

The Role of the Art of Calligraphy and Its Influence on The Formation of Students' Spiritual Values at UIN Walisongo Semarang

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Received:	Revised:	Accepted:	Online:
January 30, 2026	February 20, 2026	February 22, 2026	February 23, 2026

Abstract

The formation of students' spiritual values necessitates supportive activities beyond the formal curriculum, where the art of calligraphy is regarded as a transcendental medium involving the profound appreciation of sacred texts. This study aims to explore the role of calligraphy practices within the Student Activity Unit (UKM) LDK Arofah at UIN Walisongo Semarang and interpret how these practices contribute to the internalization of students' spiritual character. Employing a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical field research, primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving key informants from various faculties. Data analysis focused on mapping the transition of values from the artistic realm to the domain of worship using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model. The findings suggest that calligraphy serves as a significant and consistent medium for spiritual training (*mujahadah*) and informal *dhikr*, transcending its aesthetic dimensions. This spiritual engagement is reflected in three integrated thematic pillars: the enhancement of *taqarrub ila Allah* through the appreciation of sacred texts; the development of discipline and *istiqomah* through the internalization of technical precision; and the cultivation of inner peace (*jamāl*) through transcendental reflection. Ultimately, calligraphy functions as a holistic catalyst that harmonizes outward artistic excellence with inward spiritual quality, strengthening the moral foundations of students.

Keywords: Calligraphy, Istiqomah, Spiritual Values, Students, Taqarrub Ila Allah

1. Introduction

The influence of Islamic art, particularly within the campus environment of Walisongo State Islamic University in Semarang, has produced competent academics and individuals with strong spiritual character. Currently, the formation of students' spiritual values is a crucial issue that must be supported by various campus activities, including through artistic expression. Calligraphy is a transcendental medium that involves aesthetic dimensions, tranquillity, and a deep appreciation of the meaning of the holy text of the Qur'an. The activity of creating calligraphy requires a high level of focus and precision, thus involving psychological and spiritual aspects such as patience and perseverance. At UIN Walisongo Semarang, the existence of Student Activity Units (UKM) such as LDK Arofah, which facilitates the art of calligraphy, is an interesting phenomenon to study, as it provides a space for students to hone their creativity while internalising Islamic values outside the formal curriculum. Therefore, this study focuses on the dynamics of calligraphy practice in the campus environment and its correlation with the internalisation of students' spiritual character.

Academically, studies on the role of calligraphy have revealed several diverse aspects. Previous studies have examined calligraphy from various aspects, ranging from historical and sociological reviews of calligraphy's role in architecture to the social needs of society (Mujahidin, 2017) the economic dimension in which calligraphy contributes to fostering financial independence among students



(Adawiyah, 2024) to the role of calligraphy in enhancing aesthetics and understanding of Islam through literature studies (Muiz, 2024). Although these studies have mapped the contribution of calligraphy in various sectors, there are gaps that have not been explored empirically. This research focuses on shifting the focus from sociological, economic, or general aesthetic dimensions to more profound and specific empirical spiritual dimensions. This research will analyse the role of calligraphy as an instrument for holistic spiritual value formation with active subjects focused on active students of the LDK Arofah UIN Walisongo Semarang student activity unit through a field approach. To address the gaps identified in previous literature, this study formulates several specific research focuses. The investigation primarily examines the role of calligraphy as a transcendental medium in supporting the formation of students' spiritual values at UIN Walisongo Semarang. Furthermore, this research explores how students perceive and interpret the contribution of their long-term engagement in calligraphy toward their daily spiritual discipline and devotion. Finally, this study identifies the specific dimensions of spiritual values and particularly the concepts of *taqarrub*, *khusyuk*, and *mujahadah* that emerge and are internalized through the students' lived experiences in the practice of calligraphic arts.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the role of calligraphy in supporting the formation of spiritual values among students at UIN Walisongo Semarang by identifying its influence on the level of achievement of spiritual values among students and describing the forms of spiritual values formed in students as a result of their involvement in calligraphy. This study suggests an initial hypothesis that the practice of calligraphy, which is contemplative, repetitive, and involves sacred verses, is strongly suspected to have a positive and significant relationship with increasing students' spiritual devotion and discipline. This analysis uses a theoretical framework that combines the concepts of Islamic art transcendence and spiritual value formation, which includes the dimensions of *taqarrub* (closeness to Allah), *khusyuk* (focus on worship), and *mujahadah* (patience and perseverance), all of which are supported by credible and accountable references from Islamic literature.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical field research, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the role, influence, and form of spiritual values in calligraphy. The research location is centred on the activities of the LDK Arofah UIN Walisongo Semarang student activity unit. The research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, involving 3 key informants representing different specialized units, namely JHQ, BITA, and RISALAH. These participants were selected based on specific criteria: having been an active member for at least one year, holding a leadership or core position within the arts division, and being actively involved in exhibitions or the production of calligraphic works. This sample size is considered sufficient for this qualitative inquiry as these informants possess specialized knowledge and lived experiences that provide rich, deep, and thick descriptions of the spiritual internalization process, ensuring the data's saturation and credibility, with research subjects selected using purposive sampling from active members representing various faculties.

Primary data was collected through triangulation techniques consisting of in-depth interviews with key subjects (Mekarisce, 2020) participatory observation of the calligraphy practice process and documentation of the results. Secondary data was obtained from literature related to calligraphy and spirituality. Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. This process involved three concurrent activities: data condensation, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions. The coding process began with data condensation, where raw field notes and interview transcripts from LDK Arofah were simplified into

primary categories. These were then classified into specific themes, such as the technical precision of calligraphy, the psychological aspect of patience (*mujahadah*), and transcendental reflection. In the data display stage, these themes were organized into a systematic descriptive narrative to map the internalization of spiritual character. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through triangulation of data sources to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the students' experiences in forming spiritual values through the art of calligraphy.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Role of Calligraphy in Supporting the Formation of Spiritual Values among Students at UIN Walisongo Semarang

Initially, student activities focused on the Campus Da'wah Institution (LDK) at UIN Walisongo Semarang were scattered and organised at the faculty level. However, following institutional reorganisation and policy changes at the university level that led to the dissolution of Faculty Student Clubs (UKM), student activists took the initiative to consolidate their da'wah spirit and activities into a single, larger umbrella organisation. This resulted in the establishment of the LDK Arofah Student Club at the university level. Thus, the LDK Arofah UKM transformed its function into an organisation that oversees, coordinates, and continues the work of da'wah and the development of Islamic interests and talents, including the art of calligraphy, for students from several faculties at UIN Walisongo. Its status as a university student activity unit makes it central to the overall spiritual development of students at UIN Walisongo Semarang.

To understand the role of calligraphy among UIN Walisongo Semarang students, it is important to reaffirm its position in Islamic tradition. Calligraphy in the Islamic world is highly respected and considered the most valued form of art. This is based on its spiritual value, symbolism, connection to the Qur'an, and cultural heritage. Calligraphy is a means for Muslims to honour and express the greatness of Allah and strengthen their bond with the teachings (Ufaira et al., 2024). Calligraphy is a form of beautiful handwriting. The word calligraphy comes from Greek. *Kalios* means beautiful, and *graphia* means scribbling and writing (Hafizhah & Ichsan, 2024). Calligraphy is also defined as a skill that involves moving the fingertips using a pen and certain tools in accordance with predetermined writing rules. However, beyond these technical aspects, Arabic calligraphy has a very deep meaning and significance because it originates from the holy verses of the Qur'an. In Islamic calligraphy, Arabic script is used to create beautiful and meaningful works of art. Arabic script is believed to be a form of direct communication with Allah, and its use in Islamic cultural arts reflects the majesty and greatness of Allah (Atika & Br Ginting, 2024). Therefore, the practice of calligraphy at the LDK Arofah student activity unit is viewed not merely as an artistic skill, but as a transcendental medium that plays a central role in supporting the formation of spiritual values among students at UIN Walisongo Semarang.

The central role of calligraphy as a transcendental medium is implemented at the LDK Arofah Student Activity Unit through two main aspects. First, calligraphy serves as a means of training self-discipline (*mujahadah*) and concentration. As explained, calligraphy is a skill that involves the fingertips and pen with standardised writing rules. The technical process, which requires calmness, precise letter proportions, and harmony between words in creating beautiful works of art, indirectly forces practitioners to achieve a high level of mental focus and extraordinary patience. In Islam, training in patience and perseverance in carrying out an activity oriented towards goodness is included in the category of *mujahadah an-nafs* (the struggle against lust and weakness of the self) (Nurlina & Bashori, 2025). Based on field observations, students who regularly practise calligraphy demonstrate the ability to persevere for long periods of time in order to achieve a perfect result. This phenomenon shows that

the discipline learned from calligraphy is transferred into spiritual capital that shapes a tenacious and unyielding character, both in academic and religious contexts, which can be applied in everyday life.

The Jāmi'ah Hamalah Qur'an (JHQ) Student Activity Unit at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanities (FUHUM) is a forum for students to interact more deeply with the holy verses of the Qur'an. The JQH FUHUM UKM is under the auspices of LDK Arofah, with the role of calligraphy in the JHQ UKM also being implemented in a tangible way in the experiences of its members. According to an in-depth interview with the active administrators of the JHQ Student Activity Unit's arts division, calligraphy activities transcend the aesthetic dimension and serve as a medium of *taqarrub* (self-approach), where intensive interaction with the sacred text of the Qur'an through the writing process encourages deeper reflection on its meaning.

He revealed, *"Calligraphy is not just the art of writing Arabic letters. It feels more like a quiet space for myself... each letter has a rhythm that makes me feel close to the verse or prayer I am writing."* He added, *"When I am writing a verse, I automatically think and reflect on its meaning. So, it's not just 'writing' but also internalising it. Sometimes I only truly 'understand' the meaning of a verse after writing it many times."*

This process of appreciation directly supports the internalisation of Islamic values. In addition, the technical aspects of calligraphy also play a role in training self-discipline (*mujahadah*), which he confirmed: *"Calligraphy teaches me patience and thoroughness. This habit eventually carried over into my worship. I became more organised, less rushed, and better at managing my time."*

Finally, she also acknowledged the role of calligraphy in creating inner peace: *"When I'm writing calligraphy, I feel very peaceful... That peace affects my daily life. My emotions are more stable, I feel calmer, and my worship feels more focused,"* said Rosyidatul Mardhiyah, a member of the JHQ UKM (R. Mardhiyah, interview, 30 November 2025). Thus, the JHQ FUHUM UKM not only nurtures artists but also spiritual facilitators who bring the Qur'an into daily life through the beauty of its script.



Figure 1. Calligraphy work by UKM JHQ

The findings on the role of calligraphy in the Al-Qur'an Recitation Guidance Student Activity Unit (BITA) of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK) as a medium for spiritual guidance are reinforced by the statement from the second respondent, who is an active student. This is based on an in-depth interview conducted with one of the active administrators in the BITA UKM arts division. His formal Islamic education background provides an additional perspective, in which calligraphy is seen as a means of spiritual education and self-tarbiyah. He stated that, *"Writing calligraphy really requires a lot of patience. The thing is, when we write, we have to use our hearts. If we are not that patient, the results will certainly be unsatisfactory. Therefore, writing must be diligent, appropriate, and have its own rules."* This perspective shows an awareness that the artistic process of calligraphy is a pedagogical tool

for shaping Islamic mental attitudes and morals. Furthermore, regarding the concept of *jamāl* (beauty) mentioned in the literature, he also revealed, “*The role of beauty in calligraphy is indeed very important. Because calligraphy is not only seen from the beautiful words of Allah, which we can only write, but calligraphy can also make us interested in the fact that the words of Allah can indeed be written clearly and beautifully, and can also be outputted. It can be outputted into beautiful works,*” said Dina Febriana, a member of the BITA student activity unit (D. Febriana, interview, 1 December 2025). The similarity in views between the first and second respondents, despite coming from different faculties, indicates that the role of calligraphy in supporting spiritual values is a consistent finding among members of the LDK Arofah student organisation.



Figure 2. Calligraphy work by UKM BITA

In essence, the study of calligraphy is part of an artist's activity in using a pen, where letters or characters become artistic and aesthetic objects in expressing ideas, inspiration and artistic sensitivity (Setiawan, 2016). However, calligraphy plays an important role, especially when it comes from the holy verses of the Qur'an. Through calligraphy, readers can feel that the words of the Qur'an in calligraphic form are not merely words that convey ideas, but also radiate power within the reader (Fitriani, 2012). Therefore, calligraphy is an enchanting medium of artistic expression and a spiritual channel that radiates the energy and essential meaning of these sacred verses.

3.2. The Influence of Calligraphy Art on the Spiritual Values Formed in Students at UIN Walisongo Semarang

The process of creating calligraphy requires precision, perseverance, persistence, discipline and patience, which naturally makes a person a better individual. In addition to being an Islamic art form, calligraphy also conveys a noble message about the value of education. Calligraphy can be used as a medium for preaching, which can be divided into three parts, namely educational and teaching efforts, efforts to improve skills, and efforts to form an Islamic community (Aprilia et al., 2022). Calligraphy in Islamic civilisation plays a role that is not merely as a form of writing, but also as a means of preaching and deep spiritual expression. Through the writing of verses from the Qur'an, calligraphy becomes a means of conveying divine revelation while reflecting the Muslim community's respect for the word of Allah. The strokes of the letters, dots and lines are believed to contain dimensions that shape spirituality (Annisa, 2023).

On the other hand, calligraphy also has an ethical dimension because the process of its creation requires calmness, sincere intentions, and ritual awareness, thus becoming a medium that connects humans with the essence of their existence before the Almighty, while also guiding readers to understand and practise Qur'anic values in their daily lives (Annisa, 2023). After proving to be a medium for *taqarrub* and *mujahadah* training, the next step is to analyse how this role produces measurable impacts or changes (influence) on students' behaviour and spiritual quality. The influence of calligraphy

on the level of spiritual achievement of students at UKM LDK Arofah is divided into three main indicators: increased devotion, discipline in worship, and strengthening of spiritual mental attitude.

The influence of calligraphy on the level of spiritual achievement of students at UKM LDK Arofah is significantly evident through the transfer of mental abilities and discipline from the realm of art to the realm of worship. The most fundamental influence is an increase in devotion and concentration in worship. The practice of calligraphy, which requires *hudhūr* (presence of heart) and high mental focus (as has been observed), creates a habit of concentration that carries over to prayer or reading the Qur'an. The practice of calligraphy can deepen the appreciation of Islamic teachings through the written words (Muiz, 2024). Students find it easier to block out distractions when worshipping because they are accustomed to practising focus when writing. The subsequent impact is the development of time discipline and regularity in worship (*istiqamah*). Calligraphy teaches that beautiful results are achieved through repeated and consistent practice (Adawiyah, 2024). The values applied by the second respondent (FITK student) in maintaining regular worship. Finally, calligraphy has a major influence on strengthening spiritual mental attitudes, especially patience (*sabr*) and optimism (*tawakkal*). The experience of the first respondent (FUHUM student) who had to correct repeated strokes formed a tenacious character and acceptance that mistakes are part of the learning process.

To determine the influence of calligraphy and the spiritual values formed among UIN Walisongo Semarang students, an analysis and in-depth interviews were conducted on the respondents' experiences, including one active student from the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) who was actively involved in the management of the RISALAH FST UIN Walisongo student activity unit in the field of arts. Respondents from FST reinforced the findings regarding the formation of spiritual values among UIN Walisongo students due to the influence of calligraphy.

He revealed that *"Calligraphy has rules that must be followed in Arabic. Usually, it is in the form of the Word of Allah or hadith. These two things will never distance me from Allah. So, painting calligraphy can bring my spirituality closer to Allah. For example, writing verses from the words I write is never far from Allah,"* said Yumaysila Nur Hidayah, a member of the RISALAH student organisation (Y. N. Hidayah, interview, 29 November 2025).

The practice of Qur'anic calligraphy and the phrase 'Allah' does not only serve as a form of visual art, but also has a significant and profound influence on the formation and enhancement of spiritual values in students. This influence manifests itself in several key aspects:

1) **Increased Closeness to God (*Taqarrub ila Allah*)**

Calligraphy is not only viewed as a visual art, but also as a form of worship. Every movement of the pen is considered a reflection of spiritual awareness (Hasani et al., 2025). Because it involves sacred words, the students' focus is always centred on things that bring them closer to Allah.

Respondents emphasised this, even linking it to contemporary works: *"But when it comes to taqarrub ila Allah, in creating calligraphy... So, all my emotions about my relationship with Allah, I layer them all onto the canvas."* This quote is very relevant because it shows that calligraphy acts as an emotional channel where students' feelings, hopes, and spiritual struggles are processed and expressed sublimely through the beauty of calligraphy. This process creates a high mental focus (*Hudhūr*) which is then transferred into formal worship. The first respondent also explained that calligraphy creates a 'quiet space' and helps him reflect on the meaning of the verses written, making it easier for students to disconnect from distracting thoughts during prayer. The value of *taqarrub* makes calligraphy a form of non-formal zikr that deepens the appreciation of Islamic teachings through the written words (Muiz, 2024).

2) The Formation of Positive Character and Discipline (*Istiqomah*)

In Islamic education, calligraphy plays an important role in shaping students' character and personality. The process of writing sacred verses using the correct technique requires precision, patience, and respect for the text, thereby instilling the values of faith, worship, and morality (Annisa, 2023). Through calligraphy practice, students learn to love the Qur'an, improve their discipline, and accustom themselves to perseverance and optimism. Respondents stated, *"I learned to be thorough and disciplined... in worship, there is something called istiqomah. So, from learning calligraphy, thoroughness and discipline trained me to be istiqomah."* This habit of meticulousness and discipline becomes the foundation for consistency or *istiqomah* in carrying out religious obligations. This value is also directly recognised by (FUHUM students), who stated that the necessity of repeatedly correcting mistakes in their strokes shapes a tenacious character and acceptance that mistakes are part of the learning process. Concretely, this aspect of *mujahadah* translates into *istiqomah* in daily life, as evidenced by the second respondent (a FITK student) who applies the lesson of consistency from calligraphy to maintain the regularity of praying on time (Adawiyah, 2024) which links the practice of calligraphy with strengthening precision and patience skills.

3) Meaningful Reflection Media (Transcendental)

Calligraphy allows artists to express their emotions and reflections on God onto canvas, while drawing others to the meaning of sacred texts. The aesthetic value of calligraphy serves as a gateway to spiritual reflection (Nada & Kinesti, 2024), where respondents revealed: *"Who isn't interested in beautiful things? Calligraphy is beautiful... Especially learning it, learning the meaning of its contemporary strokes also has meaning"*. This aspect of contemplation was reinforced by the first respondent, who felt that the process of writing created a calm space that intrinsically encouraged deep understanding. For them, writing sacred verses involves thinking about and appreciating the meaning, which is only fully absorbed after writing it repeatedly. Thus, calligraphy not only displays the beauty of Allah's words, but also becomes a means of learning the philosophical and spiritual messages contained in the choice of colours, shapes and composition, transforming it into a medium for deep contemplation of meaning (Zamharira et al., 2025).

4) The Formation of Peace of Mind and Beauty (*Jamāl*)

Engagement in calligraphy directly affects the psychological and emotional state of the practitioner, fostering patience and tranquillity (Hsiao et al., 2023). Respondents emphasised that beautiful results require a process that is far from instantaneous and demands calmness: *"If we want perfect results, we must first make an effort... If we want perfect calligraphy, we must be meticulous, patient, and disciplined. This calmness and meticulousness must then be applied so that the results are refined; we must be calm so that the results are also beautiful"*. This quote underlines that the technical aspects of calligraphy, such as keeping brush strokes smooth or avoiding mistakes that ruin the entire composition, effectively train inner calm and emotional control. The calmness felt while working is then transferred to daily life and worship, making it more focused and peaceful, while also embodying the value of *jamāl* (beauty) in the final product.

The correlation between artistic beauty and spiritual discipline reaches its peak in the comparison between the beauty of calligraphy and heaven. This conclusion was put forward by the third respondent, who emphasised that: *"The beauty of calligraphy cannot be obtained easily, instantly... Just as when we want to enter heaven, we must enter heaven and be spiritual, we must be patient with the tests from Allah, with steadfastness, steadfastness in worship... Heaven is beautiful, just as calligraphy is beautiful,"* said Yumaysila Nur Hidayah, a member of the RISALAH student organisation (Y. N. Hidayah, interview, 29 November 2025). Thus, the process of creating beautiful calligraphy is a spiritual metaphor

for attaining paradise, teaching that beauty, both artistic and heavenly, requires deep perseverance (*istiqomah*) and patience (*sabr*).



Figure 3. Calligraphy work by RISALAH Student Activity Unit

Overall, the analysis of the influence of calligraphy on the spiritual values of students at UIN Walisongo Semarang shows consistent and significant findings, transcending the boundaries of faculties and student activity units. The role of calligraphy has been proven to transcend aesthetic dimensions, acting as a medium for spiritual training (*mujahadah*) and informal *dzikir*. Consistency in the practice of calligraphy has clearly shaped the four main pillars of spiritual values in students: Increased *Taqarrub ila Allah* (through intensive interaction with sacred texts), the formation of Discipline and *Istiqomah* (through the demands of perseverance and precision), a Medium for Contemplating Transcendental Meaning (through appreciation of the emotions and philosophy behind the words), and the Formation of Peace of Mind and Beauty (*Jamāl*). Thus, calligraphy functions as a holistic catalyst that not only enriches students' artistic abilities but also strengthens their moral foundations and spiritual qualities, harmonising the beauty of their work with the beauty of their behaviour.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that calligraphy practice within the LDK Arofah environment at UIN Walisongo Semarang serves as a significant catalyst for students' spiritual internalization, where the art form is perceived as a holistic medium for spiritual training (*mujahadah*) and transcendental reflection rather than a mere aesthetic pursuit. Students interpret the practice as a form of active contemplation and informal dhikr, where the visual beauty (*jamāl*) of the sacred verses is felt to deepen their emotional connection and presence of heart (*hudhūr*) during worship. Furthermore, the technical rigour and precision required in calligraphy are experienced as practical exercises in spiritual discipline, fostering transferable values such as *istiqomah* that students perceive as influential in maintaining their daily religious consistency. Ultimately, the creative process is viewed by practitioners as a symbolic metaphor for ethical refinement, where the struggle to achieve aesthetic perfection is felt to foster inner peace and moral beauty, effectively harmonizing outward artistic excellence with inward spiritual quality.

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