

Spiritual Education and Secularism in Modern Turkey: The Educational Legacy of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and the Nurcu Movement

Mutsanna Bin Muhammad

STAI Muhammadiyah Paciran

Email: mutsanamuhammad@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT. The works of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, especially *Risale-i Nur*, contain the foundations of Islamic thought that are not only theological in nature but also present a transformative model of spiritual education in the face of the crisis of modernity and the wave of secularism. This study aims to explore *Risale-i Nur* as an alternative interpretation of Islamic spiritual values and examine its epistemological relevance in building the paradigm of contemporary Islamic education. A qualitative hermeneutic approach is used with the method of literature review, through a critical reading of Nursi's primary texts and relevant academic secondary literature. The main findings show that *Risale-i Nur* offers a model of spiritual education based on monotheism, dhikr, and intellectual reflection that is emancipatory and integral. Education is not only seen as a cognitive process, but as an effort to purify oneself (tazkiyah al-nafs), the formation of morals, and the reconstruction of social consciousness. Within this framework, education becomes a medium of epistemological resistance to the fragmentation of knowledge and the secularization of the modern education system. Nursi unites the dimensions of faith, knowledge, and charity in a system that frees human beings from spiritual-rational dualism. The main findings show that *Risale-i Nur* offers a model of spiritual education based on monotheism, dhikr, and intellectual reflection that is emancipatory and integral. Education is not only seen as a cognitive process, but as an effort to purify oneself (tazkiyah al-nafs), the formation of morals, and the reconstruction of social consciousness. Within this framework, education becomes a medium of epistemological resistance to the fragmentation of knowledge and the secularization of the modern education system. Nursi unites the dimensions of faith, knowledge, and charity in a system that frees human beings from spiritual-rational dualism.

Keywords: *Risale-i, Spiritual education, Transformative education*

INTRODUCTION

The socio-political transformation in Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century presented a new face of the state that placed secularism as the main ideological foundation. Through the reforms carried out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, education was used as a strategic instrument to order society and reduce the role of religion in the public sphere. Religious

institutions were restricted, and Islamic teachings were codified to fit the state's agenda. In this context, education became not only an arena for the formation of knowledge and skills, but also a hegemonic medium that systematically reproduced secular and rationalistic values (Izmaylov, Imamutdinova, & Mefodeva, 2019). This creates tension between the religious identity of the community and the narrative of the country's modernity.

In the midst of this situation, there has been an intellectual response from a number of Muslim scholars and thinkers who seek to maintain the authenticity of Islamic teachings without getting caught up in the polarization between traditionalism and modernism. One of the central figures in this dynamic is Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, a thinker, mufasssır, and educational activist who offers a unique approach through his monumental works, *Risale-i Nur* (Gaffar, Suud, Ilyas, & Ridho, 2021). This work not only functions as an interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an but also as a pedagogical framework that synergizes spiritual values, scientific rationality, and social awareness. In Nursi's narrative, education is not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the process of soul formation (*tazkiyatun nafs*), which aims to build individual piety and social transformation.

The movement born from Nursi's thoughts, namely Nurcu, developed as a form of cultural resistance to the dominance of state secularism. Through non-formal education systems such as halaqah and independent madrasas, this group succeeded in nurturing the Islamic spirit of the younger generation without frontal confrontation with the state. The spiritual education model they developed not only represents the synthesis between science and faith, but also shows how religious communities are able to create alternative spaces for spiritual learning in the midst of the ideological pressures of modernity (Aji & Ziyah, 2023). This phenomenon makes education an arena of ideological contestation that brings together religious interpretations with socio-political practices in a dynamic and transformative manner.

In the midst of the current of secularism that hegemonizes Turkey's national education system, *Risale-i Nur* is present as an alternative form of interpretation that offers a spiritual approach to knowledge and character formation. In contrast to classical interpretations that tend to focus on linguistic and legal aspects, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi interprets the Qur'an as a book that also answers the contemporary problems of the ummah, especially in the realm of education and morality. *Risale-i Nur* contains an in-depth reading of the relationship between faith, reason, and science in the modern context, where education should not only shape intellectual prowess, but also strengthen the spiritual consciousness of the individual (Yazicioglu, 2013). This approach is an epistemological critique of the secular education system that denies the transcendental dimension in the learning process.

In *Risale-i Nur*, Said Nursi built a conception of education based on the harmony between revelation and reason, which he called "ta'dib ruhani." Education is not merely an attempt at cognitive rationalization, but a deep spiritual development process, which serves to connect human beings with the essence of their existence. By combining Sufistic methods and rational-religious approaches, this interpretation presents spirituality as the center of Islamic epistemology. This is where critical power lies, *Risale-i Nur* (Darda, Rochmat, Aydin, & Bayangkara, 2023): It shifts the orientation of education from just instrumentalizing knowledge to a process of self-meaning that relies on monotheism and morals. Values such as honesty, patience, and sincerity are positioned as essential basic competencies for students.

The Nurcu movement, which was born from the inspiration of the interpretation, formed a non-formal education system that rejected the epistemic hegemony of the state. In this framework, education is not only understood as a reproduction of the curriculum, but also as a medium of da'wah and social transformation. Through recitation groups (*dershane*), halaqah, and learning communities, Nurcu creates an alternative space for autonomous and community-based spiritual learning. Unlike the public education system that is co-opted by the ideology of secularism, Nurcu's

education presents a transcendental pedagogical model that is oriented towards fostering spiritual character and social commitment.

The importance of studying spiritual education in the Nurcu movement lies in its ability to present epistemological resistance without violence. In this case, education becomes an arena of subtle but effective resistance to the penetration of secular ideologies. Nurcu rejects the dichotomy between religion and science, and builds a counternarrative that repositions education as part of worship and moral struggle (Evans, 2011). Top analysis *Risale-i Nur* and its implementation in Nurcu education is not only relevant to understanding the dynamics of Islamic education in Turkey, but also an important contribution to the comparative study of Islamic education systems dealing with secular modernity in various global contexts.

In the context of Turkey's transition to a secular state, education became a complex ideological field of contestation. The state systematically removed religious symbols from the curriculum and public sphere, replacing the spiritual foundations of Islamic education with the secular and positivistic values of Western modernism. In such a situation, a crucial question arises: how did Bediüzzaman Said Nursi formulate an epistemological strategy through *Risale-i Nur* as an effort to maintain Islamic spirituality in the midst of the hegemonic pressures of the state? This issue becomes even more significant when considering that *Risale-i Nur* serves not only as a work of interpretation, but also as a philosophical and pedagogical foundation for the Nurcu movement that is widespread among the Turkish Muslim community.

The main problem in this study lies in how *Risale-i Nur* is translated into the praxis of spiritual education by the Nurcu community in response to the crisis of spiritual identity in secular society. The questions that arise are not only limited to the conceptual dimension of the text, but also touch on institutional and practical aspects: how is education rooted in *Risale-i Nur*'s values practiced outside the formal system of the state? How is Nurcu's educational strategy able to build individual spiritual resilience while maintaining the collective identity of Muslims without being caught up in direct political confrontation? This study seeks to answer these questions by exploring the relationship between texts, praxis, and resistance in contemporary Islamic education.

This research aims to examine in depth the construction of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's thought on spiritual education in his monumental work, *Risale-i Nur*, as well as how these interpretations form an alternative epistemological framework in dealing with the secularism of the Turkish state. By placing *Risale-i Nur* as a text that transcends the dimensions of conventional interpretation, this study explores how Nursi builds a synthesis between the values of faith, reason, and knowledge in shaping a distinctive system of spiritual education. This research also examines how these values are practically internalized by the Nurcu movement through non-formal education models and independent spiritual learning communities.

More broadly, this study aims to uncover how *Risale-i Nur-based spiritual education* plays a role as an epistemological resistance strategy to the ideology of secularism. By delving into the educational practices developed by the Nurcu Islamic boarding school, this study will identify pedagogical patterns, community structures, and mechanisms for the transmission of spiritual values that are able to survive in the midst of the pressures of modernity. The ultimate goal of this study is to offer a theoretical framework that can enrich the discourse of contemporary Islamic education, especially in the face of global ideological challenges such as secularism, positivism, and moral reductionism in education.

Previous studies of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and the Nurcu movement have generally focused on the theological, historical, and political aspects of the movement in the modern Turkish social landscape. Most studies have highlighted the role of *Risale-i Nur* as a religious text or as a form of social resistance to secular authoritarianism, but not many have specifically addressed the pedagogical aspects and transformation of spiritual values in the educational praxis of the Nurcu community. Even in contemporary interpretive studies, *Risale-i Nur* is more often positioned as a

sufistic or reformist work, without seeing its potential as a foundation of alternative education that integrates the intellectual and spiritual dimensions integrally.

This gap shows that there is an important gap in the literature that needs to be filled, namely the relationship between religious interpretation and the spirituality-based education system in response to the ideological pressures of the modern state. There has not been enough academic exploration that examines how spiritual education in the Nurcu movement functions as a systematic and organized form of epistemological resistance. Thus, this research contributes to broadening the horizons of Islamic educational studies by raising alternative educational models rooted in community interpretation and experience, and offers an interdisciplinary approach between the study of interpretation, the sociology of education, and the critical theory of modernity.

This research offers a new approach in interpreting *Risale-i Nur* not merely as a religious work, but as an epistemological construction of Islamic education that unites spiritual, intellectual, and social pragmatic dimensions. The main novelty lies in the attempt to position *Risale-i Nur* as a transformative pedagogic framework that transcends the dichotomy between traditional education and secular modern education. Not many studies have highlighted how this work of tafsir is used as the foundation of spiritual education in the form of an independent, systematic, and adaptive learning community to the ideological pressures of the state. By bridging the study of interpretation and pedagogy, this study expands the scope of Islamic educational literature and offers an alternative paradigm in designing a relevant spiritual education system in the midst of the challenges of globalization and secularism.

The academic justification of this research is reinforced by the urgent need to evaluate and develop an Islamic educational model capable of addressing the challenges of modernity without losing its transcendental dimension. In today's global context, where education tends to get caught up in instrumentalist logic and lose its ethical orientation, the experience of the Nurcu movement offers important insights into how education can become a space for the maintenance of spiritual values and resistance to moral decadence. This research not only makes an empirical contribution to the study of Turkey and religious movements, but also contributes a theoretical foundation that can be used to design contextual models of Islamic education, both in the Muslim world and in the broader global educational discourse.

METHOD

The data in this study were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Said Nursi's main works, especially *Risale-i Nur*'s collection of treatises, such as *Sözler* (The Words), *Mektubat* (The Letters), and *Lem'alar* (The Flashes). These works are the main conceptual foundation for constructing Nurcu's model of spiritual education. Secondary sources include related academic literature, both in the form of books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and research reports that discuss Nursi's thought, Islamic education, Sufism, and transformative education. The data were analyzed using philosophical hermeneutic methods in an interpretive framework. The steps of the analysis included: (1) the historical understanding and biographical context of Said Nursi; (2) thematic reading of the text to find key ideas about education, spirituality, social transformation, and science; (3) interpretation of meaning based on the principles of hermeneutic interpretation; and (4) critical reflection to relate the meaning of the text to the reality of contemporary Islamic education.

This analysis model also pays attention to the dialectic between text and context, namely, how *the text of Risale-i Nur* is read and interpreted dynamically according to the needs of the times. The author uses content analysis techniques to categorize the main ideas into frameworks: educational vision, educational goals, pedagogic methods, and social-spiritual transformation. This process involves cross-validation with Islamic education theories and transformative education to strengthen the accuracy of the analysis. To ensure the interpretive validity and validity of the data,

this study applies triangulation of sources by comparing various scientific literature and the opinions of experts in the fields of Islamic thought, Sufism, and education. In addition, the researcher's reflexivity is also an important part in maintaining objectivity, where the researcher consciously evaluates his ideological and epistemological position towards the text and context studied.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Political-Secularism Constellation in Modern Turkey

Turkey's political transformation in the early 20th century marked a major shift from the Ottoman Islamic caliphate system to a modern nation-state based on the principles of secularism. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey underwent a radical process of institutional secularization, including in the fields of law, administration, and especially education. These reforms removed religious authority from the public sphere and replaced it with a state structure that systematically marginalized the role of religion (Fadil et al., 2023). Religious education was removed from the national curriculum, madrassas were closed, and the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet. These measures were not only administrative changes, but were a social engineering strategy to form a new national identity free from religious influences.

The secularism applied in Turkey is not merely a principle of separation between religion and state, but has become a state ideology that is active in defining the boundaries and role of religion in society. Education is one of the main tools in this project, serving as a mechanism for the formation of modern citizens who are rational, scientific, and loyal to the state, not to religious authorities (Nor & Ibrahim, 2023). Turkish secularism has an authoritarian character because it strictly regulates religious expression in public spaces, including the use of religious symbols and religious practices in schools. This has resulted in the emergence of tensions between the country's secularization project and the religious aspirations of the Muslim community.

Education in Turkey is not only an arena for the transmission of knowledge, but also an ideological battleground between state secularism and Islamic spirituality. The state adopts a positivist approach in curriculum design and learning methods, which indirectly ignores the moral and transcendental dimensions of the educational process. Religious education is considered an obstacle to progress and modernization, and is therefore suppressed and subordinated in the formal education system (Ulpah, Irawan, Priatna, Maburri, & Muhtadin, 2024). This led to a spiritual vacuum in public education which, in the long run, encouraged the emergence of various non-formal religious movements as a form of resistance.

One of the most significant responses to this condition comes from Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, who developed an educational approach based on Islamic spirituality as an effort to re-introduce divine values in the intellectual and social life of Turkish society. Through the work *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi offers an alternative interpretation of the relationship between science and faith, as well as strongly criticizes the secular education system that he considers to ignore the spiritual aspects of man. Nursi not only opposes secularism theologically, but also establishes an epistemological basis that unites revelation and reason as the foundation of a complete and comprehensive education (Alfiyanto, Rijal, & Silahuddin, 2023). In this case, *Risale-i Nur* becomes not only a work of interpretation, but also a contextual manifesto of Islamic education.

This presentation shows that the political-secular conditions in Turkey have created an educational landscape full of ideological conflicts, where education is never neutral, but is always linked to the project of power. In these conditions, intellectual responses such as those carried out by Said Nursi are very important to be studied as a model of epistemological resistance to the single narrative of secularism. Through community-based spiritual education, such as that developed by the Nurcu movement, it appears that education can function as an arena for the reconstruction of religious identity and an alternative space for the formation of public morality. The study of these dynamics not only enriches the discourse of Islamic education but also opens up new possibilities for reconciliation between spirituality and modernity in a global context.

Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Nurcu Movement

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960) was one of the most influential Islamic thinkers and reformers in the intellectual history of modern Turkey. He was born in Nus, a small village in Eastern Anatolia, and received his religious education traditionally in various madrassas in the region. From a young age, Nursi showed extraordinary intelligence and mastered various Islamic disciplines such as tafsir, fiqh, kalam, as well as logic and philosophy. Nicknames *Bediüzzaman* (The Miracle of the Times) were pinned to him because of his intellectual capacity that surpassed that of most scholars of his time (Sethi, Jalal, & Haq, 2022). But what distinguishes Nursi from her contemporaries is her courage to associate traditional sciences with modern science and her anxiety about the condition of Muslims under the pressure of secular modernity.

At the beginning of her intellectual career, Nursi was known for her work *Said Nursi Lama*, which was polemic and political, including his involvement in public debates on educational reform and the role of Islam in the country. He was even involved in Turkey's post-war Supreme National Assembly, hoping that Islam could become the moral foundation of the new country (Yusoff, Yilmaz, & Ebrahimi, 2013). However, after witnessing firsthand the marginalization of religion by Atatürk's secular regime, Nursi chose a contemplative and intellectual path through the so-called phases of *Said Nursi Baru*, which is marked with writing *Risale-i Nur*—a work of tafsir that focuses on faith strengthening, spiritual education, and intellectual resistance to secularism.

In *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi rejects the dichotomy between religious science and modern science. He builds an epistemological framework that unites reason and revelation and emphasizes that ideal education must include the spiritual and rational dimensions in a balanced manner. For Nursi, the crisis of Muslims is not solely due to poverty or technological backwardness, but because of a deep crisis of faith (Rahim, 2018). Therefore, she sees the need for educational reform that not only emphasizes the technical aspect but also spiritual revitalization. Education, according to Nursi, is a process of forming a whole human being who has faith, critical thinking, and is socially responsible.

The Nurcu movement grew out of the spirit and principles of Nursi's thought. Unlike other Islamist movements that took the political path, Nurcu preferred cultural and educational strategies as a means of social transformation. This community formed a network of *classrooms* (study houses) throughout the territory of Turkey, where its followers studied and discussed *Risale-i Nur* collectively (Khamami, 2023). This method allowed Nursi's thought to be widely disseminated even in the midst of political pressure and restrictions on religious activities. The success of this movement lies in its ability to form an autonomous and community-based non-formal education system, with a focus on moral development, spiritual awareness, and the resilience of religious identity.

Although informal, the educational structure in the Nurcu movement is not spontaneous or random. Rather, it shows an organized, decentralized pattern, but has a common goal and a distinctive pedagogical approach. Interaction in *the classroom* is dialogical, where participants learn in a participatory manner through discussion and deep reflection on texts, *Risale-i Nur* (Darda et al., 2023). This process results in learning that is not only cognitive, but also affective and moral. This movement avoids harsh forms of indoctrination and instead encourages inner awareness as the foundation of social change. Thus, education in the Nurcu movement becomes a model of spiritual pedagogy that emphasizes self-transformation as the beginning of societal change.

It is within this framework that it is important to place the figure of Said Nursi as more than just a religious thinker. He was the architect of a spirituality-based educational movement that survived and flourished under repressive and secularistic conditions. His intellectual biography reflects the transformation from political activism to the practice of education and spirituality, a path that has proved its effectiveness in building a broad and lasting social base. Through the intellectual and educational legacy he has formed, Nursi has offered one of the most powerful examples of how a Muslim thinker can respond to the challenges of modernity in a way that is reflective, non-confrontational, and firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Interpretation of Education in Risale-I Nur

Educational thinking in *Risale-i Nur* is Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's direct response to the spiritual and epistemological crisis faced by Muslims in the era of Turkish secularization. Within the framework of his interpretation, Nursi builds an educational concept based on the unity between revelation (naql) and reason ('aql), with the main goal of strengthening faith in the midst of a wave of Western materialism and positivism (Siraj & Husni, 2020). *Risale-i Nur* interprets the verses of the Qur'an contextually, making them relevant to modern problems without losing their transcendental spirit. For Nursi, education is not just an instrument to achieve technological progress, but a means of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) and tahzibul akhlaq (moral construction).

One of the important concepts in Nursi's interpretation of education is the integral relationship between science ('ilm) and faith (iman). He rejects the separation between religious science and worldly science as constructed by the secular education system. In *Risale-i Nur*, science is supposed to guide man to know and love God (Alfiyanto et al., 2023). Every discipline, be it natural, social, or humanities, according to Nursi, is a window to understand the signs of Allah's greatness (kauniyah verses). Thus, education should not stop at cognitive mastery, but must foster spiritual awareness and moral responsibility towards others and the environment.

Education in Nursi's view also emphasizes the importance of the hereafter orientation as the basis for learning motivation. In the context of secularism that emphasizes worldly orientation, *Risale-i Nur* offers a profound correction by returning the purpose of education to the development of the Plenary Human Being (Insan Kamil) (Mohamad Mat, Noh, Junid, Wan Khairuldin, & Yusof, 2024). He stated that the crisis of modern civilization is the result of widespread spiritual ignorance, not merely technological backwardness. Therefore, education must form human beings who are aware of their mission as caliphs on earth, not just as economically productive agents. This indicates that education in Nursi's perspective is holistic, integrative, and teleological.

Furthermore, *Risale-i Nur* contains a distinctive pedagogical approach, namely the use of reflective and contemplative methods in the learning process. Nursi encourages students to relate knowledge to inner experiences and daily life. Education is not a mechanistic process based on memorization, but a dialectical process between knowledge, spiritual experience, and character formation. This method indicates a phenomenological approach in Nursi's interpretation of education, which makes the subjectivity of students an important part of the learning process. This makes *Risale-i Nur* relevant to modern learning approaches that emphasize personalization and internalization of values.

Another important aspect of education, according to *Risale-i Nur*, is the role of teachers as spiritual guides, not just material facilitators. Nursi emphasized that teachers must be moral and spiritual role models for students. The relationship between teacher and student is not only instructional, but also spiritual. In this case, the educational process resembles the relationship between students and mursyid in the Sufism tradition. Teachers are responsible not only for the transmission of knowledge, but also for the formation of the personality and guidance of the student's soul. This shows the existence of a strong sufistic dimension in the Nursi education system, although it is packaged in a rational and contextual framework.

In *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi also inserted a criticism of the state education system, which he considered to produce a generation that was weak in faith and morals. He said that the secular system has separated reason from revelation, thus creating a spiritual void that endangers society. Secular education, according to Nursi, only produces "scientists who are dry souls" and "rulers without moral direction". Therefore, he calls for a fundamental epistemological reform, namely restoring the position of revelation as the main source of knowledge that guides reason, not the other way around. This criticism shows *Risale-i Nur*'s position as a text that is loaded with socio-cultural content, not just theological.

The transformational dimension in Nursi's interpretation of education lies in its ability to make education a path of simultaneous individual and social change. She not only targets institutional reform, but also a paradigm shift in Muslims' thinking towards science and life. Through contextual reading of the Qur'an and spiritual learning, *Risale-i Nur* forms an education movement that is resistant to ideological pressure. This proves that value-based education not only survives but can grow and spread even in a repressive environment. This model of education is particularly relevant in the context of the contemporary Muslim world that faces the challenges of globalization and the erosion of values.

Overall, the educational interpretation in *Risale-i Nur* offers a strong conceptual framework for the development of an integrative, spiritual, and socially real-based Islamic education. By bringing together the dimensions of revelation, reason, and praxis in an epistemological unity, Nursi builds a vision of education that is not only normative but also applicative. This interpretation deserves to be studied more broadly because it not only offers a critique of secular education, but also provides a systemic alternative rooted in Islamic tradition and at the same time open to modernity. This research, thus, opens up space for a critical dialogue between classical texts and contemporary educational challenges within a progressive Islamic framework.

Nurcu Islamic Boarding School Education Model

The Nurcu Islamic boarding school education model is a praxis manifestation of the educational interpretation developed by Said Nursi in *Risale-i Nur*. Although Turkey does not recognize Islamic boarding schools like in Indonesia, the Nurcu movement has succeeded in forming an informal education network that imitates the function of pesantren as an institution for intellectual and spiritual regeneration. This model is decentralized, community-based, and relies on a non-formal learning relationship between supervisors (abi/abla) and students (Rahim, 2018). This is a tactical strategy to avoid the repression of the secular Turkish state, while creating an autonomous space for the reproduction of distinctive Islamic values.

The main feature of the Nurcu educational model is the integration of spirituality, intellectuality, and social praxis. In the tradition of the Nurcu Islamic boarding school, text learning *Risale-i Nur* was carried out collectively in small assemblies called the *Classroom*. This place is not only a study space, but also a center for character development and the strengthening of social solidarity (Siddiq, 2021). The learning process does not take place vertically-authoritatively like in formal schools, but is horizontal-participatory, which allows dialogue, reflection, and deep internalization of values.

This system shows a methodological affinity with pesantren education in Indonesia, especially in the aspects of book-based learning, cultural student-teacher relations, and emphasis on practicing religious values in daily life. However, the Nurcu pesantren is unique in its epistemological approach. In contrast to traditional pesantren, which tends to be textual and turats-based, the Nurcu pesantren presents contextual readings of the Qur'an, using rational and sufistic approaches at the same time. This makes the Nurcu educational model a form of "transformative modern pesantren" that answers the challenges of the times while still being grounded in Islamic authenticity.

In practice, the Nurcu Islamic boarding school not only focuses on the transfer of knowledge but also strongly emphasizes aspects of spiritual and moral transformation of students. The reading of *Risale-i Nur* is designed not only as an intellectual study, but as a process of tazkiyah and the formation of an integral Islamic worldview. This is in accordance with the spirit of *the Kamil people* in Sufism, where education plays the role of a wasilah towards self-perfection and actualization of spiritual potential. The educational process is not disconnected from the dimension of ubudiyah and existential attachment to God.

One of the strengths of this model is its connection to social reality. The Nurcu community actively engages itself in community life through strengthening the community's economy, empowering youth, and advocating for Islamic values peacefully. Education does not stop in the

classroom or *dershane*, but is embodied in social actions that reflect Qur'anic morals. In this case, Nurcu education is more like a spirituality-based social movement, not just a teaching institution. This makes the Nurcu pesantren a prototype of community-based education that combines values, knowledge, and charity.

Another advantage of this educational model lies in its ability to survive and develop despite being faced with political pressure and formal bans. Nursi and her followers managed to develop education without physical buildings, formal curriculum, or state legality, but were still able to produce a generation of Muslims who were intellectuals and committed to Islamic values. This flexibility of structure and ideological strength is what makes Nurcu's education very contextual and resilient in the face of changing times. The Nurcu Islamic Boarding School proves that quality education does not have to rely on the state system, but on the strength of values and community.

In a global context, Nurcu's educational model provides inspiration for the development of alternative Islamic education that is not bureaucratic, but still transformative. The *dershane pattern*, although simple, has become the basis for the formation of the collective and spiritual consciousness of Turkish Muslims, which then spread to various countries. This is proof that the Islamic education system can reach a wide audience without relying on formal institutionalization. Social movement-based education, such as Nurcu, can be a convergent model between pesantren traditions, da'wah movements, and modern non-formal education systems.

Thus, the Nurcu pesantren model offers a synthesis between classical Islamic values and contextual-modern educational methods. It is not only an education system, but an epistemological and social movement that makes education a way to improve the ummah comprehensively. In this framework, the Nurcu pesantren can be reflected as a prototype of *Islamic transformative education*, which is an Islamic education model that not only conveys knowledge but also transforms humans and society as a whole.

Spiritual Education as a Resistance to Secularism

Nurcu's educational model has significant relevance to be studied and adapted in the context of Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, especially in responding to the challenges of the times marked by social disruption, digitalization, and spirituality crises. Indonesian Islamic boarding schools as the oldest Islamic educational institution, have a flexible and resilient character in the face of change (Kholis, 2018). In this context, the basic principles of Nurcu education, such as collectivity, transformative spirituality, and community-based learning, can strengthen the resilience of pesantren to the pressure of modernity and secularization of education.

One of the advantages of Nurcu's adaptable model is its holistic approach to the formation of kamil people. This concept intersects closely with the values of traditional Islamic boarding school education that prioritizes the formation of morals, examples, and spiritual relationships with God. However, Nurcu introduced renewal through an emphasis on literacy of rational and scientific interpretation of the Qur'an. This opens up space for Islamic boarding schools to combine yellow book education with contemporary readings based on modern Islamic science and philosophy, in order to produce students who are not only knowledgeable but also adaptive to global issues.

Nurcu's learning practices that are not bound by formal structures are also in line with the practice of halaqah and sorogan in the pesantren tradition. This method allows flexibility in the delivery of material and a more egalitarian approach to relationships between teachers and students. This adaptation is important to answer the challenges of the digital generation that is more active, autonomous, and critical in absorbing information. The integration of the Nurcu model can encourage pedagogic reform in pesantren towards a more dialogical and reflective learning system.

On the other hand, Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia have strong social roots and a broad community base. This is an important meeting point with the Nurcu movement, which also relies on fostering a community of faith through *Classroom* and collective activities (Azhar & Anshory, 2024). Pesantren can expand their social function not only as formal and informal educational institutions, but also as centers for the empowerment of the people. The spirit of collectivity and

social responsibility in the style of Nurcu can strengthen the role of pesantren as strategic actors in social development based on Islamic values.

The Nurcu model also shows that Islamic education does not have to be tied to the state structure to be effective and transformative. This is important in the midst of the increasingly strong state intervention in the curriculum and governance of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools need to maintain their independence both ideologically and organizationally in order to remain an authentic space for the formation of Islamic character and spirituality. In this case, Nurcu's approach can inspire Islamic boarding schools to strengthen their epistemological and pedagogical autonomy without having to be separated from social and public involvement. Furthermore, the integration of the Nurcu model can also enrich the approach of da'wah to pesantren, which has been predominantly verbalistic. Nurcu shows that education is the most essential and sustainable form of da'wah, through the simultaneous formation of intellect and heart. Islamic boarding schools that adopt these values can be more effective in conveying friendly, rational, and inclusive Islamic teachings in the midst of a pluralistic society. This becomes particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia as a pluralistic country that continues to face the challenges of religious intolerance and disinformation.

The adaptation to the Nurcu model also challenges pesantren to reposition themselves in the midst of the industrial revolution 5.0, which demands a leap in innovation and global relevance. It is not enough for pesantren to only maintain tradition, but also to actively transpose Islamic values in the realm of technology, science, and contemporary issues (Harmathilda, Yuli, Hakim, & Supriyadi, 2024). By adopting a dynamic and participatory approach to Nurcu, pesantren can become a *think tank*, Islam is alive and productive in giving birth to alternative narratives to the dominance of secular Western education. In conclusion, the relevance of the Nurcu model in the context of Indonesian pesantren lies in its conformity with the basic principles of pesantren and its ability to inspire contextual, spiritual, and social transformation of Islamic education. Adapting this model does not mean copying completely, but localizing values and strategies according to local needs. With this approach, pesantren can continue to be the anchor of the archipelago's progressive and competitive Islamic culture in the global arena.

Theoretical Analysis and Conceptual Implications

Nurcu's model of spiritual education, formulated by Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, is a unique synthesis between Islamic spirituality, modern rationality, and epistemological resistance to secularism. Within the framework of transformative Islamic education, this model offers an integrative approach that not only focuses on the cognitive aspect but also shapes the affective and moral dimensions of learners (Jamshed, 2016). The spiritual values that are instilled do not stop at the personal level, but are directed at social transformation based on monotheism.

The spiritual concept in Nurcu's education is rooted in a Sufi understanding that does not move away from social reality, but rather encourages active involvement in improving the conditions of society. This is different from spirituality, which is escapist. Nurcu's spiritual education teaches that individual piety must result in social piety. Therefore, Islamic education in this model not only shapes ritually obedient human beings, but also socially responsible (Wijaya, 2022). Said Nursi emphasized that the main crisis of Muslims is not only poverty or ignorance, but the weakness of spirituality that stems from the disconnection of human beings with the Qur'an. Therefore, the solution offered is to revive the meanings of the Qur'an through education that touches the heart and intellect at the same time. This is reflected in his monumental work, *Risale-i Nur*, which acts as a spiritual book as well as an interpretation of life.

In transformative education, the ultimate goal is not just the mastery of the subject matter, but the creation of critical consciousness that is able to liberate individuals from structural and cultural oppression. Nurcu's model aligns this goal with an intellectual and contemplative da'wah approach (Owa-Onire, 2023). Education is not an instrument of domestication, but a means of

spiritual and intellectual emancipation. This process is carried out through a reflective re-reading of the texts of revelation. Nurcu's model of spiritual education also avoids the dichotomy between religious science and modern science. He views that science, when read with a clean heart and monotheistic orientation, will actually strengthen faith. This is contrary to the Western project of secularism that separates science from religion. In this context, a transformative education that adopts Nurcu's approach will emphasize epistemological reconciliation, not fragmentation of knowledge.

The educational curriculum in Nurcu's perspective is not built on the basis of the mastery of worldly skills alone, but must be directed at self-recognition (*ma'rifat an-nafs*) and the knowledge of God (*ma'rifatullah*). The educational process becomes a spiritual path that brings humans to the highest existential consciousness (Zainuri, Khojir, & Mukmin, 2023). Therefore, every lesson—whether science, mathematics, or interpretation—must be interpreted within the framework of monotheistic values. The pedagogic strategy in the Nurcu model is participatory and rooted in example. Teachers are not only teachers, but also spiritual *murabbi*. The relationship between teacher and student is based on love, respect, and togetherness in seeking the truth. This is very much in line with transformative education that rejects authoritarian models and promotes egalitarian relations in the learning process.

In terms of praxis, Nurcu's spiritual education is embodied in a learning community called *dershane*, which is a collective space where students and teachers learn *Risale-i Nur* together. This concept reflects the spirit of collectivity, parallel learning, and dialogical spirituality. *Dershane* can be an alternative model for contemporary Islamic education that is not trapped in bureaucracy and rigid formal standards. The social transformation dreamed of in Nurcu's education does not occur revolutionarily, but is evolutionary through the inner transformation of the individual. Said Nursi believes that if the human heart has been enlightened by faith and knowledge, then structural changes will follow. This approach shows a close correlation between personal ethics and public ethics in building a just and civilized Islamic society.

In the Indonesian context, Nurcu's spiritual education model has high relevance to strengthen Islamic education that is facing the challenges of globalization, materialism, and moral degradation. An approach that is not only technologically adaptive but also strong in values and spirituality is needed. Nurcu-based transformative education can be an alternative that enriches the *pesantren* and *madrasah* models that have been running in a dualism between religious and public curricula. Another advantage of Nurcu's approach is its ability to touch the younger generation through contextual language and authentic spiritual experiences. In an era of digital disruption and massive information, Muslim adolescents need a spiritual handle that makes sense and meaning. Transformative education must be able to answer its existential questions and spiritual anxieties, not just provide data and memorization.

Nurcu's spiritual education also has the power to build Islamic cosmological awareness, that the universe is God's open verses. This approach opens up opportunities for integration between ecology, science, and spirituality in contemporary Islamic education. Thus, education not only creates productive human beings but also humans who are environmentally conscious and spiritually responsible for God's creation. Criticism of the modern Islamic education system that is too caught up in quantitative assessments (grades, exams, rankings) can be answered by Nurcu's model that emphasizes spiritual qualities, depth of understanding, and character formation. This is in line with the direction of 21st-century education that emphasizes *well-being*, not just academic achievement. Institutionally, Nurcu's spiritual education provides inspiration to build more open, collaborative, and community-based Islamic educational institutions. Institutions such as *Dershane* can be developed into centers for contemporary Islamic studies, cross-disciplinary dialogue, and Qur'anic literacy movements. This is important to cultivate critical reasoning and spirituality as a whole.

Finally, Nurcu's model of spiritual education within the framework of transformative Islamic education is not only theoretically relevant but also practically urgent. In the face of the challenges of the complex times, Islamic education requires a new approach that touches the heart of the problem: the relationship of man with God, others, and nature. Nurcu's spiritual education exists not as a nostalgic sufi, but as an intellectual and spiritual strategy to build an Islamic civilization rooted in values, not just structures.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, through his monumental work *Risale-i Nur*, has built the foundation of a spiritual education interpretation that is not only contemplative but also loaded with epistemological resistance to modern secularism. Through a non-conventional interpretive approach, Nursi offers an integration of faith, science, and morality in one educational system that emphasizes the process of spiritual awareness and the formation of prophetic character. Education in Nursi's perspective is not just the transmission of knowledge, but the process of liberation from the emptiness of meaning due to the dominance of secular and positivist science. The Nurcu Islamic boarding school, which grew from the inspiration of *Risale-i Nur*, became an alternative educational model that actively revives Islamic spirituality amid the pressure of secular Turkish modernity. This educational system brings together dhikr-based learning, tafakur, and in-depth discussions of sacred texts, while fostering intellectual militancy in defending transcendent values. In this context, Nurcu's spiritual education appears not only as a cultural strategy but also as a form of resistance to epistemic colonialization. That contemporary Islamic education must move beyond a reductive technocratic approach, towards a model that is integral and transformative. *Risale-i Nur* opens up space for the development of Islamic epistemology that dialogues with the challenges of the times without losing its spiritual roots. Its academic implications enrich the global Islamic education discourse, while its practical implications encourage the formation of educational institutions that are not only critical of secular hegemony but also constructive in shaping a generation of faithful, knowledgeable, and noble character.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this article, the author used ChatGPT, an AI-based language model developed by OpenAI, to assist with language refinement, grammatical correction, and the improvement of academic writing clarity. The use of this tool was intended to support the presentation and organization of the manuscript. The selection and review of relevant literature, historical examination, critical analysis, and interpretation of the educational ideas of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and the Nurcu Movement were reviewed and verified by the author. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scholarly integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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