

SOCIOECONOMICS GROUNDED IN THE VALUE OF *ṢABR* DERIVED FROM *SUFI ISHĀRĪ TAFSĪR* FOR INDIVIDUAL INTEGRITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Individual integrity constitutes a fundamental foundation in shaping an exemplary personality. Discussions on integrity commonly focus on issues and problems related to corruption. Various anti-corruption policies and law enforcement mechanisms have been implemented. Nevertheless, the efforts undertaken by the government have yet to demonstrate satisfactory results. Despite numerous initiatives and actions carried out thus far, corrupt practices remain widespread and appear more severe than before. The objective of this study is to identify socioeconomic factors as causes of integrity-related problems and to propose the value of *ṣabr* derived from Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* as a solution for individual integrity education. This study adopts a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews and inductive text analysis. The findings indicate that socioeconomic factors are among the causes of integrity problems, particularly corruption. The most effective solution lies in instilling the value of *ṣabr* within the individual. *Ṣabr* is not merely an attitude of self-restraint when afflicted by calamity; rather, it is a form of moral resilience that strengthens individuals in facing life's trials. *Ṣabr* signifies victory and serves as a safeguard against wrongdoing.

**Keywords:** Socioeconomics, *ṣabr*, Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr*, Individual Integrity Education

## 1. Introduction

Individual integrity is a crucial foundation in shaping an outstanding personality. Discussions concerning integrity generally focus on corruption-related issues and problems (Asmar Abdul Rahim, 2021). Although various anti-corruption policies and law enforcement measures have been implemented, the most critical factor remains an individual's moral strength and personal honesty.

Among the initiatives undertaken by the government to combat corruption are the National Integrity Plan (Pelan Integriti Nasional, PIN), the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) 2019–2023, and the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) 2024–2028 (Prime Minister's Department, 2024). However, these efforts have yet to yield satisfactory outcomes. Despite the numerous measures implemented thus far, corrupt practices remain pervasive and appear more entrenched than before. This deeply rooted corruption challenge not only hampers the effectiveness of preventive initiatives but also erodes public confidence in the government's commitment to combating corruption (Prime Minister's Department, 2024). Findings from a comprehensive nationwide survey conducted in 2023 revealed that 41% of respondents strongly agreed that corruption in Malaysia remains highly alarming, while one in four Malaysians believed that corruption had worsened within a year. Overall, more strikingly, more than two-thirds (67%) of Malaysians believe that corruption has increased compared to the previous year (Prime Minister's Department, 2024). International studies such as the Global Corruption Barometer and the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) indicate that a significant proportion of the public does not believe that corruption has improved in the country. Survey findings suggest that the transformation process needs to be strengthened and that more efforts are required to enhance public awareness at all levels, particularly during the formative stage (Prime Minister's Department, 2019). Perceptions of corruption during the implementation period of the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) from 2019 to 2023 also reflect a worrying trend. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Malaysia's score declined from 53/100 in 2019 to 50/100 in 2023. At the same time, Malaysia's global ranking dropped from 51/180 to 57/180 during the same period, falling short of the government's target of achieving rank 30 by 2025 and 25 by 2030 (Prime Minister's Department, 2024). According to the Ministry of Economic Affairs (2019), during the introduction of the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, corruption and abuse of power have adversely affected economic growth and distribution. At the macroeconomic level, the negative impact of corruption in Malaysia is substantial. Between 2005 and 2014, Malaysia lost RM1.8 trillion through illicit financial flows, part of which stemmed from corrupt practices (Prime Minister's Department, 2019). Similarly, Malaysia suffered losses amounting to RM277 billion in economic output between 2019 and 2023. By comparison, this amount is equivalent to 28 years of allocation for Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR), or nearly equivalent to the combined GDP of Johor and Penang (Prime Minister's Department, 2024).

Therefore, in supporting the government's aspiration to combat corruption and cultivate integrity, individual integrity education through the value of *ṣabr* in Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* is crucial to be examined. A socioeconomic framework grounded in *ṣabr* must be emphasized so that it becomes a protective shield for individuals in confronting the temptations of desire (*nafs*) and base inclinations (*shahwah*).

The justification for selecting Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* as the foundation of this educational framework lies in its integration of Qur'anic exegesis as a divine reference for building human personality, alongside its emphasis on *taṣawwuf* (Islamic spirituality), which prioritizes Islamic values contributing to the formation of individual integrity. These two dimensions have historically produced noble personalities in the development of exemplary integrity, aligning with the fundamental purpose of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) being sent (Mahyuddin Hashim, 2012; Alosaimi et al., 2024).

Spiritual formation constitutes the essence of *taṣawwuf*, in contrast to many contemporary theories or models that do not prioritize this dimension (Ballentine, Larres & Mulgrew, 2014). This does not imply that the present study neglects intellectual, physical, emotional, and social dimensions in individual integrity education. Rather, it asserts that the spiritual dimension and values derived from the Qur'an must not be marginalized and should be emphasized alongside other dimensions.

Ballentine, Larres, and Mulgrew (2014) recommend incorporating religiosity as a dependent variable, given that relatively few studies include this element, despite religiosity being recognized as a determining factor in studies of dishonesty.

Laurin, Kay, and Fitzsimons (2012) suggest that activating divine-related concepts within the human self and mind can foster behavioral integrity and moral purity grounded in transcendental awareness. Similarly, Randolph-Seng and Nielsen (2007) found that religiosity can lead individuals toward more ethical and honest behavior.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to identify socioeconomic factors as causes of integrity problems and to propose the value of *ṣabr* derived from Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* as a solution in individual integrity education.

## Sufi *Ishārī Tafsīr*

*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* represents a field rich with diverse methodological approaches, including *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (exegesis based on transmitted reports), *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (exegesis based on reasoned interpretation), and *tafsīr Ishārī*. *Tafsīr Ishārī*, which is synonymous with Sufi exegesis,

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emphasizes inward meanings unveiled through spiritual experience and divine inspiration (*kashf*). This approach reflects the understanding that the Qur'ān encompasses multiple layers of meaning (*ẓawāhir wa bawāṭin*).

Etymologically, the term *Ishārī* derives from the root word *ashāra*, meaning “to indicate” or “to symbolize” (al-‘Ābid et al., n.d.). In the context of Qur’ānic exegesis, it refers to the unveiling of inner meanings or spiritual indications from the verses of the Qur’ān. It constitutes an interpretative approach grounded in subtle indications that differs from the outward (*ẓāhir*) interpretation of Qur’ānic verses. This is because it relies upon the deeper realities behind expressions without confining itself to literal boundaries or lexical definitions alone. It perceives Qur’ānic expressions in a manner distinct from ordinary understanding (al-Qushayrī, 1981).

Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* differs significantly from the interpretation of the Bāṭiniyah sect. Sufi scholars affirm that the Qur’ān possesses both outward (*ẓāhir*) and inward (*bāṭin*) dimensions. In contrast, the Shī‘ah Bāṭiniyah recognize only the inward meaning while denying the outward sense. They deliberately interpret the inward aspects according to their own ulterior motives. Sufi scholars, however, acknowledge the outward meaning of the Qur’ān and do not reject it, just as they affirm its inward dimension.

Shaykh al-Taftāzānī stated:

“They are called Bāṭiniyah because they claim that the scriptural texts are not according to their outward meaning, but rather possess inward meanings known only to al-Mu‘allim. Their objective is to nullify the Sharī‘ah entirely.”

(al-Taftāzānī, 2000)

He further stated:

“As for the view of certain *muḥaqqiqūn* (verifiers of truth), that the scriptural texts retain their outward meaning while simultaneously containing hidden indications known to the people of spiritual wayfaring (*ahl al-sulūk*), which may be harmonized with the outward meaning of the text — this represents the perfection of knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) and faith (*īmān*).”

(al-Taftāzānī, 2000)

Among the scholarly works related to Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* are the author’s own studies, including:

- Mahyuddin Hashim and Asman Taeali (2022), *Uzlah dan Dhikr dalam Tafsir Sufi Ishārī al-Baḥr al-Madīd Karangannya Ibn ‘Ajībah*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim et al. (2016), *Tafsir Sufi Ishārī in The Profits of Mysticism: Criticism Approach in Tafsir Rūḥ al-Bayān by al-Burūsawī*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim (2019), *Tafsir Sufi Ishārī and its Comparison with Tafsir al-Bāṭiniyah, Tafsir Sufi of Philosophy and Tafsir Scientific Ishārī*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim et al. (2017), *al-Tafsīr al-Ṣūfī al-Ishārī fī al-Manhaj al-‘Amalī ‘inda al-Ṣūfīyah: Dirāsah Naqdīyah fī al-Baḥr al-Madīd li Ibn ‘Ajībah*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim et al. (2016), *al-Tafsīr al-Ṣūfī al-Ishārī fī Bidāyat al-Sālikīn: Dirāsah Naqdīyah fī Rūḥ al-Bayān li al-Burūsawī*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim et al. (2016), *al-Tafsīr al-Ṣūfī al-Ishārī fī A‘māl al-Qulūb: Dirāsah Naqdīyah fī Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān li al-Burūsawī*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim (2013), *al-Tafsīr al-Ṣūfī al-Ishārī fī A‘māl al-Qulūb: Dirāsah Naqdīyah fī al-Baḥr al-Madīd li Ibn ‘Ajībah*.
- Mahyuddin Hashim (2010), *Mawqif al-Shāṭibī min al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī, Ma‘ālim al-Qur’ān wa al-Sunnah*.

These works collectively demonstrate the methodological rigor and scholarly legitimacy of Sufi *Ishārī tafsīr* as a valid exegetical approach within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition.

*Ṣabr* from the Perspective of the Sufi Scholars

*Ṣabr* constitutes a fundamental foundation in the moral formation of a believer. It is not merely restraining oneself from complaining when afflicted with calamity; rather, it encompasses the entirety of human life. It represents a noble spiritual station (*maqām*), the secret of human felicity, a source of well-being during adversity, and provision for a believer when confronted with major challenges, surrounding tribulations, and continuous trials. It is also a weapon for the spiritual wayfarer (*sālik*) in his struggle against the lower self (*nafs*), disciplining it to remain steadfast (*istiqāmah*) upon the Sharī‘ah of Allah SWT and protecting it from slipping into the valley of corruption and misguidance.

The values of repentance (*tawbah*), scrupulousness (*wara’*), and asceticism (*zuhd*) will not attain perfection for a Sufi unless he understands how to exercise *ṣabr* in facing calamities and how to endure deprivation and the bitterness of life.

Al-Ghazālī (2011) established a profound connection between *ṣabr* and gratitude (*shukr*). He asserted that faith (*īmān*) consists of two halves: one half is *ṣabr* and the other half is *shukr*. Similarly, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1997) stated that *ṣabr* constitutes half of faith, while the other half is *shukr*. This is because faith requires self-regulation in two states: ease and hardship. In times of ease, humans are tested through gratitude; in times of hardship, they are tested through *ṣabr*.

Al-Suhrawardī (1993) linked the station of *ṣabr* with the station of *tawbah* in elucidating its true nature. He stated:

“The reality of *ṣabr* arises from tranquility of the soul, and such tranquility results from its purification. Its purification is achieved through repentance. When the soul is purified through sincere repentance (*tawbah naṣūḥah*), its innate harshness disappears, for the lack of *ṣabr* originates from the presence of harshness within the soul. Sincere repentance softens the soul and brings it from its natural harshness to gentleness.”

When al-Junayd was asked about *ṣabr*, he replied:

“Bearing burdens for the sake of Allah SWT until the times of hardship pass.”

(al-Ṭūsī, 2001)

Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ said regarding *ṣabr*:

“Most of creation flee from bearing the burden of *ṣabr*; instead, they rely upon effort and causes and depend upon them as though they were their deity.”

(al-Ṭūsī, 2001)

Dhū al-Nūn stated:

“*Ṣabr* is distancing oneself from committing acts of disobedience, remaining calm while tasting the bitterness of affliction, and manifesting contentment even when poverty befalls one’s life.”

(al-Qushayrī, n.d.)

According to al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (2005), *ṣabr* is the strength of the soul in restraining the impulses of desire. A person who possesses *ṣabr* is not easily swayed by worldly temptations, is not quick to anger, and does not act hastily in making decisions. Thus, *ṣabr* forms the foundation of serenity, mature reflection, and wise action.

The Dimensions of *Ṣabr*:

Classical scholars divide *ṣabr* into several dimensions:

### 1. *Ṣabr* in Obedience to Allah SWT

*Ṣabr* in fulfilling divine commands requires inner strength, as it demands sacrifice of time, energy, wealth, and at times personal comfort. Examples include perseverance in performing prayer punctually, fasting despite hunger and thirst, paying zakāh, and striving in the path of Allah. These acts of worship cannot be performed with excellence without the strength of *ṣabr* (al-Ghazālī, 2011).

### 2. *Ṣabr* in Refraining from the Prohibitions of Allah SWT

Resisting sin is often more difficult than performing acts of obedience, because the lower self (*nafs*) continuously inclines toward worldly desires. Therefore, *ṣabr* in abstaining from what is unlawful becomes the primary shield that prevents a servant from falling into sin. Scholars emphasize that this form of *ṣabr* is among the most demanding, as it requires strength to combat internal impulses (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 1997).

### 3. *Ṣabr* in Facing Trials and Calamities

Trials constitute a divine decree (*sunnat Allāh*) upon humankind, whether in the form of loss, illness, or hardship. Exercising *ṣabr* in the face of calamity does not signify passive resignation without effort. Rather, it involves acceptance of Allah's decree while continuing to strive for improvement.

Allah SWT states in Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:155–157):

“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth, lives and fruits; but give glad tidings to the patient (*al-ṣābirīn*). Those who, when disaster strikes them, say: ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return.’ Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is they who are rightly guided.”

In conclusion, *ṣabr* is not merely a reaction to trials; it is an inner strength that permeates every dimension of human existence. It serves as the foundation of steadfastness (*istiqāmah*), a barrier against sin, a shield during calamity, and the secret behind the firmness of spiritual wayfarers and defenders of religion. A believer cannot attain perfection in faith and character without being adorned with the quality of *ṣabr*.

#### Individual Integrity Education

The term integrity derives from the Latin word *integer*, which signifies wholeness, completeness, and firm unity (Widang & Fridlund, n.d.). According to Megat Arifin and Ahmad (2016), integrity is grounded upon two primary foundations: first, the individual; and second, the organization. Generally, integrity refers to a constellation of excellent qualities embodied by individuals, rooted in the principle of steadfast adherence to honesty and the practice of high moral standards.

At the individual level, integrity denotes the alignment between actions and moral principles, ethical standards, and legal norms, as well as the harmony between personal interests and public interests.

At the organizational level, integrity is institutionalized through the implementation of codes of ethics, client charters, systems and work processes, and adherence to best practices. Such codes of ethics are emphasized, reiterated, and internalized by members of the organization until they become habitual and ultimately form part of the organization's culture (*corporate culture*). Ideally, integrity—whether at the individual or organizational level—represents a coherent and consistent code of behavior.

Previous studies have found that integrity is positively correlated with individual well-being, community well-being, and organizational well-being (Widang & Fridlund, n.d.). Integrity cultivates staff members who demonstrate positive conduct and remain free from counterproductive behaviors such as theft, vandalism, unauthorized extension of break periods, and absenteeism. Conversely, weak integrity contributes to moral decline and professional degradation (Megat Arifin & Ahmad, 2016).

Each individual bears responsibility for the development of his or her own integrity. According to Aristotle, an individual is considered moral when he performs the right action because he understands that the action is right, does so consistently, and internalizes it as part of his character. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate sound moral values through habituation and disciplined practice (Wakin, 1996).

Individuals must also possess the courage to define boundaries and defend themselves against matters that undermine their personal values and integrity (Widang & Fridlund, n.d.). Koonce (1998) suggests that individuals should demonstrate creativity, avoid excessive rigidity to the extent of losing a sense of humor, act ethically, avoid blind fanaticism toward particular personalities, and remain open to others' opinions in order to strengthen their personal integrity.

#### Integrity Education in the Islamic Framework:

Integrity education must begin with the education of the individual. According to Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, knowledge in the sphere of education does not merely function as a means of achieving socioeconomic objectives; rather, it also serves a specifically spiritual purpose. The aim of education is to prepare individuals who are capable of fulfilling their roles and adapting appropriately within their respective societies. Educational objectives, therefore, are derived from and directed toward strengthening beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that are recognized as beneficial to society (Wan Daud, 2018).

According to al-Attas, the purpose of education in Islam is not merely to produce good citizens or competent workers. Rather, it is to produce good human beings. The emphasis lies upon the value of the human being as a true spiritual entity. An educated person is a good person. “Good” in this context refers to *adab* in its comprehensive sense, encompassing both spiritual and material dimensions of life, and striving to internalize the quality of goodness received.

Thus, a truly educated person is an *insān adabī*—a person of refined character. The cultivation and internalization of *adab* within an individual is termed *ta'dīb* (education). The organization of knowledge within the Islamic educational system must reflect the model of the Perfect Man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*), exemplified by the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). The *insān adabī* is an individual fully conscious of himself and his proper relationship with others, with God, with society, and with both the visible and unseen realms (Wan Daud, 2018).

#### Contemporary Theoretical Models Related to Individual Integrity:

Among existing theoretical models related to individual integrity are:

##### 1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

According to this theory, intention (*niyyah*) is the immediate determinant of behavior. Attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the three primary components that shape an individual's intention to perform a particular action (Ajzen, 1991).

##### 2. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

This theory centers upon intention as a motivational construct regarded as the closest predictor of behavior. Intention reflects the extent to which an individual plans and strives to perform a given behavior. It is conceptualized as a function of two belief-based constructs: attitude and subjective norm.

Attitude refers to a positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior in the future, while subjective norm reflects the belief that significant others expect the individual to perform the behavior (Hagger, 2019).

##### 2. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews and inductive text analysis.

The interview method was employed to achieve the first objective of the study, namely to identify socioeconomic factors as causes of integrity problems. An interview constitutes a form of social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This interaction aims to obtain as much relevant information as possible from the interviewee. An interview protocol was prepared, which included the questions to be posed. These questions were constructed based on themes that had been previously identified and served as a guideline for the researcher during the interview process (Awang, 2009).

Table 1 presents the list of agencies involved in this study. The codes assigned to the informants are also provided for reference. Informant codes were used to protect their identities and preserve their privacy rights.

Table 1: Informants and Agencies

No.	Informant Code	Position / Agency
1	TB01	Department of Siyazah Shar'iyah, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya
2	TB02	Community Education Division, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM)
3	TB03	Immigration Department of Malaysia, Federal Territory
4	TB04	Integrity Division, Kuala Lumpur City Hall
5	TB05	Integrity Unit, Office of the State Secretary of Johor

The text analysis method was employed to achieve the second objective, namely to propose the value of *ṣabr* in relation to individual integrity education within Sufi Ishārī tafsīr as a solution to corruption. Text analysis is a research method used to interpret the content of textual data subjectively through a systematic classification process involving coding and the identification of themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The primary textual source utilized in this study was the Sufi Ishārī tafsīr entitled *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* by Aḥmad Ibn 'Ajbāh. This work served as the principal reference for identifying Sufi perspectives concerning the value of *ṣabr*.

All data collected were analyzed using an inductive approach. This approach involves careful reading of raw data to produce detailed interpretations based on thematic analysis conducted by the researcher (Thomas, 2006).

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### Socioeconomic Factors as Causes of Integrity Problems:

Based on the interview method employed to achieve the first objective of this study, the researcher asked informants about factors contributing to integrity problems within society. The findings derived from the informants' responses are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Themes and Subthemes for the Category of Integrity Problem Factors Related to Socioeconomics

Category	Theme	Subthemes
Integrity Problem Factors	Socioeconomics	Living necessities and large family expenditures
		High cost of living
		Debt burden
		Victims of investment fraud

Source: Interview data

Based on Table 2, the study identified one main theme and four subthemes based on the perspectives of the five informants. The primary theme is socioeconomic factors. The subthemes identified are: (1) living necessities and large family expenditures, (2) high cost of living, (3) debt burden, and (4) victimization through investment fraud.

#### *Living Necessities and Large Family Expenditures:*

One of the integrity-related factors associated with socioeconomic conditions is the pressure arising from living necessities and substantial family expenditures.

TB05 stated:

"Okay, and lastly, the factor of living necessities. Especially if I may say, even before COVID, our economy was already challenging. Sometimes our needs require us to obtain something more. These living necessity factors can cause someone to become involved in integrity issues, particularly when money is involved."

Similarly, TB01 shared the following perspective:

"Sometimes, because family expenses are high — buying diapers, paying for parents' milk every month, not to mention children — when the breadwinner's financial burden is heavy, some people take shortcuts through fraud. Then when tenders come in, they make prior arrangements behind the scenes. The first time passes, the second time passes, the third time passes — eventually it no longer feels wrong because it becomes habitual. When they receive bribery money, it becomes normal. When investigated, it turns out the individual initially struggled financially and needed money to cover medical expenses for his parents. But even after his parents passed away, the culture continued within him."

This statement illustrates how prolonged economic pressure can normalize unethical behavior over time, transforming necessity into habitual corruption.

#### *High Cost of Living:*

In addition to living necessities and large family expenditures, the high cost of living—particularly in urban areas—was identified as a contributing factor to integrity problems. This issue may not be as pronounced in rural or remote areas.

TB04 stated:

"Okay, the first phenomenon is being overly exposed to opportunities for disciplinary violations among staff or officers in Kuala Lumpur City Hall. The main cause is socioeconomic imbalance."

This perspective highlights how socioeconomic disparities in urban environments may create conditions conducive to misconduct.

#### *Debt Burden:*

Debt burden was also identified as a factor contributing to integrity problems. Financial pressure may influence individuals to engage in actions contrary to integrity, particularly corruption.

TB02 explained:

"First of all, it is due to pressure. Perhaps those involved in corruption are pressured by insufficient financial resources or work stress. For example, financial pressure — they have no money, or they marry a second wife, or they have debt problems. They may use other sources to obtain additional income."

This statement indicates that financial instability and debt obligations can motivate individuals to seek unethical means of financial relief.  
*Victims of Investment Fraud:*

Another socioeconomic factor identified was victimization through fraudulent investment schemes.

TB03 stated:

“Another factor is the existence of quick-rich MLM investment schemes that encourage officers to invest. When they invest and get scammed, they suffer losses. In order to recover those losses, they may become involved in corruption.”

This demonstrates how financial losses resulting from fraudulent investments may push individuals toward unethical conduct as a compensatory measure.

*Alignment with Previous Research:*

The findings above clearly indicate that socioeconomic factors constitute one of the causes of integrity problems, particularly corruption.

This conclusion aligns with the study conducted by You Jong-sung and Sanjeev Khagram (2005), which found that income inequality contributes to higher levels of corruption. Inequality weakens social norms against corruption and undermines institutional legitimacy. Their study, which involved 129 countries using corruption control and corruption perception indices, implies that high socioeconomic inequality can erode societal moral structures, reduce integrity, and systematically encourage corruption.

Similarly, Hlasny (2025) examined the complex relationship between inequality and corruption across various political and economic systems. The study found that inequality may promote corruption through reduced social trust and unequal opportunities, and may function as a compensatory mechanism within non-democratic systems. The implication is that socioeconomic inequality and marginalization weaken institutional and societal integrity.

Noor Syakirah et al. (2022) found that socioeconomic weakness among public servants constitutes a risk factor affecting workplace integrity. Likewise, David Seth Jones (2022) concluded that socioeconomic structures and political-economic influences serve as systematic drivers of corruption. Kamalulil et al. (2021) demonstrated that low socioeconomic status negatively affects well-being and may weaken employees' commitment to integrity.

*Ṣabr as a Safeguard of Integrity in Sufi Ishārī Tafṣīr:*

The researcher employed text analysis to achieve the second objective of this study. The findings indicate that the value of *ṣabr* constitutes the most appropriate solution to integrity problems arising from socioeconomic pressures.

The themes and subthemes identified from *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* by Aḥmad Ibn 'Ajībāh are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of Themes and Subthemes for the Category of Socioeconomic Solutions Related to the Value of *Ṣabr*

Category	Theme	Subthemes
Solution to Socioeconomic Factors	Value of <i>Ṣabr</i>	<i>Ṣabr</i> as a foundation of moral resilience <i>Ṣabr</i> as a deterrent against corruption

Source: *al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* by Aḥmad Ibn 'Ajībāh

Based on Table 3, the study identified one main theme and two subthemes derived from Ibn 'Ajībāh's exegesis. The overarching theme is the value of *ṣabr* as a solution to socioeconomic factors contributing to integrity problems. The two subthemes are: (1) *ṣabr* as the foundation of moral resilience, and (2) *ṣabr* as a deterrent against corruption.

*Ṣabr as the Foundation of Moral Resilience:*

An Ishārī indication concerning the value of *ṣabr* appears in the interpretation of the following verse:

“And [mention] Ayyūb (Job), when he called to his Lord: ‘Indeed, adversity has touched me, and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.’ So We responded to him, removed the adversity that was upon him, and restored to him his family and the like thereof with them, as a mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers.”

(Qur'ān, al-Anbiyā' 21:83–84)

*Ṣabr* is not merely an attitude of restraining oneself during calamity; rather, it represents moral resilience that fortifies the individual in facing the trials of life.

Ibn 'Ajībāh (2002), in his Ishārī interpretation of this verse, emphasizes that hardship, illness, and life's challenges are manifestations of divine mercy intended to draw the servant nearer to Allah. He states:

“Whatever befalls the believer—whether pain, illness, hardship, or calamity affecting himself or his family—is a great mercy and a tremendous blessing. It resembles a person who departs from loved ones and homeland, endures the difficulty of travel and bodily fatigue. The Sufis describe this as *jalāliyyah acquaintance*, whereby Allah introduces Himself to them through these experiences so that they may truly know Him. Thus, they rejoice when trials come, for they perceive within them closeness to Allah, the lifting of veils, and the shortening of distance between themselves and the Lord of Lords.”

This Ishārī interpretation of Ibn 'Ajībāh aligns with the view of al-Burūsawī (n.d.), who regards trials as divine mercy aimed at elevating one to the station of *ṣabr*. He states:

“Prophet Ayyūb experienced pain from his suffering and expressed it; yet his spiritual dimension, strengthened by divine assistance, continually perceived with the Light of Allah. He saw beyond the trial the perfection of the Examiner's attention and the reality of His mercy, as spiritual discipline elevating his soul to the station of *ṣabr* and the rank of true servanthood.”

Within the framework of integrity education, *ṣabr* must be established as a foundational principle in character development, as it produces individuals who are steadfast, resilient, and not easily compromised by economic pressures.

Research in the field of integrity education indicates that the cultivation of *ṣabr* enhances self-control and emotional resilience, which are crucial elements in maintaining integrity. Ahmad Jafri Bahar and Fariza Md. Sham (2024) emphasize that *ṣabr* contributes to the formation of moral virtues such as trustworthiness (*amānah*), honesty, and responsibility, particularly when individuals face social and economic pressures.

*Ṣabr as a Deterrent Against Corruption:*

Another Ishārī indication concerning the value of *ṣabr* appears in the interpretation of the following verse:

“O you who believe! When you meet a force [in battle], stand firm and remember Allah abundantly so that you may succeed.” (Qur'ān, al-Anfāl 8:45)

Economic pressure often drives certain individuals to engage in corruption, fraud, or abuse of power. Ibn 'Ajībāh (2002), in his Ishārī interpretation of this verse, explains that *ṣabr* signifies victory and serves as a safeguard against evil. He states:

“Allah addresses those who journey toward Him and advance toward His Presence, commanding them to remain firm and persevere upon the path of *ṣabr*, and to continue in remembrance (dhikr) when facing obstacles and distractions that sever them from the path. This requires

avoiding engagement in disruptive speech, holding fast to Allah, and refraining from listening to disturbances. Whoever exercises *ṣabr* attains victory, and whoever persists upon the path shall arrive.”

In the context of integrity education, the relationship between *ṣabr* and socioeconomic factors can be understood through the framework of internal control. When economic pressures intensify, external controls such as laws and regulations alone are insufficient to prevent misconduct. In such circumstances, *ṣabr* functions as an internal safeguard that restrains individuals from opportunistic behavior.

*Ṣabr* operates as an internal moral mechanism guiding individuals to choose the righteous path even when temporary hardship must be endured. Through *ṣabr*, individuals are capable of rejecting unethical opportunities that promise immediate material gain.

Studies in integrity research similarly indicate that internal ethical values and attitudes play a critical role in curbing corruption and organizational misconduct. Noor Syahiran Mohd Kamsan et al. (2023) assert that strong individual integrity reduces the tendency toward misconduct even in high-risk environments.

Thus, *ṣabr* is not only relevant at the individual level but also carries broader social implications in shaping ethical and transparent organizational and societal cultures.

#### 4. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to identify socioeconomic factors as causes of integrity problems and to propose the value of *ṣabr* derived from Sufi Ishārī tafsīr as a solution within the framework of individual integrity education.

Integrity problems cannot be understood in isolation from the socioeconomic realities faced by individuals. Prolonged economic pressure may weaken moral judgment and lead to misconduct. However, Islam offers the value of *ṣabr* as an effective internal control mechanism for preserving integrity.

*Ṣabr* enables individuals to regulate their desires (*naḥs*), resist material temptations, and uphold ethical principles even in situations of hardship. It strengthens moral resilience and fosters steadfastness (*istiqāmah*) in confronting life's trials. When internalized as a spiritual and ethical discipline, *ṣabr* not only protects individuals from corruption but also cultivates a culture of integrity within organizations and society.

Therefore, efforts to address integrity challenges must integrate structural socioeconomic reforms with the reinforcement of internal moral values such as *ṣabr* through religious and moral education. This holistic approach is essential in building a just, integrity-driven, and resilient society.

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