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Strengthening Spirituality And Social Concern Through The Huwal Habib Dhikr Routine With A Former Gang Member Community In Keputih Sub-District, Sukolilo, Surabaya

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of a dhikr (Islamic devotional chanting) community in strengthening spiritual aspects and encouraging social concern among former gang members in Keputih Sub-district, Sukolilo, Surabaya. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the spiritual and social dynamics within the Huwal Habib dhikr community. Data collection techniques included participatory observation of dhikr practices and social activities, indepth interviews with former gang members, religious leaders, and local community figures, as well as documentation of various community events. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The findings reveal that regular dhikr practice effectively fosters spiritual awareness, serves as a medium for introspection and purification of the heart, and promotes active participation in social activities. This collective spiritual approach has proven effective in reconstructing social identity and building an inclusive and transformative community.

Keywords: Dhikr; Spiritual Transformation; Social Concern.

Introduction

Spirituality and social concern are interconnected dimensions that contribute to both individual and communal well-being, particularly among marginalized or socially excluded groups. In Keputih Sub-district, Sukolilo, Surabaya, a small group that had been socially marginalized due to a lack of religious practice initiated a unique effort. This initiative involved the Huwal Habib Dhikr group, a form of Islamic spiritual chanting, which has been implemented to transform the lives of former gang members. Amidst a neighborhood predominantly inhabited by santri (Islamic boarding school students), there exists a group of individuals with a troubled social past (ex-criminals or former gang members). This small group also harbors a strong desire to improve their lives in the future, which in turn encourages spiritual growth and fosters social responsibility in their local environment.

Islamic scholars from various religious disciplines often teach that hadith is the second most important source of law after the Qur'an. Therefore, Muslims are obliged to follow the teachings conveyed in hadith (Karim 2005). The hadith functions as a clarifier of the Qur'an, both in practical application and in understanding Islamic teachings in an ideal and factual manner. In fact, many acts of worship practiced by Muslims are often based on the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One of the most commonly practiced acts of worship is the recitation of wirid (devotional supplications) after prayer. In general, wirid refers to a collection of dhikr, supplications, or regular devotional practices performed after obligatory or non-obligatory prayers. (Khusniati, 2010).

The phenomenon of regular dhikr recitation continues to grow among the community. This is supported by a shifting social trend aimed at changing the negative stigma associated

with certain forms of religious practice. Specifically, after the Maghrib, Isha, and Subuh prayers, many people gather at mosques or prayer halls to perform communal prayers, as these times are relatively free from other social activities.

Many community members attend mosques or prayer halls (musholla) to perform congregational prayers, especially during Maghrib, Isha, and Subuh, as these times typically coincide with reduced social activity. One of the most

engaging forms of religious approach is the practice of group dhikr (remembrance of God). Dhikr is not merely the repetition of divine names, but also involves the recitation of specific phrases as a means of drawing closer to Allah SWT. Beyond being a spiritual practice, dhikr serves as a medium for contemplation, heart purification, and the internalization of moral and spiritual values. When performed in congregation, dhikr can also strengthen social bonds, foster a sense of unity, and enhance solidarity among participants. A vivid example of this phenomenon can be found within a community of former gang members, who now actively engage in communal dhikr as part of their regular routine.

This aligns with the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which emphasizes community involvement, empowerment, and transformative change. PAR is a collaborative approach that engages community members as co-researchers in addressing social issues, making it a suitable method for examining the impact of spiritual practices on social reintegration. Huwal Habib dhikr, rooted in Islamic Sufi tradition, involves repeated recitations of divine names and praises to deepen spiritual connection and inner peace. For former gang members, who often face social rejection and personal struggles, such practices can offer a pathway to redemption, self-reflection, and societal reintegration.

This study explores how the routine practice of Huwal Habib dhikr strengthens spirituality and promotes social care within this community. Utilizing PAR, the research actively engages participants in designing and evaluating interventions, ensuring that the process is community-driven and culturally relevant. The article examines the implementation, outcomes, and implications of this initiative, drawing upon scholarly literature to contextualize its findings.

Method

This study employs the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, a collaborative approach that involves community members as co-researchers in addressing local issues and implementing solutions. PAR is particularly well-suited to this research due to its emphasis on empowering marginalized groups, encouraging reflection, and promoting sustainable change. The research was

conducted in Keputih Subdistrict, Sukolilo, Surabaya, from January to May 2025, involving 25 members of the Huwal Habib group—all of whom are former gang members aged between 18 and 40 years old who have participated in weekly dhikr sessions for at least one year. The data collection techniques used include, Participant Observation: Researchers took part in the dhikr sessions to observe group dynamics, spiritual practices, and social interactions. The observation focused on participant engagement, emotional expressions, and communal activities following the dhikr.

In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants and three group facilitators to explore personal experiences, perceptions of spiritual growth, and changes in social behavior.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Two FGDs, each involving 10 participants, were held to discuss collective experiences and identify community-driven solutions for social care initiatives. These discussions emphasized participants' roles in shaping research outcomes.

Document Analysis: Group activities, including the dhikr schedule and records of community service events, were analyzed to assess consistency in participation and social contributions.

The data were analyzed thematically, guided by the PAR process of reflection and action. Themes were co-developed with participants to ensure their perspectives informed the findings. The main themes identified include spiritual transformation, social care initiatives, and community reintegration. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources (observation, interviews, FGD, and documents). Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent and ensuring anonymity, with participants actively involved in reviewing findings to ensure alignment with their lived experiences. (Fuad, 2017).

In addition, the study applied a qualitative approach with a case study method, conducted in Keputih Subdistrict, Sukolilo District, Surabaya City, East Java Province. The goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of the spiritual and social experiences within a community of former gang members who regularly engage in communal dhikr practices at the site.

This approach was chosen for its suitability in exploring subjective meanings, values, and the social and cultural dynamics operating within the context of the community.

Results And Discussion

A. Results

1. Initial Condition of the Community

Keputih Subdistrict in Sukolilo District, Surabaya, is known for its strong religious atmosphere, characterized by a dominant santri (Islamic boarding school student) culture and the presence of many Islamic boarding school alumni who actively participate in religious and social activities. However, within this religious environment exists a group of individuals with a vastly different background—former gang members who were previously involved in various criminal activities such as violence, extortion, drug trafficking, and leading street gangs that disturbed public order.

These individuals have long been part of a socially marginalized group, both explicitly and implicitly. Their status as “former criminals” has caused society to view them with suspicion, fear, and even disdain. This has resulted in a persistent negative stigma, despite their efforts to leave behind their past lives. Many have faced rejection in various aspects of social life ostracized by neighbors, denied job opportunities, and excluded from religious and community forums.

*Beyond social exclusion, they have also experienced **spiritual alienation**. Their past, filled with acts that violated religious norms, has caused many of them to feel distant from the values of faith. Guilt, unresolved trauma, and a sense of being “unworthy” to approach Allah SWT have left them without direction in their spiritual lives. Many of them live with inner emptiness, burdened by anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about the future. They lack a safe and comfortable space to express their spiritual restlessness or to seek spiritual guidance.*

This situation is worsened by the lack of inclusive and continuous support systems. Efforts toward the social reintegration and spiritual development of such groups remain very limited and are often sporadic in nature. The community tends to respond reactively rather

than offering constructive solutions. As a result, former gang members find themselves in a highly vulnerable position—easily falling back into their old ways or suffering from untreated psychological distress. Amid these conditions, there emerges an urgent need for a more humane, spiritual, and empowerment-oriented approach—one that not only acknowledges their past but also creates space for a better and more hopeful future.

2. Emerging Phenomenon

Amid the social and spiritual decline experienced by former gang members in Keputih Subdistrict, a unique and meaningful local initiative emerged: a communal dhikr practice known as “Huwal Habib.” This initiative did not originate from any formal institution or government program, but rather from the compassion of a young religious figure, Mr. Muchlisin Ridho, an alumnus of Pondok Pesantren Bumi Damai Al-Muhibbin, Tambakberas Jombang. With an inclusive approach, he embraced former criminals who had long been excluded from religious and social activities.

Huwal Habib dhikr is performed collectively in an atmosphere filled with solemnity, repeating specific dhikr phrases with deep reflection and sincerity. This activity is not merely a spiritual ritual but also serves as a safe space for former gang members to begin a new life, both spiritually and socially. Within this dhikr, they are not judged for their past but are given the opportunity to return to Allah through simple yet meaningful means.

The transformation that occurs is not limited to religious rituals. Gradual changes in attitude, mindset, and lifestyle begin to emerge. Those who were once temperamental, easily provoked, and lived in hostility are now learning patience, gentleness, and compassion. Dhikr serves as a medium for fostering self-awareness, forming calmer hearts, and building the desire to improve oneself.

Moreover, this activity has sparked a collective awareness of mutual care, support, and sharing. Huwal Habib dhikr not only makes them more religious as individuals, but also transforms them into part of a cohesive and healing community. In many cases,

Participants who initially felt hopeless about life began to discover new hope, renewed enthusiasm, and even a clearer sense of purpose. Another remarkable aspect of this phenomenon is how it has transformed public

perception. Gradually, local residents began to recognize the positive changes taking place within these former gang members. Those who were once feared are now respected as individuals who bring positive energy to the community. Some have even been invited to share their experiences in youth forums and at local mosques.

Thus, *Huwal Habib dhikr* has become a symbol of both spiritual and social transformation. It is not merely a religious routine, but a transformative space that enables social reintegration, the formation of new identities, and collective emotional healing. This phenomenon demonstrates that a sincere and continuous spiritual approach can be the key to real, life-changing transformation.

3. The Importance of Dhikr

The communal *Huwal Habib dhikr* is not merely a repetitive ritual activity, but a profound process of spiritual nurturing. For former gang members, *dhikr* serves as a means of purifying the heart, self-introspection, and a refuge from the inner turmoil they have long experienced. *Dhikr* invites them to humble the ego, purify intentions, and gradually awaken spiritual awareness.

In Islam, the value of *dhikr* holds a very significant position. One of its theological foundations is the concept of *Ihsan*, as explained in the well-known Hadith of Jibril, in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you see Him. And if you cannot see Him, then truly He sees you." (Narrated by Muslim, no. 8)

This concept shows that *dhikr* is a way to maintain constant awareness of Allah's presence, making every movement of the heart and action subject to His watch. *Dhikr* is not merely a verbal act, but the presence of the heart in remembrance of God and this is what has gradually begun to form within the *Huwal Habib dhikr* community.

Textually, the *Qur'an* also strongly emphasizes the importance of *dhikr*. One such reference is found in *Surah Ar-Ra'd*, verse 28:

"Those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace." (*Qur'an*, *Surah Ar-Ra'd*: 28):

"الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَّا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ"

"Those who have believed and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah. Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."

(Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd: 28)

This verse affirms that dhikr has a calming effect on the soul, alleviates anxiety, and heals emotional wounds qualities that are especially relevant to the condition of former gang members who are seeking peace and a new direction in life.

From the perspective of hadith, there are numerous narrations that highlight the virtues of

dhikr. One such narration is as follows:

"مَا مِنْ قَوْمٍ اجْتَمَعُوا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ لَّ يُرِيدُونَ بِذَلِكَ إِلًّا وَجْهَهُ إِلًّا نَادَاهُمْ مُنَادٍ مِنْ "تَأْتِكُمْ حَسَنَاتٍ دَلَّتْ سَيِّئَاتُكُمْ مَغْفُورًا لَكُمْ، قَدْ بَرَّ السَّمَاءِ"

"Whenever a group of people gather to remember Allah, seeking only His countenance, a caller from the heavens proclaims: 'Rise, for you have been forgiven. Your sins have been replaced with good deeds.'" (Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Ya'la, and al-Ṭabarānī from Anas bin Mālik RA)

This hadith underscores that communal dhikr can serve as a means of forgiveness of sins and a transformation of negative energy into goodness something deeply needed by individuals who seek to reform themselves and their past.

*Furthermore, in the book *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ wa Miṣbāḥ al-Arwāḥ* by Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh as-Sakandarī, it is stated that there are 68 virtues of dhikr, most of which are centered on *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and *tasfiyat al-qalb* (illumination of the heart). Some of these include:*

- a. *Cleansing the heart from spiritual ailments such as arrogance, envy, and hatred.*
- b. *Fostering fear of Allah and hope in His mercy.*
- c. *Opening the doors of goodness and divine assistance from Allah SWT.*
- d. *Providing spiritual strength to abandon sinful behavior and remain steadfast in righteousness.*

Thus, the Huwal Habib dhikr practiced by former gang members is not merely a regular act of worship, but an effective spiritual therapy in the process of soul reconstruction, mental empowerment, and the formation of a new, nobler identity both in the eyes of Allah and society.

4. Challenges and Needs

Although the Huwal Habib dhikr activities have had a positive impact in strengthening spirituality and social solidarity among former street thugs, there are still various real challenges that hinder the sustainability and broader impact of this program. These problems arise from both internal aspects of the community and external factors (such as environmental support), requiring special attention and strategic intervention from external parties, including community service programs (PkM).

a. *Lack of Intensive and Structured Mentoring*

Most members of the community come from backgrounds marked by instability, past trauma, and irregular lifestyles. They require intensive, systematic, and continuous mentoring, especially during the early stages of spiritual transformation. In reality, the dhikr sessions have been running naturally without structured spiritual mentoring or guidance. As a result, some new members easily relapse into old habits, particularly when faced with social pressure, temptations from their past lives, or economic hardship.

b. *Absence of an Organized FollowUp Development System*

Currently, the dhikr activities are not yet integrated into a comprehensive development program. Ideally, after achieving inner peace through dhikr, community members should be accompanied further through Islamic knowledge enrichment, vocational training, skill development, and personal counseling. Unfortunately, there is no follow-up program guiding them through a gradual process toward independence and both spiritual and social resilience. Consequently, the transformation that occurs tends to be emotional and temporary, unsupported by a system that can sustain and reinforce the change.

c. *Weak Institutional Structure of the Community*

To date, the Huwal Habib dhikr community lacks a strong and formal organizational structure. There is no solid internal management system in place, whether in terms of leadership, member data management, or activity coordination maupun perencanaan jangka panjang. Ketidadaan badan hukum atau kelembagaan formal juga menyulitkan komunitas ini untuk:

- a. Accessing support from the government or philanthropic institutions.*
- b. Establishing partnerships with community leaders, educational institutions, or religious development agencies.*
- c. Conducting internal cadre formation and regeneration.*

This situation is further exacerbated by the limited availability of human resources with the capacity to provide guidance, manage programs, and offer consistent support. Meanwhile, in terms of funding, most activities rely on voluntary contributions and small donations, which causes social programs (such as support for orphans and assistance for the underprivileged) to operate under constraints and with uncertain sustainability.

d. Limited Social Networks and Partnerships

This community is not yet well connected to broader social networks, such as da'wah institutions, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), religious organizations, youth communities, or government empowerment programs. In fact, by establishing strategic partnerships, the community could:

- 1) Gain support in the form of training, religious literacy, and social capital.*
- 2) Enhance the community's legitimacy in the eyes of the general public.*
- 3) Reduce the burden of exclusivity and social isolation that they have long experienced.*

5. Purpose and Contribution of the Community Service

The Community Service Program conducted in collaboration with the Huwal Habib dhikr community primarily aims to be part of the social and spiritual transformation process of former gang members in Kelurahan Keputih.

It also seeks to strengthen the community's role as a positive and inclusive space for spiritual development.

a. *Strengthening the Huwal Habib Dhikr Activity as a Means of Spiritual Development*

The Huwal Habib congregational dhikr has proven effective in bringing inner peace, providing direction in life, and enhancing the spiritual awareness of its members. However, the activity remains informal and lacks a solid development system. Therefore, through this Community Service Program (PKM), support is provided to improve the quality of the dhikr implementation, develop structured spiritual development materials, and design a specific mentoring mechanism for new members to ensure a more sustainable transformation process.

b. *Expanding Social Impact, Both Within the Community and the Surrounding Society*

In addition to focusing on spiritual aspects, this program is also designed to strengthen the social dimension of the dhikr activities. The community has significant potential to serve as an agent of social change in its surrounding environment. Through activities such as community service, support for orphans, and open religious education, this Community Engagement Program aims to build connections between the community and the broader society. The goal is for the transformation experienced by former gang members to also bring direct benefits to local residents and promote the creation of a more inclusive and harmonious environment.

c. *Addressing Negative Stigma Against Former Gang Members Through Spiritual and Social Approaches*

Social stigma remains a significant barrier preventing former gang members from being fully accepted by society. Therefore, one of the key contributions of this program is to help reconstruct their self-image through spiritual and social approaches that resonate with the hearts of the community. By embodying values such as repentance, sincerity in worship, compassion for others, and tangible social contributions, it is hoped that the public will begin to shift their perception no longer viewing

them as threats, but as individuals striving to transform their lives for the better.

Arising from issues of spiritual alienation, the lack of structured mentorship, and the absence of an established institutional system within the Huwal Habib dhikr community, this community engagement program is not intended to act as a passive observer, but rather as an active partner in supporting the community's transformation process. Field realities show that the desire for change among former gang members is strong, yet it is not supported by a system capable of sustaining and maintaining the consistency of that transformation. Therefore, this engagement initiative is aimed at strengthening both the spiritual and social foundations of the community through approaches that directly address their practical and contextual needs.

Several key activities are specifically designed to provide intensive mentoring, particularly for new members who are still in the early stages of their life transition. In addition,

a follow up development program is also being prepared, consisting of basic religious teachings, character guidance, and community leadership training, so that each member can grow holistically both spiritually and socially.

Another equally important effort is strengthening the community's institutional structure. This includes forming a simple organizational system, formally registering members, and designing a community work program to ensure that the continuity of the dhikr movement does not rely solely on a central figure, but evolves into a well organized collective culture.

To address these needs, the program adopts a participatory approach, in which community members are not treated as passive recipients of aid, but as active subjects who help determine the direction of activities, implementation methods, and success evaluation. This approach aligns with the principles of community development, which aim to build self-reliance based on awareness and internal potential.

The implementation method is designed in an integrated manner, covering the following aspects:

- a. *Observation of real needs in the field, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the spiritual, social, and emotional conditions of the community members;*

- b. *Facilitation of focus group discussions (FGDs), as a means to identify potentials, aspirations, and the obstacles they directly face;*
- c. *Spiritual mentoring during dhikr activities, not only by participating in the sessions but also by reinforcing the aspects of meaning, sincerity, and proper conduct in dhikr;*
- d. *Development of a structured guidance model, in the form of simple modules or manuals that the community can use to independently carry out future mentoring activities.*

In this way, the community engagement is not top-down or merely an external intervention, but rather grows from within the community itself, deeply rooted in the values they understand and live by. It is hoped that the activities carried out during this community service program (KKN) will have a long-term impact fostering the spiritual and social independence of the former gang members' community and strengthening their position as legitimate and respected members of society.

6. *Spiritual Transformation*

Participants reported significant spiritual growth through regular dhikr routines. The practice, centered on the phrase “Huwal Habib” (He is the Beloved), fosters a sense of closeness to God, aligning with the concept of ihsan (excellence in faith) as explained by Buya Ridho. Interviews revealed that 80% of participants experienced reduced anxiety and increased inner peace, reinforcing findings that dhikr enhances psychological well-being. For instance, one participant stated, “Dhikr helps me feel calm and reminds me to stay away from my old habits.” Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) highlighted a sense of collective spiritual accountability, with participants encouraging one another to maintain their religious practices.

7. *Social Care Initiatives*

The Huwal Habib group extends its spiritual practice into acts of social care, such as organizing cleanup drives in the slum areas of Keputih and distributing food aid to impoverished residents. Document analysis shows that the group conducted ten community service events over five months, involving 90% of its members. Participants noted that the dhikr sessions inspired a sense

of responsibility toward their community, in line with Islamic values of compassion and service. One facilitator remarked, "After dhikr, we talk about how to help our neighbors turning our faith into action." (Buya Ridho, 2025)

8. Community Reintegration

The dhikr routine has facilitated the reintegration of former gang members into society. Observations indicate improved interpersonal relationships, with participants transitioning from social isolation to active community engagement. Around 70% of participants reported securing stable employment or starting small businesses, attributing their motivation to the group's spiritual support and guidance. This aligns with research showing that Islamic spirituality fosters positive behavior and social bonding. Community members outside the group also noted a decline in delinquent behavior in Keputih Subdistrict, giving much of the credit to the influence of the Huwal Habib group and its members. (Noor, 2024).

In the research we conducted, we found that the routine practice of collective dhikr within a community of former gang members plays a highly significant role in strengthening their spiritual dimension while also fostering social awareness and care for others. These findings are categorized into two interrelated main themes: spiritual empowerment and the formation of solidarity and compassion toward fellow human beings.

This dhikr routine was initiated by Mr. Muchlisin Ridho, an alumnus of Pondok Pesantren Bumi Damai Al-Muhubbin, located in Tambakberas, Jombang. After completing his studies at the pesantren, he returned to his hometown. Equipped with the religious knowledge he had acquired, he began applying what he had learned by continuing and expanding upon the community-based religious activities previously initiated by his father, who was a respected religious leader in Kelurahan Keputih.

Interestingly, Kelurahan Keputih is home to many alumni of prominent Islamic boarding schools, particularly Pondok Pesantren Tambakberas. As a result, the influence of Tambakberas culture is deeply embedded in the area. However, despite the large number of pesantren graduates, only a portion of them are actively engaged in community service.

As is often the case in major urban areas, the population in Keputih is highly diverse, and not everyone is well-informed about Islamic teachings and religious law (syariah). This presents a significant challenge for pesantren alumni, including Mr. Ridho, and it has motivated him to reach out to and embrace those in the community who lack a solid foundation in religious knowledge.

This was the foundation upon which the Huwal Habib dhikr routine was established, led by Mr. Ridho. It began with just one or two people, and now more than 100 individuals regularly participate. These individuals come from a wide variety of backgrounds including former contract killers, ex-gang leaders, former drug dealers, and many others. Yet Mr. Ridho remains undaunted, guided by his personal motto: "Whoever does good will be rewarded with goodness in return."

B. Discussion

*The majority of respondents stated that, prior to joining the Huwal Habib dhikr routine, they experienced emotional instability, anger, and inner turmoil. They admitted that their previous involvement in criminal and violent activities occurred during a period of prolonged emotional instability and a lack of clear direction. Even after leaving that life behind, they were still haunted by feelings of regret. As part of their life reflection, they often view their dark past as a valuable *lessona* turning point to improve themselves and pursue a better, more meaningful life.*

After regularly participating in the Huwal Habib dhikr in Kelurahan Keputih, they began to gradually experience changes within themselves. The dhikr they recited slowly brought inner peace, nurtured a sense of fear and reverence for Allah SWT, and sparked hope for a better future. No matter how dark a person's past may be, there is always hope for a brighter tomorrow.

One of the respondents, Mr. Rudi, a former contract killer, shared his testimony: "Every time I recite the Huwal Habib wirid, my heart feels calmer, Sir. I used to get angry easily, but now I'm more patient. It feels like I'm being cleansed from within."

*The behavior described above reflects practices that align with Islamic spirituality and the concept of *Ihsan*. The concept of *Ihsan* (excellence in faith), rooted in Islamic theology, emphasizes worshiping God as if one sees Him,*

fostering a deep spiritual connection and heightened moral awareness. It is grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an, such as in Surah Ar-Ra'd: 28, which highlights dhikr as a means to attain peace of heart. The discussion links the observed spiritual transformation among participants to Ihsan, as the dhikr routine— particularly the recitation of "Hawal Habib" cultivates a sense of closeness to God, reduces anxiety, and strengthens ethical behavior (Indriyani, 2024).

In the book Miftahu Al-Falah wa Mishbahu Al-Arwah by Ibn 'Atha'illah As-Sakandari, it is mentioned that there are 68 benefits for those who regularly engage in dhikr. Nearly all of the benefits listed in the book carry a Sufi tone, with the main goals being to attain peace of heart, tranquility of the soul, clarity of mind, and the pleasure and love of Allah SWT.

The only benefit of dhikr related to the physical body, according to As-Sakandari, is the strengthening of bodily organs. This is understandable, considering that he was a great Sufi scholar who focused more on religious sciences than on biology or the physical sciences.

physiology. Nevertheless, this does not mean that dhikr only benefits spiritual health beyond that, dhikr also offers benefits for physical well-being.

Ibn 'Atha'illah As-Sakandari also emphasized that one of the primary purposes of dhikr is to purify the heart and bring peace to the soul.

Allah SWT says: "Indeed, the believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts tremble; and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith, and upon their Lord they rely."

The Virtue of Dhikr in Hadith

In several hadiths, there are strong recommendations to engage in dhikr, both during available moments and at specific times, such as after prayer. These hadiths offer abundant praise for those who engage in dhikr, whether in groups or individually.

مَنْ قَوْمٌ اجْتَمَعُوا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى لَا يَرِيدُونَ بِذَلِكَ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ إِلَّا نَادَاهُمْ مَنَادٌ مَغْفُورًا لَكُمْ قَدْ بَدَلْتُ لَكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ حَسَنَاتٍ " "مَنْ السَّمَاءُ قَوْمُوا

The meaning is: "No group of people gathers to remember Allah, seeking His pleasure, except that a caller will call out from the heavens, 'Your sins have

been forgiven, and you have been rewarded in place of your sins." (Hadith narrated by Ahmad, Abu Ya'la, and al-Tabarani from Anas bin Malik RA)

This hadith shows that dhikr not only brings peace to the heart, but also serves as a means of forgiveness of sins and a source of reward from Allah SWT. Therefore, engaging in regular dhikr, whether individually or in congregation, can be an essential part of the spiritual journey toward drawing closer to Him.

The social aspect gained from this dhikr activity is also highly significant. It serves as a meeting point that strengthens the sense of brotherhood among the members. They no

longer feel isolated or rejected, but rather accepted within a community that shares common values. A spirit of mutual support grows, and various social initiatives begin to emerge. which are born out of shared awareness. In fact, several positive effects of this activity are felt not only by its members but also by the surrounding community.

In addition, the practice of Huwal Habib dhikr helps preserve five essential aspects: faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property emphasizing the promotion of community well-being and social justice. It provides a framework for aligning spiritual practice with social benefit. Based on the theory of Maqasid al-Shari'ah, the social care initiatives of the Huwal Habib community can reflect the preservation of faith and the promotion of societal welfare. The dhikr sessions inspire participants to translate spiritual values into concrete actions that address the social and environmental challenges in Keputih. (Yusof, 2019).

Here are several forms of positive effects related to the community. Social Service Activities

a. Assisting Underprivileged Residents

Community members often support those in need through a unique method collecting donations during their regular dhikr gatherings. Using a repurposed cigarette tin, they contribute small amounts of money with sincerity and the hope that their actions will become a source of blessing. Almost every year, the Huwal Habib group organizes charity events for orphans and provides basic necessities to the underprivileged in the Keputih area. In fact, these contributions have helped many orphans continue their education.

b. Mentoring New Members

Especially for those still struggling to break free from their old habits. Once they experience personal transformation, they begin inviting others who were once like them, aiming to show that everyone no matter how dark their past has the right to become a better person and find purpose in life.

c. *Supporting Fellow Dhikr Community Members*

Members also support one another within the dhikr community, fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual care as they walk the path of spiritual and social renewal together. One of the religious leaders guiding the community, Buya Ridho, said: "Now, they compete in doing good. In the past, they competed in shows of strength; now, they compete in giving charity and helping others."

The dhikr activities have also become a symbolic medium that has transformed the way society views these former gang members. Once feared and avoided, they are now starting to be respected as individuals who have changed and even as agents of transformation in their communities. They are frequently invited to speak at youth forums, mosque events, and religious training programs.

This demonstrates that the reconstruction of social identity can occur naturally through spiritual approaches and community involvement. This success serves as evidence that an approach combining spiritual and social elements is far more effective than one based solely on punishment or stigma.

Documentation



Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the practice of communal dhikr within a community of former gang members plays a significant role in strengthening spiritual aspects and fostering social awareness. Through dhikr and wirid (repetitive devotional recitations), these individuals gradually undergo inner transformation from people filled with anger to individuals who are calmer and more hopeful. The practice of dhikr becomes a turning point in their lives, offering new meaning and guiding them toward a more religious and positive way of living.

Moreover, dhikr also serves as a social medium that nurtures solidarity and empathy. The community functions not only as a place of worship, but also as a space for mutual support among members and with the wider public. Activities such as providing aid to orphans, supporting the poor (dhuafa), and offering moral guidance to new members illustrate the transformation of values within them. This phenomenon proves that a faith-based, community-centered approach can be an effective instrument for both spiritual and social reintegration and for eliminating the negative stigma often attached to former offenders.

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