics exhibits fundamental differences. Conventional economics is based on the principles of utilitarianism and the concept of homo economicus, where individuals are assumed to act rationally to maximize profit or utility (Kahf, 2019). The methodology employed in conventional economics is scientific and quantitative, emphasizing empirical data and mathematical models to analyze and predict economic behavior (Ascarya & Masrifah, 2021; Nienhaus, 2013). Its primary objective is to optimize the allocation of limited resources to meet individual and societal needs, focusing on efficiency, growth, and wealth maximization (Zarqa, 2019).

Conversely, Islamic economics is rooted in theology and Islamic law, emphasizing moral and ethical guidelines derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, integrating religious teachings into economic activities (Al-Sabbagh, 2012; Maghfirah, 2022). While it adopts some scientific methods from conventional economics, Islamic economics also incorporates qualitative and phenomenological approaches to align economic behavior with Islamic values such as honesty, trust, and social justice (Kahf, 2019; Ascarya & Indra, 2021). Its ultimate goal is to achieve socioeconomic justice and equitable wealth distribution by eliminating exploitation and excessive materialism through instruments like zakat and an interest-free financial system (Al-Sabbagh, 2012; Mohammad & Shahwan, 2013).

Meanwhile, Sufi economics places greater emphasis on the spiritual and ethical dimensions, focusing on self-purification and detachment from materialism. Its methodology is more introspective and qualitative, prioritizing personal transformation and ethical behavior over empirical analysis. The primary objective of Sufi economics is to harmonize economic activities with spiritual growth and ethical living by reducing material desires and instilling qana'ah (contentment), humility, and altruism.

“If conventional economics is merely profit-oriented, while Islamic economics aims to achieve falah (success in this world and the hereafter), then Sufism delves even deeper by seeking spiritual happiness through economic activities.” (Mursyid of the Idrisiyyah Order).

Table 2. Conceptual Comparison – Conventional Economics, Islamic Economics, and Sufi Economics

| Aspect | Conventional Economics | Islamic Economics | Sufi Economics |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| Fundamental Thought | Utilitarianism and homo economicus (rational individuals seeking maximum profit). | Rooted in theology and Islamic law, integrating religious teachings into economic activities. | Emphasizes spiritual and ethical dimensions in economic activities. |
| Methodology | Quantitative with a scientific approach and mathematical models. | Utilizes both scientific and qualitative approaches, incorporating values of honesty, trust, and social justice. | Introspective and qualitative, focusing on personal transformation and ethical behavior. |
| Primary Objective | Efficiency, growth, and wealth maximization. | Achieving social justice and equitable wealth distribution by eliminating exploitation. | Aligning economic activities with spiritual growth and an ethical way of life. |

A defining characteristic of Sufi economics is its nuanced interpretation of zuhd (asceticism). Contrary to the misconception that Sufism rejects material wealth, true zuhd does not imply renunciation but rather discipline in wealth management. The Sufi economic paradigm encourages financial success, provided that material prosperity serves as a means of spiritual fulfillment, social contribution, and ethical living (Kusuma & Ryandono, 2016; Rohim & Al-Kindely, 2013). A Sufi entrepreneur embodies qana'ah (contentment), avoids greed, and seeks barakah (divine blessings) in business endeavors, ensuring that financial gains are ethically sourced and aligned with higher spiritual aspirations. Compared to conventional economics, Sufi economics offers a distinct paradigm. While conventional economic models prioritize profit maximization based on the homo economicus (rational self-interest) framework (Kahf, 2019), Islamic economics incorporates moral values and wealth redistribution mechanisms to ensure equitable prosperity (Al-Sabbagh, 2012; Maghfirah, 2022). Sufi economics extends this further by emphasizing self-purification, material detachment, and spiritual consciousness in economic engagements (Table 1).

Business as a Means of Suluk Towards Allah

From the perspective of Sufism, business is not only a means of economic gain but can also serve as an integral part of suluk, provided it is conducted with the right intention. Suluk, in the Sufi tradition, refers to a spiritual journey aimed at attaining closeness to Allah through various practices and stages of soul purification (Leccese, 2021; Post, 2016). The term “suluk” is derived from Arabic, meaning “path,” which underscores the transformative journey inherent in spiritual practice (Leccese, 2021). Figure 4 illustrates the concept of business as a path to spiritual attainment within Sufism, highlighting key principles such as viewing business as an act of worship, conducting economic activities in alignment with Islamic ethics, practicing mujahadah (spiritual striving) and riyadhah (spiritual discipline), maintaining a balance between material and spiritual obligations, and achieving success in both this world and the Hereafter. In this context, business is not merely an avenue for financial profit but a means of heart and soul purification. As stated by a mursyid of a Sufi order, economic transactions can become a form of suluk if conducted with full spiritual awareness and adherence to Islamic values.

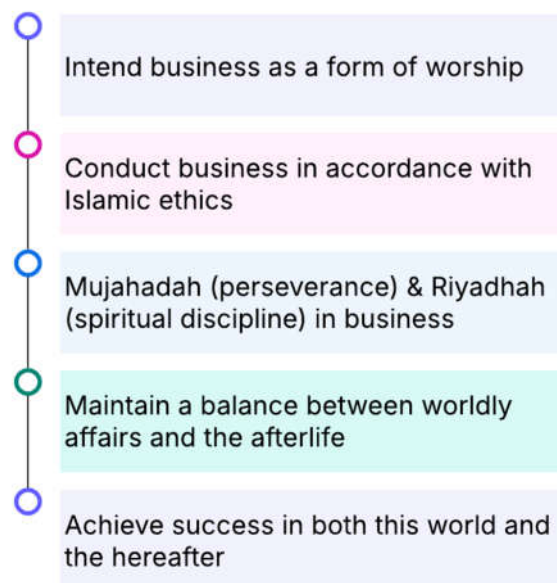


Figure 4. Business as a Path to Spiritual Attainment

This concept aligns with Sufi teachings, which emphasize that the material world should not be abandoned but rather utilized as a vehicle for drawing closer to Allah. Certain traditions, such as those practiced at Riyad al-Jannah Islamic boarding school, integrate Sufism with

entrepreneurship, demonstrating that spiritual and economic well-being can be pursued simultaneously (Abitolkha, 2022). Similarly, Rumi's teachings advocate for a balanced approach to zuhd (asceticism), in which inner purification is prioritized without necessitating a complete detachment from worldly affairs (Rahbari Ghazani & Uysal, 2023). Sufism further promotes practical spirituality, in which everyday economic activities serve as a means of worship and divine connection (Muvid & Kholis, 2024; Karacan, 2023). This holistic approach encourages active engagement in worldly affairs while maintaining a steadfast focus on spiritual objectives (Abdel-Karim, 2008; Heck, 2007).

A Sufi practitioner in business is not solely driven by profit motives but embodies the principles of mujahadah (diligence in striving) and riyadhah (spiritual discipline). As emphasized by the Director of the Sufi Order Assembly, "Constantly cleansing the heart from inner sins, followed by riyadhah and mujahadah, is essential in establishing inner obedience." Mujahadah in business involves the struggle to uphold Islamic ethical principles, requiring perseverance, honesty, and patience in the face of challenges while avoiding prohibited practices such as riba (usury) and fraud (Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*). Meanwhile, riyadhah in business represents the self-discipline necessary to uphold Islamic ethics, encompassing simplicity, sincerity, and strict adherence to principles of justice and trustworthiness (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madarij al-Salikin*; Nasr, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study*). A Sufi entrepreneur does not merely strive to earn halal sustenance but also ensures that business activities do not lead to spiritual heedlessness.

Research has shown that spiritual discipline in business fosters ethical conduct and corporate sustainability. Spiritual leadership contributes to ethical business practices by embedding spiritual values within organizational structures (Duthely, 2017). Buddhist philosophy, particularly the Sufficiency Economy Model, highlights the significance of moderation, resilience, and ethical stakeholder engagement as essential components of corporate sustainability (Suriyankietkaew & Kantamara, 2019; Ng, 2022). Likewise, Ignatian values in business ethics integrate efficiency with moral and spiritual responsibility, fostering more ethically responsible organizations (Cavich & Chinta, 2021).

Additionally, organizational spirituality plays a crucial role in enhancing knowledge sharing and practical wisdom (phronesis), thereby supporting ethical decision-making and sustainable performance (Rocha et al., 2024). A dignity-based framework in Catholic social doctrine similarly

emphasizes ethical management and human well-being as fundamental to long-term business success (Mea & Sims, 2019). Business education can further benefit from the integration of spiritual disciplines such as Daoist inner work, Buddhist reflection, and Quaker affirmations, which contribute to enhanced emotional intelligence and ethical leadership (Burton et al., 2021). The four-phase model of spiritual discipline has been shown to cultivate a virtuous organizational culture aligned with servant leadership (Dyck & Wong, 2010). Even small businesses that incorporate spirituality from various traditions exhibit higher ethical standards and greater social responsibility, reflecting a deep connection between values and business conduct (Driscoll et al., 2019).

In Sufism, worldly success and success in the Hereafter are inextricably linked. A person's achievement in business is not measured solely by financial gain but by the extent to which economic endeavors bring them closer to Allah. Therefore, a Sufi entrepreneur must maintain a harmonious balance between material and spiritual aspirations. As stated by a mursyid of the Idrisiyyah Sufi Order, "Practicing Sufism requires greater diligence in striving, as exemplified by the Prophets and righteous predecessors." Islam upholds the principle that hard work is a form of worship, and worldly success—if acquired through halal means—brings divine blessings that ultimately lead to true fulfillment in the Hereafter.

Studies confirm that religiosity is positively correlated with life satisfaction, as demonstrated by various research findings on Muslim communities (ten Kate et al., 2017; Abu-Rayya et al., 2016; Rakrachakarn et al., 2015; Aydogdu et al., 2021). Additionally, life satisfaction serves as a mediating factor in reducing deviant behavior among Muslim youth (Abu-Rayya et al., 2016). In the realm of entrepreneurship, devout Muslim entrepreneurs are more likely to uphold religious values and ethical business practices, leading to improved business conduct (Gursoy et al., 2017). The implementation of Islamic business ethics—encompassing honesty, justice, and benevolence—not only enhances ethical business standards but also contributes to higher life satisfaction (Tlaiss, 2015; Kayed & Hassan, 2010; Akmar et al., 2018). Furthermore, religiosity strengthens social cohesion, providing both social and cultural benefits that enhance overall well-being (ten Kate et al., 2017; Aydogdu et al., 2021). Even in conflict-affected regions, religiosity plays a significant role in improving psychological well-being by reinforcing self-acceptance and a sense of life purpose (Koburtay & Alqhaiwi, 2024). Interestingly, research suggests that the impact of religiosity on life satisfaction varies across religious communities, with the strongest

effects observed among Muslim populations in countries such as Malaysia (Rakrachakarn et al., 2015).

Within the spiritual journey of a disciple in a Sufi order, the role of the mursyid is fundamental, not only in guiding acts of worship but also in providing ethical direction in business matters. A mursyid does not merely serve as a spiritual mentor but also as a role model in professional and ethical business conduct. Under the guidance of a mursyid, disciples can engage in business endeavors that uphold spiritual values. Notably, some mursyids possess business expertise and impart modern management principles that remain deeply rooted in Islamic teachings (Mursyid of the Idrisiyyah Sufi Order). This demonstrates that Sufism does not advocate for renouncing worldly affairs; rather, it offers a structured approach to ensure that economic activities remain spiritually grounded while actively contributing to business success and societal well-being.

Summary of Key Findings

The study explores the integration of Sufi economic principles into modern business practices, emphasizing spirituality, ethical entrepreneurship, and economic sustainability. The findings highlight that Sufi economics is not merely a theoretical framework but a practical and scalable model, as demonstrated by the Idrisiyyah Sufi Order's approach to business management. The research underscores that Sufi economics is deeply rooted in Islamic economic principles, incorporating tawhid (monotheism), shariah (Islamic law), and ihsan (excellence and benevolence). Unlike conventional economic models that focus primarily on profit maximization, Sufi economics integrates spiritual growth, social responsibility, and ethical business practices. It promotes an alternative economic paradigm that balances material prosperity with spiritual well-being.

A key finding is that within Sufi economic thought, business is not merely a means of wealth accumulation but a form of suluk (spiritual journey) aimed at self-purification and ethical refinement. Economic activities must be conducted lillāh (for the sake of Allah), fillāh (in accordance with Allah's laws), and billāh (under Allah's guidance), reinforcing the spiritual dimension of business transactions. This study further emphasizes that in Sufi-based economic systems, the mursyid (spiritual guide) plays a dual role as both a religious mentor and an economic leader. The mursyid provides spiritual guidance on ethical business conduct while also imparting modern management principles that ensure business professionalism without compromising

Islamic values. This challenges the misconception that Sufism discourages economic engagement and instead presents it as a model of ethical entrepreneurship.

The Idrisiyyah business model adopts a structured corporate governance system, integrating Islamic ethics with professional management. The economic framework is built upon trust, mutual accountability, and long-term sustainability, diverging from conventional Western business models that prioritize contractual rigidity and short-term profitability. The research finds that Islamic spirituality plays a critical role in shaping organizational culture, leadership ethics, and employee well-being. Businesses incorporating Sufi spiritual principles exhibit higher employee commitment, ethical awareness, and workplace satisfaction. Furthermore, spiritual leadership fosters a more sustainable and socially responsible economic system, aligning with global trends in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical finance.

The study illustrates the distinctive differences between Sufi economics, conventional economics, and Islamic economics. While conventional economics operates on utilitarian principles and profit-driven motives, Islamic economics integrates theological and ethical guidelines. Sufi economics, however, goes further by prioritizing personal transformation, self-discipline, and ethical detachment from materialism. Table 1 provides a comparative analysis, emphasizing how Sufi economic principles address the spiritual and moral gaps in contemporary economic models.

An important aspect explored in this study is the correlation between religiosity and life satisfaction. The findings reinforce that spiritually grounded business practices enhance psychological well-being, ethical decision-making, and social harmony. This finding is particularly significant in entrepreneurship and corporate leadership, where ethical dilemmas often arise. Sufi-based businesses encourage ethical wealth accumulation and redistribution, ensuring that economic success benefits both the individual and the community.

Despite the robustness of Sufi economic principles, challenges remain in bridging the gap between Islamic economic ideals and contemporary business structures. The study highlights the need for further research, policy development, and leadership training to align Islamic spirituality with modern economic demands. Future studies should focus on scaling Sufi economic models for broader adoption in financial institutions, microfinance sectors, and global ethical investment frameworks.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing discourse on Islamic economics, ethical finance, and sustainable business practices. By positioning business as an extension of spirituality, Sufi economics offers a compelling alternative to conventional capitalism, one that harmonizes profitability with ethical responsibility. The success of the Idrisiyyah business model demonstrates the practical viability of Sufi economic principles, suggesting that spiritually conscious entrepreneurship can drive both economic growth and social well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Sufi economics serves as a viable and sustainable model for economic engagement, effectively countering the misconception that Sufism is detached from financial and business activities. Tasawuf (Sufism), alongside Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) and Tawhid (Islamic monotheism), plays a crucial role in shaping Islamic economic thought, providing a structured framework for ethical and socially responsible business practices. Far from advocating economic disengagement, Sufi teachings emphasize the ethical management of wealth, entrepreneurial diligence, and economic empowerment, ensuring that financial success remains aligned with spiritual integrity and social responsibility. The economic model pioneered by Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman and implemented within Tarekat Idrisiyyah serves as a practical demonstration of how Sufi economic principles can be effectively integrated into modern business practices. The findings indicate that Tarekat Idrisiyyah's structured approach—combining Shariah-compliant financial management with Sufi ethical values—has led to measurable economic success, as evidenced by its expanding business portfolio, financial sustainability, and community-oriented economic programs. The Murshid's leadership in both spiritual and economic affairs ensures that business practices remain firmly rooted in Islamic ethical standards, challenging long-standing assumptions that Sufi communities are economically passive.

The research also highlights that the economic philosophy of Sheikh Muhammad Fathurrahman is deeply rooted in Islamic sources, drawing upon the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical Sufi scholarship. His structured methodology for integrating Sufi values into economic life—through a clear economic mission, entrepreneurial training, and organizational culture development—ensures that business growth aligns with social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and sustainable development. The success of Tarekat Idrisiyyah's business model confirms that spiritual values and professional business management are not mutually exclusive

but rather complementary forces in achieving financial prosperity and social welfare. By merging Sufi economic thought with modern corporate strategies, Tarekat Idrisiyyah has developed an inclusive and ethically driven business ecosystem, illustrating that Sufi economics is not only a theoretical concept but a practical and scalable economic model. The study concludes that when guided by spiritual and ethical values, Islamic economic thought has the potential to foster financial success, economic equity, and long-term societal resilience. As global discussions on ethical finance, sustainable business practices, and Islamic economics continue to evolve, Sufi economic principles offer a valuable alternative framework for promoting economic justice and holistic well-being.

Acknowledgement

This research can be carried out thanks to the help of various parties. The researcher would like to express his deepest gratitude to all parties who have helped in completing this research. Especially to the LPPM Idrisiyyah Islamic College, which gave us the opportunity to conduct this research.

Conflicts of Interest Declaration

There were no disclosed conflicts of interest by the authors.

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