

The Concept of Sincerity in The Qur'an and its Implementation Among The Academic Community of Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang

Samsir

Postgraduate of Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, Indonesia

Email: samsir@gmail.com

Rosmini

Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, Indonesia

Email: rosmini@gmail.com

Hasyim Haddade

Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, Indonesia

Email: haddade.hasyim@gmail.com

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Abstract: This research explores the meaning of sincerity in the Quran and its implementation within the academic community at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, South Sulawesi. This type of research is qualitative descriptive, with approaches involving interpretation (tafsir) and sociological analysis. The data source for this research is the academic community of *Ma'had Aly* in South Sulawesi. The results of this research demonstrate the concept of sincerity from the perspective of the academic community at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang* and how it aligns with the principles passed down to the founder of the *As'adiyah* Islamic Boarding School by *Anre Gurutta KH.Muh. As'ad*. The implementation of sincerity at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang* involves fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted by *Anre Gurutta*. Teachers should begin with themselves, setting an example by taking the initiative to do things without being told. They should be responsible for their tasks, sensitive to what needs to be done and how to do it best. They should strive to be sincere, avoid envy towards other teachers, and teach to make students knowledgeable in religion or *taffakkuh fiddin*. Additionally, they seek compensation before discussions.

Keywords: Sincere; Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang

INTRODUCTION

Sincerity is a concept of utmost importance emphasized by religion, as it is an act of the heart known only to Allah and the possessor of the heart. It is often difficult to measure because it resides within a person's heart, and even the individual may need to be sure whether their sincerity meets the required standards. Sincerity implies that every human being has the potential for their thoughts or intentions to be contaminated by impurities, so Allah commands us to strive to cleanse and purify our hearts. The heart

serves as the vessel of worship for humans, and it should be pure solely for the sake of Allah. If something that Allah does not sanction enters the heart, it must be removed so that the heart is no longer filled with anything other than Allah. Indeed, every action has a motivating factor; some are evident and apparent alongside the action, while others are hidden so that even the doer may not be aware of them.

Sincerity, according to the interpretation of Buya Hamka, means purity, free from any mixture, like pure gold without any alloy. A sincere worker in their actions towards something is called sincere or *ikhlas*. For example, if someone works solely for their wages, seeking only the praise of their employer, then their sincerity is directed towards their employer. Alternatively, if they work tirelessly from morning till evening solely for financial gain, their sincerity is directed towards their income.¹

The opposite of sincerity is association or mixture, which means being associated or mixed with something else. Sincerity and association (*isyarat*) cannot coexist, just as motion and stillness cannot meet. If association finds a place in the heart, it can only enter after sincerity has been uncovered and expelled. Conversely, when all prior conditions are met, the heart has room for *isyarah* (association). When a person intends to undertake a task, the direction and basis of that intention are already determined as they take their first step. Some people intend to help the poor and needy, which is a good deed, but it may only be perfect if the foundation is fertile. It becomes perfect when it is rooted in sincerity, for example, helping the poor and needy for the sake of Allah, not merely seeking the praise and admiration of others. Hence, sincerity is achieved solely for Allah, not for human praise or recognition.²

Sincerity cannot be separated from honesty, delicately expressed as "*tulus*" in Indonesian. That is why we must be sincere and honest all the time. Sincerity and honesty are not confined to words alone, but what truly matters is the sincerity of the heart. An eloquent speaker must refrain from deceiving the sincerity of the heart, as their speech may precede visible evidence and actions. That is because speech originates from the heart, and the tongue merely reflects the heart.³ Similarly, certain conditions must be met for someone to be considered a guardian or to possess trust that contradicts the fundamental beliefs of religion. As *Imam Ghazali* stated, "The corruption of a king is the corruption of scholars. Regarding the statements of *Hamka*, he emphasizes that one should not obey the government if it engages in wrongdoing (*mungkar*), and one should not follow a fatwa if it promotes misguided beliefs.

Islam places significant emphasis on this aspect, and fundamentally, whether one's actions are considered praiseworthy or blameworthy in the eyes of Allah depends on one's sincerity. From a Sufi perspective, this sincerity is not limited to prayer but extends to all matters of religion. Islam's insistence on sincerity and the purification of intentions for the sake of Allah is not mere lip service. Life itself will not run smoothly and straightforwardly without people who possess sincerity. Many disasters and crises that befall various communities and congregations are caused by a few individuals who

¹Buya Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen, Penjuru Ilmu* (Jati Bening Permai 2014), p. 127

²Buya Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen, Penjuru Ilmu*, h. 127

³Buya Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen, Penjuru Ilmu*. h. 129

do not desire Allah and the Hereafter. In other words, they worship the world and indulge in its abundant wealth.⁴

Qualities like sincerity are fading away today because many people are becoming increasingly egoistic, prioritizing themselves over the interests of others. The author provides an example from contemporary life where someone wants to perform good deeds. However, their intentions are tainted because their superior is also engaged in charitable activities, and they are merely following suit. It is as if they want to feel superior in their actions to those they are emulating. Moreover, on social media, the author observes a phenomenon where people today engage in acts of worship and kindness, but, unfortunately, they immediately post updates and selfies (narcissistic photos) showcasing their religious or charitable activities on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and others. This behavior is becoming more widespread because they seek praise and self-satisfaction from their social media peers. In short, social media can provide additional rewards for those who chase worldly recognition. However, social networks can also lead us astray towards Hellfire due to our intentions in the virtual world. On the other hand, someone may do good deeds or help those in need, but there may be ulterior motives behind it. They desire respect and praise from others. If our right hand gives, then our left hand should not know what our right hand is doing; this is a sign of sincerity. Not to mention others, even our body parts do not need to know what others are doing. However, all the other body parts will witness every action.

Furthermore, sincerity is one of the topics that originates from the Islamic spiritual tradition known as *tasawwuf* or Sufism⁵. Therefore, the study of sincerity cannot be separated from the study of Sufism, as they are closely related and mutually influential. Sincerity is an internal practice that serves as the foundation for the perfection of faith, which is realized through the study of Sufism, a movement aimed at drawing closer to Allah.⁶ When a person is close to Allah, they have fulfilled his commandments correctly.

The study of Sufism in the Quran emerged because Sufi scholars were not satisfied with the superficial interpretations of the Quran. They believed that the Quran had deeper spiritual meanings that were the most important. Therefore, many Sufi scholars conducted Quranic studies using Sufi knowledge, which gave rise to many commentaries known as Sufi tafsir (interpretations of the Quran). Some Sufis delve even deeper into the concept of sincerity, emphasizing boundless sincerity, which means sincerity in all aspects and actions, which expresses the belief in the Oneness of Allah. In this perspective, genuine sincerity relies solely on Him, not using one's deeds to measure spiritual progress and desiring only His countenance, without making paradise a driving force for one's deeds.⁷

Ikhlas is very important in actions and is the fundamental principle of Tawhid (the belief in the oneness of God). It has become a common belief that any action not

⁴Yusuf al-Qhadrawi, *Niat dan Ikhlas* (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 1996), h.22.

⁵Lu luatul Chizanah, *Ikhlas-Prososial? Dalam Jurnal Psikologi Islam*. Vol. 8. No 2 (t.k. :tp,2011), p.146

⁶Azief Hamazy, *Ensiklopedi Islam* (Jakarta: PTtichtiar Baru Van Houve, t.th), p.145.

⁷Izza Rahman Nahrowi, *Ikhlas Tanpa Batas: Belajar Hidup Tulus dan Wajar Kepada Sepuluh Ulama-Psikolog Klasik* (Jakarta: Zaman, 2016), p. 9.

accompanied by a sincere heart is considered devoid of value as a virtue both in the eyes of humans and Allah. However, in the present time, this quality is often regarded as insignificant by many people. However, it holds great value in the acceptance of deeds and is a requirement for the acceptance of worship. Allah states in Surah Al-Bayyinah (Quran 98:5).

Translation: "But they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion.⁸

From the above verse, it can be understood that every action or deed performed by every servant of Allah should be based on sincerity. If this attitude can be realized in all dimensions of life, then the individual's character can be shaped for the better.

This attitude is an act of genuine kindness that can provide peace and tranquility for oneself and others. Moreover, it can bring enlightenment to other dimensions of life, such as developing a devout worshipful attitude, a sense of responsibility, a disciplined character, a high level of camaraderie, and more. Allah grants special blessings to those who possess this sincere attitude.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Most people believe that they already practice sincerity in their intentions, beliefs, purposes, and objectives in their actions. However, they should delve more deeply into the matter. In that case, they will understand that their intentions and beliefs are hidden and that there is no purpose or objective other than Allah in their daily activities. The characteristics or indicators of sincerity based on the Quran and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) include Not expecting anything from creatures; fulfilling obligations without seeking status, popularity, or positions; Experiencing no regrets and making no distinctions whether the response is positive or negative; Not distinguishing between different situations and conditions; Not letting wealth and status become obstacles; Integrating the external and internal aspects of life; Avoiding sectarianism or fanaticism and promoting unity; and continuously seeking opportunities to do good.⁹

These characteristics reflect the true essence of sincerity in the Islamic context as follows:¹⁰

Not Showing Off

A sincere person does not have the desire in their heart to show off their actions or attitudes to others. Even if they have done something good, they remain humble and do not display themselves.

High Social Concern

Sincerity teaches us to do things with pure intentions and to help humanity. Therefore, someone who possesses the quality of sincerity will find it easy to engage in acts of

⁸Kementerian Agama RI, *al-Qur'an dan terjemahnya*, p. 598.

⁹Muhammad Ramadhan, *Quantum Ikhlas*, Terj Alek Mahya Sofa (Solo; Abyan.2009), p. 61-75.

¹⁰Lu'luatul Chizanah dan M. Noor Rachman Hadjam. (*Penyusun Instrumen Ikhlas Pengukuran Ikhlas*, Jurnal Psikologika Vol. 18 Nomor 1. Tahun 2013), p. 46

kindness, extending a helping hand to others. That reflects a high level of social concern.

Positive Feelings

Having sincerity in one's actions also brings about positive feelings. Thus, a person with sincerity will develop positive emotions, starting with a pure intention for the sake of Allah, which in turn leads to positive feelings.

Not Being Forced

As we all know, sincerity is done solely for the sake of Allah without any compulsion from others. Therefore, our work is done willingly, not haphazardly, because of our sincerity without pressure from our superiors.

Without Expecting a Reward

Someone who is truly sincere performs their tasks without expecting anything in return. That means they do not seek anything else; they do not seek any other reward because their reward comes from Allah.

Indicators or characteristics of sincere individuals according to KH. Abdullah Gymnastiar are:¹¹

Having a Peaceful Life

Sincere individuals lead a life filled with remembrance of Allah, as sincerity is a form of remembrance of Allah, always remembering Allah, "only through the remembrance of Allah can the hearts find peace".

Not Being Easily Offended, Irritated, or Angry

Someone quick to anger has a principle that they are not prepared to accept events that do not align with their desires. Sincere individuals have gentle hearts and patience and are not easily offended, irritated, or angry,

Living an Enthusiastic Life for the Sake of Allah

High spirits characterize the souls of sincere individuals in carrying out actions or tasks, focusing solely on Allah and not driven by any other motives.

Readily Engaging Acts of Kindness

The motivation of sincere individuals in their actions is solely for Allah, not to seek praise or gain something from others; their actions are solely for the sake of Allah.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is of the qualitative descriptive type, with an approach involving interpretation and a sociological approach. The data source for this research is the Academic Community of *Ma'had Aly* South Sulawesi. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data processing and analysis involve data reduction, presentation, verification, or conclusion. The validity of the research data is

¹¹<http://admaulana.wordpress.com/2016/04/10/tausiyah-aagym-ciri-ciri-orang-ikhlas-mp3/> (accessed on May 11, 2018, at 2:30 PM)

ensured through triangulation tests to verify data validity concerning the research focus.

RESULTS OF DISCUSSION

The implementation of sincerity involves carrying out what has been entrusted by *Anre Gurutta*, and lecturers should start from themselves (ابدأ بنفسك) to set an example by doing things without needing someone to tell them. Lecturers should be responsible for their tasks, be aware of what needs to be done, and how to do it well. They should strive always to be sincere and not envy other lecturers. Teaching should be done to make students تفقه في الدين (understand the religion) and not discuss things without receiving compensation.¹²

Muhyiddin Tahir emphasized that, as seen in the way the lecturers conduct religious lectures and teaching, they do so with great joy, without any burden. However, they genuinely love their students, even though, from a material perspective, what they receive could be more substantial.

Sincerity has a very significant impact and virtue. The academic community of *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah* is expected to possess sincerity, and its implementation should be deeply rooted in the heart. One way to implement sincerity is to start with oneself, setting an example, doing things without being told, being attentive to what needs to be done, and striving to always be sincere without being envious of other lecturers, teaching to make students useful in the future, benefit the nation and the country. Implementing sincerity cannot be expressed in words, as explained above by *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang* lecturers.¹³

First, it must start with oneself, so people are inspired by what we do. There is no need for external orders; besides, from within ourselves, we must be aware and always try to be sincere, not envy other teachers, and teach to make our students the future successors of the nation. Even if we are rewarded for our actions, no matter how much we receive, we should not discuss it with others. It is just this: here is how it is: implementing sincerity does not need to be spoken about; saying, "I am sincere," is not enough. What proves it is our daily activities.¹⁴

The above emphasizes that we should start with ourselves, or ابدأ بنفسك setting an example. In *Ma'had Aly*, activities go on almost 24 hours a day. After the pesantren, *Anre Gurutta* guides the students to conclude the material from his lessons.

The implementation of sincerity at *Ma'had Aly* is significant for a student or a mentor. Especially in سمعنا وأطعنا which means that what is entrusted and commanded by *Anre Gurutta* from *Ma'had Aly* should be done wholeheartedly for the sake of Allah, giving it a profound and implicit meaning. That is the essence of sincerity.¹⁵

¹²Muhyiddin Tahir, Director of *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on February 25, 2021.

¹³Andi Syahrir, Lecturer at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 6, 2021

¹⁴Andi Syahrir, Lecturer at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 6, 2021

¹⁵Abdul Haris, Lecturer at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on February 10, 2021.

In essence, every human action is influenced by several factors. There are internal factors, and there are external ones. Internal factors can be the motivations that arise within a person and drive them to do something, while external factors can be the influence of people around them or the goals they aim to achieve. However, external factors are often the commanders or the initial determinants of an activity. That is because a person's motivation and enthusiasm sometimes ignite when external encouragement is related to the desired goal. As a result, a person's actions may differ from those of others based on their goals.¹⁶

Abdul Haris emphasizes that the implementation of sincerity is also highly influenced by the place of our service and the people around us. The individuals in our surroundings often provide motivational support, which serves as a foundation for upholding the values of sincerity among the lecturers at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*.

This insight indicates that students and educators at the institution are willing to accept responsibilities and directives from Anregurutta, not out of coercion but because it is the foundation and a tangible indication of sincerity. It carries a profound meaning that educators and students can feel.

The implementation of values related to sincerity among the lecturers at Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang is evident when these educators can impart knowledge solely to seek Allah's pleasure and blessings. Lecturers who teach students do so without being distracted by worldly and materialistic concerns that can compromise their sincerity in teaching. An instructor's dedication and enthusiasm for teaching remain consistent, whether they receive incentives or not.¹⁷

The implementation of values related to sincerity among the students at Ma'had Aly As'adiyah can be observed when they carry out all instructions given by lecturers and mentors. Students strive to execute these instructions to the best of their abilities, solely seeking the blessings of Allah SWT rather than the approval of their instructors and mentors. A student's enthusiasm for the tasks and commands given by lecturers or mentors indicates that their intentions are pure and not influenced by other factors.¹⁸ This insight underscores that lecturers must sincerely impart their knowledge, and students must sincerely engage in learning at Ma'had Aly As'adiyah. It is understood that attaining blessings can only be achieved through *سمعنا وأطعنا* (obedience and submission to God's will).

When we look at the limited resources and the simplicity of what the lecturers need, it is noteworthy that they can perform their duties effectively due to their sincerity. Almost 100% of the teaching staff serves on an honorarium basis. The implementation at *Ma'had Aly* is like *ta'lim*, from *Anre Gurutta* and *ta'allum*. A student at *Ma'had Aly* truly adheres *سمعنا وأطعنا*, to their *Muallim* or lecturer based on what *Anre Gurutta* conveys, which is well-understood and accepted by the students. Even if there may be

¹⁶Abdul Haris, lecturer at Ma'had Aly AS'adiyah Sengkang, Interview on February 10, 2021.

¹⁷Tarmizi Tahir lecturer at Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang, Interview on March 5, 2021

¹⁸Tarmizi Tahir lecturer at Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang, Interview on March 5, 2021

differences in interpretation, what *Anre Gurutta* conveys is still accepted as a treasure of knowledge.¹⁹

The students at the Islamic boarding school (*Ma'had*) are not allowed to enroll if they are already married, and they are also prohibited from getting married while they are studying at *Ma'had Aly*. This means that the students at *Ma'had Aly* are expected to be sincere (*ikhlas*) participants in their educational journey. If they have marriage aspirations, they must postpone those plans, and if they are already getting married, they cannot enroll at *Ma'had Aly*. This policy is part of the values of sincerity, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing education for its own sake rather than other motives. Furthermore, the implementation at *Ma'had Aly* includes a mandatory community service component for its students. Students are obligated to serve the community after completing their studies, which typically lasts around four years. This service may involve teaching, delivering lectures, or engaging in missionary work (*muballig*) as part of the mission of *As'adiyah Dakwah* to serve the community. This requirement is seen as an integral part of the implementation of sincerity.²⁰

Therefore, as mentioned above, it emphasizes the importance of being a role model and setting a positive example for the *Ma'had Aly* lecturers to always maintain our sincerity (*ikhlas*), just as *Anre Gurutta* preserves the purity of the heart in worship or righteous deeds in the pursuit of Allah. *Anre Gurutta* implements sincerity at *Ma'had Aly* by consistently attending teaching sessions. When they teach, they always maintain their state of ritual purity (*wudhu*). Before teaching, *Gurutta* purifies their soul, cleanses their heart, and recites *Al-Fatihah* (the opening chapter of the Quran) as a supplication to the authors of the reference books they use for teaching.

At *Ma'had Aly*, the implementation of sincerity (*keikhlasan*) is very evident. In general, it is *الله تعالي علي الكامة الله* (*For Allah, the Most Exalted, the Perfect*). Moreover, the specific implementation by *Anre Gurutta* and the lecturers is through teaching. *Ma'had Aly* lecturers prioritize sincerity, ensuring that the knowledge received by the male and female students is blessed. Sincerity is not limited to teaching alone; *Anre Gurutta* tirelessly guides without expecting material rewards. They would not be willing to look after the students if they were focused on material gain.²¹

The implementation of sincerity (*keikhlasan*) among male and female students is evident at *Ma'had Aly*. These students must sincerely receive lessons from the *Ma'had Aly* lecturers. They need to be sincere in accepting knowledge, whether during their scheduled classes in the morning, afternoon, or especially during religious gatherings. Furthermore, they must sincerely obey the orders of *Anre Gurutta*. That is a prominent implementation of sincerity at *Ma'had Aly* compared to other levels within *As'adiyah*. Our slogan is *سمعنا وأطعنا* (*We hear and we obey*), and this represents our commitment to sincerely following *Anre Gurutta's* orders. When given an order, there is no room for refusal, even if it contradicts our desires; sincerely accepting *Anre Gurutta's* orders and feeling proud to do so embodies sincerity.²²

¹⁹Nuridin Maratang, Director 2 at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 1, 2021..

²⁰Nuridin Maratang, Director 2 of *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 1, 2021.

²¹Imran Syuaib, Lecturer at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 2, 2021

²²Imran Syuaib, Lecturer at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on March 2, 2021

The above points explain that when Allah is involved from the beginning of any endeavor, one can continuously witness miracles that others may not comprehend. The dedication of the lecturers and students exemplifies the implementation of sincerity (*keikhlasan*) at *Ma'had Aly*. They diligently attend congregational prayers, fulfill their learning tasks, and regularly supervise and guide the students. That is a distinctive feature of the implementation of sincerity at *Ma'had Aly* compared to other institutions, where some individuals may need to be more diligent in attending congregational prayers and paying attention to their students when there are no financial incentives.²³

The key takeaway here is that sincerity can be realized when individuals adhere to the principles set forth by the Founder of *As'adiyah* Islamic Boarding School *كن مخلصا تكن مخلصا* (*Be sincere, and you will be rewarded with sincerity*), and when they adhere to the Quranic principle that whoever helps the cause of Allah, Allah will help them in return.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

The indicators of sincerity among the lecturers at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang* and insincerity can be identified as follows. Firstly, an indicator of insincerity among lecturers is when they receive a responsibility or command but carry it out reluctantly, all while hoping that their efforts will be recognized and that there is a specific purpose they aim to achieve. For instance, they may teach a subject not for the sake of spreading knowledge for the sake of Allah but primarily to earn an income. Secondly, on the contrary, a genuine indicator of sincerity among the lecturers at *Ma'had Aly* is when their main goal in fulfilling their responsibilities in their daily routines at *Ma'had Aly* is solely for the sake of Allah. That is because *Ma'had Aly* primarily focuses on the education of future religious leaders, and both theory and sincerity have been instilled in them for approximately four years. Their primary duty is to strive to uphold and implement these principles.

Research Implications

For other researchers, conducting further research that can uncover various forms of realization and issues related to the implementation of sincerity is recommended. Based on the conclusions and suggestions mentioned above, the researcher hopes that research on the implementation of sincerity at *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang* will be beneficial for the development of knowledge and studies on the implementation of sincerity and the concept of sincerity within the Quranic context.

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²³M. Syaib Nawan, Syaikh of *Ma'had Aly As'adiyah Sengkang*, Interview on February 19, 2021.

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