

## PROBING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SUFISM AND TAREKAT

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### ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the perspectives of students' master program in Islamic religious education towards Sufism and Tarekat (Sufi orders). Specifically, the analysis focuses on their beliefs regarding the influence of foreign practices on Sufism and their explanations of the controversial doctrines associated with Tarekat. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study deployed eight respondents who demonstrated high proficiency in the Sufism course. The research employed documentation studies and in-depth interviews as primary techniques. Before and after the Sufism course, respondents underwent assessments to gauge their attitudes towards the central tenets of Sufism and Tarekat. Results of this study indicated significant shifts in viewpoints, with the majority initially holding opposing perspectives that evolved positively after the course. Many graduates embraced *Tarekat* under the guidance of a *Murshid* (spiritual guide) and accepted doctrines such as *dhikr-tarekat*, *talqin-dhikr*, *ma'rifat*, and *wahdat al-wujud*. Consequently, Sufism lectures were found to have a constructive impact on fostering religious moderation among students, countering the negative narrative propagated by the Salafi campaign against Sufism and Tarekat. The findings suggest the importance of delivering Sufism lectures in master's program for Islamic religious education, emphasizing an objective approach due to their effectiveness in shaping graduate students' attitudes towards Tarekat.

Keywords: Attitude, Higher education, Islamic Religious education, *Sufism*, *Tarekat*.

### INTRODUCTION

The laity and the Ulama engage in discussions regarding the merits and drawbacks of *Tarekat* (Sufi order). Common individuals participate in Sufism by dedicating considerable time to prayer, fasting, engaging in dhikr (remembrance of God), and observing silence in hermitages or homes. They believe that these practices can lead to the attainment of sustenance and peace of mind without the need for rigorous labor. Some individuals also seek spiritual solace by visiting mosques or villages and engaging in periods of seclusion (*uzlah*). Contrastingly, opponents of Sufism perceive it as a practice intended for the general populace. Instances of Sufi figures facing death sentences (Corbin, 2002) are cited as evidence that Sufism has deviated from Islamic teachings. Furthermore, pseudo-Sufis are criticized for rejecting the *Shari'ah* (the legal aspect of religion) and formulating their own rules that contradict established principles. This faction abstains from traditional acts of worship such as prayer and fasting, asserting that engaging in *dhikr* alone is sufficient (Kabbani, 2015).

The scholarly discourse revolves around the core tenets of Sufism, encompassing elements such as *Tarekat*, *Murshid* (the Spiritual Guide of *Tarekat*, also known as the Pirs or the

Master), *dhikr-tarekat* (remembrance of God focusing on the Essence of God), and *talqin-dhikr* (guidance of *dhikr-tarekat* by the *Murshid* in secrecy). *Tarekat* represents the Sufi spiritual path guided by the *Murshid*, with each *Murshid* in *Tarekat* tracing their spiritual lineage back to Prophet Muhammad (Nasution, 2000). The foundation of *Murshid's* guidance lies in *dhikr-tarekat* facilitated through *talqin-dhikr*. However, scholars outside the *Tarekat* tradition critique the *sanad* (chain of hadith narrators), branding the *Tarekat sanad* as invalid using the methodology of hadith criticism (*mustalah hadith*).

In general, the *dhikr-tarekat* and *talqin-dhikr* are invalid without *sanad*. According to Sufi scholars, Allah in the Qur'an 18:17 asserts that a person is lost because without the guidance of the *waliya murshida*, the *Murshid*. In Qur'an 16:43, 21:7, Allah commands everyone to seek advice from an *abl al-dhikr* (*dhikr* expert), specifically *Murshid* (Rahmat, 2016). Non-*Tarekat* Ulama and others in the Tafsir Qur'an of the Ministry of Religion of Indonesia and Saudi Arabia define *waliya murshida* as a leader who provides guidance, specifically Allah. *Dhikr* experts know prophets and Allah's books or scholars with deep knowledge (tafsirweb, 2022).

The doctrine of *ma'rifat* and *wahdat al-wujud* is also a point of contention. Sufi scholars generally interpret *Ma'rifat* as the highest level of spirituality after shari'a and *Tarekat*. *Ma'rifat* is a servant's close relationship with Allah that leads to a union with God (Latifa et al., 2019). Essentially, *Ma'rifat* is obtained through *kashf*/gnosis (direct knowledge of God), meaning God reveals Himself to people after going through stages (*maqamat*) (Masturin, 2018). However, non-*tarekat* scholars accuse this doctrine of external influences from Islam because there is no evidence in the Qur'an or Hadith (Hilal, 2002). The *wahdat al-wujud* principle originated from the *ma'rifat* concept and was experienced by many Sufis. This principle was first written by Ibn 'Arabi and represents the unity of the human being with God. Therefore, what exists is only God, while creatures are only the shadow of God. Nature is God's *tajaliyat* (appearance) (Sirriyeh, 2013). Shykh Sha 'ranī (XVI century AD) defended Ibn 'Arabi's principle of *wahdat al-wujud* (Cheifetz, 2023). Hence, there is no difference between nature and God. Non-*tarekat* scholars accuse this doctrine of heresy and shirk for equating creatures with God (Ghafir, 2017). The Islamic schools that most strongly reject sufism and *tarekat* are Wahhabis (XVII-XVIII centuries) (Sahin & Asroor, 2021) and Salafis (XX centuries) (Sirriyeh, 2013, Wagemakers, 2017).

Since the X century, the anti-Sufism movement has persisted. Al-Hallaj (d. 922 AD) was famous for his words *Anā al-Haqq*. He was executed, and the body burned before being thrown into the river (Sirriyeh, 2013; Ramli, 2013). Al-Hallaj was punished for publishing the secret of God despite being right (Hamid & Hossein, 2020). Similarly, Shaykh Siti Jenar (d. XVI century A.D.) was sentenced to death in Indonesia for understanding *wahdat al-wujud* with his words *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti* (Unity of human form with God) (Fauzan, 2012).

Muslim-majority countries do not explicitly state the pros or cons of Sufism. However, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia officially reject sufism and *tarekat*. Sufism and *tarekat* are strictly prohibited in Saudi Arabia. *Tarekat* Tijaniya, Qadiriya, and Naqshabandiya have been sentenced to *munkar* (Lajnah Daimah li al-Buhutsi al-'Ilmiyyah wa al-Ifta', 2005). The Malaysian National Council has issued several fatwas condemning the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, *Tarekat* Naqsandiyah Haqqani, Naqshabandiyah Qadirun Yahya, Mufarridiyah, and the practice of *suluk* (perform special rituals strictly) and *rabitah* (bring *Murshid* into the heart) from *Tarekat* Naqshabandiyah Khalidiyah, deeming them contrary to the creed of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamaah* and deviating from Islamic teachings (Arifan, 2014). During Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reign, Turkey considered Sufism a significant obstacle to modernization. Additionally, sufism and *tarekat* are perceived as opposition movements to the government (Ambrosio, 2017; Arifin et al., 2017).

Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population in the World, has two prominent Islamic organizations, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. NU is a mass organization that follows the Four Schools of Islamic jurisprudence, particularly Shafi'i. In contrast, Muhammadiyah adheres directly to the Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, without specific schools of thought. NU overshadows sufism and *tarekat*, while Muhammadiyah, with a more Wahhabi leaning, aims to eradicate superstitions, heresy, and other beliefs, including the ones that attack sufism and *tarekat*. Most Muhammadiyah figures practice sufism without *tarekat* through *ihسان* (doing the best) and morals. However, the organization has not issued specific *fatwas* (opinions of authoritative Ulamas) on sufism or *tarekat* (Beck, 2014).

Harun Nasution was an Indonesian Islamic reformist who belonged to the *Tarekat Qadiriya wa Naqshabandiya*. He disagreed with the belief that sufism and *tarekat* are not in harmony with Islamic teachings. Nasution presented four arguments to support sufism and *tarekat* as Islamic teachings, including (1) Prophet Muhammad PBUH lived his spiritual life as a Sufi, (2) the *Khulafa al-Rasyidin* and senior companions of the Prophet also imitated him as Sufis, (3) many scholars lived as Sufis during the corrupt Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, and (4) Sufism has strong arguments in the Qur'an and Hadith (Saude, 2011; Rahmat, 2016). NU, as an *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* umbrella organization, supports the practice of *Tarekat*, while Muhammadiyah, with a Salafi leaning, advocates for sufism without *tarekat* (Beck, 2014). It was argued that people have more trust pesantren and tarekat than "shady" religious organizations or political parties (Yani et al., 2022).

*Tarekat* flourished throughout the Islamic World, with over 70 recognized *tarekat* and numerous adherents (en.wikipedia.org., 2022, slife.org., 2022). In Indonesia alone, there were 46 *tarekat mu'tabarab* (Ṣahih, straight, valid) (Tedy, 2017), including Qadiriya wa Naqshabandiya (Ahmad et al., 2021), Shattariyah (Yahya et al., 2022), Tijaniya (Kosasih, 2015), and Naqshabandiya (Umam, 2006) in the city of Bandung and other areas in West Java.

Sufism is integrated into every master's program in IRE (Islamic Religious Education) across Indonesia; however, the specific content varies based on individual lecturers. Some instructors focus on a contemporary approach to Sufism, covering topics such as tawbat (repentance), dhikr, taqarrub ila Allah (drawing closer to Allah through increased worship), takhalli-tahalli-tajalli (self-discipline involving the elimination of negative traits and the cultivation of virtuous qualities for the development of a noble personality), ihsan, and piety, all without incorporating *Tarekat*. On the other hand, some educators adopt a more traditional Sufi perspective and include *Tarekat* as an integral part of their teachings.

Master's programs in Islamic Religious Education at UPI (Indonesia University of Education) and UNISBA (Universitas Islam Bandung) are dedicated to the study of Sufism. The curriculum includes essential topics such as the meaning and objectives of Sufism, the foundations and references of Sufism, and the doctrines of Sufism and *Tarekat*. Particularly emphasized are aspects related to *Tarekat*, Murshid, dhikr-tarekat, talqin-dhikr, ma'rifat, and wahdat al-wujud, as highlighted by Rahmat and Firdaus (2022). In the upcoming 2023 sessions, the courses will feature lectures, presentations by faculty members, and class seminars. The discussions will delve into various issues, including the pros and cons of Sufism and *Tarekat*, the role of Murshid, practices like dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr, the concept of ma'rifat, and the understanding of wahdat al-wujud. This information is based on personal communication with the Sufism lecturers from UPI and UNISBA in February 2023.

This study focuses on the perspectives of students enrolled in the master's program in IRE regarding *Tarekat*. Numerous studies have underscored the significance of Sufism in fostering religious and spiritual dedication, ethical conduct, and a balanced approach to life. Islamic education grounded in Sufism has been associated with improvements in moral behavior (Rahmat et al., 2016) and enhanced honesty among students (Rahmat & Yahya, 2021), as well

as heightened levels of spiritual and religious devotion (Yahya & Rahmat, 2022). The effectiveness of Dhikr therapy has been demonstrated in reducing the pace of patient experiences (Sulistiyawati et al., 2019; Kusuma et al., 2020). Furthermore, this approach places a strong emphasis on religious moderation, actively countering radicalism (Ahmad et al., 2021; Yahya et al., 2022).

While prior studies have highlighted the positive outcomes of engaging in Sufism, such as heightened spirituality, increased religiosity, improved morality, honesty, religious moderation, and stress reduction in patients, there exists a notable gap in the literature that our current research sought to address. Our study delved into the attitudes of master's program students in IRE specifically concerning Sufism and Tarekat. What sets our research apart is its innovative focus on the impact of Sufism courses on the evolution of students' attitudes regarding the fundamental doctrines of Sufism and Tarekat. This unique perspective has distinguished our study from previous research endeavors in this domain.

This study probed students' perspectives regarding Tarekat to address the existing gap in the literature. Prior research has consistently highlighted the positive outcomes associated with Sufism, such as increased religiosity, enhanced morality, religious moderation, and stress reduction. Our study investigated the specific attitudes of master's program students in IRE toward Sufism and Tarekat.

## METHOD

The present research endeavors to scrutinize the attitudes of master's program students in IRE towards the core doctrines of Sufism and Tarekat, including Tarekat, Murshid, dhikr-tarekat, talqin-dhikr, ma'rifat, and wahdat al-wujud. Opting for a qualitative research method is deemed most suitable for our objectives, as it enables an in-depth exploration of these central doctrines. This choice aligns with the insights of Simuh, a recognized expert in Indonesian Sufism, who emphasizes the necessity for researchers to possess a profound understanding of the nature of Sufism and its relationship with Islamic teachings, along with a mastery of Sufi language and terminology. Qualitative approaches, grounded research, and case studies have been advocated for Sufism research by scholars such as Yahya and Rahmat (2022).

The rationale for choosing a qualitative method is further justified by the expertise of the researchers involved in the study. As lecturers specializing in Sufism, we bring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Our previous academic pursuits, including dissertation theses on Sufism, such as Fahrudin's work (2013) on the education of 'arif bi Allāh at Pondok Sufi Shaṭṭāriya High School, and Rahmat's research (2010) on *insān kāmīl* from the Shaṭṭāriyah perspective, along with Yahya's examination (2007) of the teachings of Shaykh Muhyi's Sufism (31st Wasīṭah Shattariya, 1690-1718 AD), underscore our proficiency and commitment to the subject matter.

The qualitative paradigm involves the interpretation of human perspectives and behaviors within specific contexts from the researcher's viewpoint (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011). This study adopts a predominantly case study approach, aiming to observe individuals within the respondents' environment, engage in interactions with them, and comprehend their expressions concerning the world around them (Nasution, 1992). The focus of our investigation centers on the attitudes of Islamic postgraduate students towards Sufism and Ṭarīqa. Utilizing Berger's terminology (1985), we employ anthropological methods by immersing ourselves as students participating in Sufism lectures, an environment that is initially foreign to us. Simultaneously, we draw upon sociological approaches by positioning ourselves as outsiders within the community, specifically within the lecturer-student relationship.

The participants in this research comprised students enrolled in IRE master's programs at the two prominent universities in Indonesia: Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and

Universitas Islam Bandung (Unisba). The sample size consisted of eight individuals. A crucial criterion for inclusion as research respondents was their familiarity with and personal experience in Sufism, as emphasized by DePoy and Gitlin (2015). All respondents possessed a good understanding of both Sufism and Tarekat. Among them, four students from UPI and Unisba attained the highest scores (grade=A) in the Sufism course, while the majority of students received B grades, and a few did not meet the passing criteria.

Table 1. Characteristics of research respondents

No.	Name Initials	Gender	Age (years)	University	Sufism course grades
1.	AA	Male	28	UPI	A
2.	BB	Female	30	UPI	A
3.	CC	Male	25	UPI	A
4.	DD	Female	24	UPI	A
5.	EE	Male	29	Unisba	A
6.	FF	Female	27	Unisba	A
7.	GG	Male	28	Unisba	A
8.	HH	Male	26	Unisba	A

Our research was conducted in February (pre-test) and June 2023 (post-test). The research instruments were in the form of tests (pre and post-test) and interviews concerning the issues of sufism and *tarekat*, which are often debated and even cause disputes among Muslims, namely: *Tarekat*, *Murshîd*, *dhikr-tarekat*, *talqin-dhikr*, *ma'rifat*, and *wahdat al-wujûd*.

The test aims to measure students' views on the central doctrines of Sufism and tarekat. The students were asked to: first, provide a written view of the *tarekat*, *Murshîd*, *dhikr-tarekat*, *talqin-dhikr*, *ma'rifat*, and *wahdat al-wujûd*; and secondly, after expressing their views, they were asked to indicate their attitude, whether they accepted, were neutral, or rejected these doctrines? The lecturers (researchers) emphasized that students' attitudes did not influence the assessment of the sufism course. Lecturers only assess it based on students' mastery of the doctrines of sufism and tarekat. The interviews are more in-depth to analyze students' mastery and attitudes toward these doctrines. Interviews were only conducted with eight students who got A grades.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The outcomes and analysis of this study are organized into three key sub-sections aligning with the primary objectives. The initial section explores respondents' perspectives on Tarekat and Murshîd. Subsequently, the second section delves into respondents' viewpoints regarding dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr. Finally, the third section investigates respondents' attitudes toward ma'rifat and wahdat al-wujûd.

### Respondents' attitude toward Tarekat and Murshîd

The profile of students' attitudes towards *Tarekat* and Murshid before and after studying Sufism can be seen in the following graph.

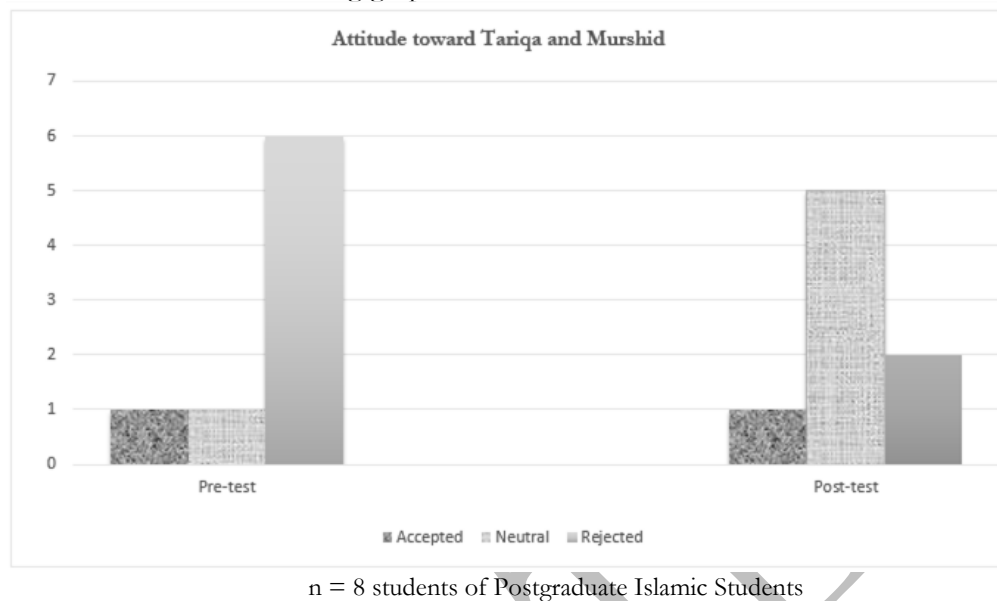


Figure 1. Respondents' Attitude toward *Tarekat* and Murshîd

The above Chart 1 illustrates that in the pre-test phase, the majority of respondents held a negative stance towards *Tarekat* and Murshîd, with one respondent in acceptance and another remaining neutral. Following the lectures in the post-test phase, more than half of the respondents displayed a lukewarm inclination (though leaning towards acceptance), one accepted it, and two rejected it.

The following information is based on the documentation study and interviews about respondents' attitudes towards *Tarekat* and Murshîd before lectures (pre-test). In the interview, participant AA provided insights into their familiarity with *Tarekat*, stating that this spiritual path embraces challenging and serious religious practices, prioritizing the afterlife over worldly pursuits. The followers of *Tarekat* are described as engaging in increased remembrance of God, prayer, and fasting, leading a life of poverty, often in seclusion with a primary focus on worship. AA highlighted the role of a Murshîd as a guide within *Tarekat*. Notably, AA acknowledged diverse perspectives on *Tarekat*, with some scholars considering it heretical due to perceived influences outside Islam and others viewing the Murshîd as a cult leader. Despite these controversies, AA noted the presence of individuals who support and actively practice *Tarekat* (AA, personal communication, February, 2023).

In the interview, participant BB elucidated the meaning of *Tarekat* as *tazkiyat al-nafs* (the purification of the soul), achieved through the selection of lawful wealth, abstaining from sins, increasing worship, reading numerous *istighfar* and *Salawat*, and engaging in extensive *dhikr*. Additionally, BB highlighted the role of a Murshîd within *Tarekat*, serving as the imam, and underscored the benefits of communal existence led by a Murshîd (BB, personal communication, February, 2023).

In the interview, participant EE expounded on their understanding of *Tarekat*, stating that it exclusively prioritizes the hereafter, shunning material pursuits, and willingly embracing hardship and hunger. Followers are described as intensifying *ṣalāt* and fasting, and engaging in extensive *dhikr*. EE contended that Sufism accentuates the spiritual aspect at the expense of the

physical. Within Tarekat, the Murshîd is portrayed as the leader and is revered by followers. EE expressed the belief that Tarekat contradicts Islamic teachings due to its perceived imbalance between the worldly and the hereafter. This perspective was shared by five other respondents: CC, DD, FF, GG, and HH (EE, personal communication, February, 2023).

The findings depicted in Chart 1 indicate a shift in the respondents' comprehension and attitudes towards Tarekat following the lectures (post-test). Respondent AA, initially neutral, tends to accept Tarekat based on the following interpretation: "The word Tarekat, found in the Qur'ân 72:16, means, 'And that if they kept walking straight on the Tarekat, we would surely give them fresh water to drink (a lot of sustenance)'" (AA, personal communication, June, 2023).

Based on the interviews conducted before the lectures (pre-test), respondents AA, BB, and EE share commonalities in their understanding of Tarekat and Murshîd. All three participants perceive Tarekat as a spiritual path primarily focused on the afterlife, involving practices such as increased remembrance of God, prayer, fasting, and a life of simplicity, often in seclusion. They acknowledge the role of a Murshîd as a guide within Tarekat. While AA acknowledges the controversy surrounding Tarekat and Murshîd, BB emphasizes the importance of Tarekat in purifying the soul. Conversely, EE, along with five other respondents (CC, DD, FF, GG, and HH), expresses a negative view, arguing that Tarekat contradicts Islamic teachings by prioritizing the hereafter over a balanced approach to both worlds. Chart 1 indicates a shift in AA's perspective after the lectures (post-test), where AA, previously neutral, tends to accept Tarekat based on its Quranic mention, suggesting a nuanced evolution in understanding following the educational intervention.

The essence of *Tarekat* is the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the heart (*tasfiyat al-qalb*), guided by the Murshîd. This concept is rooted in the Qur'ân, as stated in verses 91:9-10, "Indeed, successful is he who purifies the soul, and indeed, he fails who corrupts it," and 37:83-84, "And indeed, Abraham was among his [Noah's] followers when he came to his Lord with a sound heart." To achieve maximum purification, a Sufi must ascend the various levels of the *nafs*. The journey begins with the *nafs mutmainnah*, as directed in Qur'ân 89:27-30, "O you peaceful soul, return to your Lord, pleased and well-pleasing, enter among My servants, and enter My Paradise!" According to *Tarekat's* teachings, to draw nearer to Allah, a person needs to reach the state of the *nafs mutmainnah* and progress to the higher levels of *nafs radhiyah* (pleased with Allah) and *mardhiyah* (Allah is pleased with him), ultimately reaching the highest level of *nafs*, 'ibâdî (servants of Allah, namely *insân kâmil*). The individuals descending the *nafs* ladder are invited by Allah to His paradise.

In the interview, participant AA expounded on the role of the Murshîd as the instructor in Tarekat, regarded by Sufi brothers as their exclusive guide toward the highest level of spirituality, *insân kâmil*. Despite this, Murshîd allows students to formulate their religious interpretations. Participant AA noted that although NU and Muhammadiyah adhere to their distinct teachings concerning dhikr, they align with Murshîd due to his status as an ahl al-dhikr, as mentioned in Qur'ân 16:43, "So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know." The term ahl al-dhikr in the verse refers to an individual with profound religious knowledge. While some Muslim communities follow Tarekat, the majority do not. Ordinary individuals are advised to seek guidance from Ulama, including Murshîd, as they are recognized as Sufi scholars (AA, personal communication, June, 2023). This perspective was also shared by three other respondents with differing viewpoints: EE, FF, and GG.

In the interview, respondent EE's response mirrored that of AA, with the exception of expressing a desire to join Tarekat despite having reservations about the Murshîd. DD contributed insights into three characteristics of Tarekat mu'tabarâh, including (1) teachings grounded in references from the Qur'ân and Hadith, (2) Ittisâl, indicating the traceability of the Murshîd's sanad (genealogy) back to Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and (3) the Murshîd being

elected by virtue of being appointed by the preceding Murshîd. However, DD argued that the Murshîd of TQN Suryalaya, succeeding Abah Anom, did not fulfill these criteria as there was no appointed successor by Abah Anom. Consequently, a dispute has persisted for 12 years without mutual acknowledgment of the legitimacy of each side's Murshîd (EE, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent BB expressed a positive stance, accepting the meaning of Tarekat based on the Quranic verse 72:16, which states, "wa allawî astaqâmû `ala al-Tarekatti la asqaināhum mān ghadaqā = And that if they continue to walk straight on that Tarekat, we will surely give them fresh water to drink (happiness)" (BB, personal communication, June, 2023).

The essence of Tarekat is based on the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the heart (*taṣfiyat al-qalb*) under the guidance of the Murshîd. This fundamental concept is rooted in the Qur'ān 91:9-10 which states, "Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it (the soul), and indeed failure is the one who corrupts it." Furthermore, Qur'ān 37:83-84 references the Prophet Abraham and his clear heart. A Sufî should pass through several stages to achieve the ultimate goal of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *taṣfiyat al-qalb*. The journey begins with *nafs mutmainnah*, specifically when one's soul is content and satisfied, as instructed by Allah in Qur'ān 89:27-30. The ladders of the *nafs* are unique to *Tarekat*.

The Murshîd assumes the roles of teacher and guide within Tarekat, guiding its disciples on the path towards Allah until they reach the status of *insān kāmīl* (the perfect human being). Without the Murshîd's guidance, one risks becoming lost, as articulated in Qur'ān 18:17, "Whoever Allah guides, he is the rightly guided; and whoever He sends astray, you will never find for him a guiding mentor." This signifies the importance of the Murshîd as a guiding figure. Additionally, Qur'ān 49:7 mentions the existence of a Messenger of Allah among the people. Sufî scholars interpret the phrase "Wa'lamû" (Know) as an ongoing command and identify the "rasûl Allāh" as Prophet Muhammad and his representatives or successors in each generation, known as *al-khulafā al-rāshidīn al-mahdiyyīn* (the rightly guided successors of the Prophet) or Ulama. In Sufism, these figures are referred to as the Murshîd, emphasizing their role as inheritors of the Prophet and underlining the significance of Muslims learning from them (BB, personal communication, June, 2023).

The Respondents CC and BB had similar perspectives regarding the importance of Murshîd in Sufism. CC mentioned *Al-Wasilata* and *Wasatā*, referenced in the Qur'an 5:35 and 2:143, respectively. *Al-Wasilata* refers to a Murshîd, and *Wasatā Ummatan* is a community led by a *Wasitā*, which in the *Shaṭṭāriyah* order is the Murshîd. BB confirmed joining Tarekat TQN Suryalaya, while CC joined the congregation of *Shaṭṭāriyah* Jogomerto.

DD respondents express a pessimistic viewpoint, rejecting the centrality of *Tazkiyat al-nafs* and *taṣfiyat al-qalb* in the teachings of Tarekat, which are guided by a Murshîd. While acknowledging the teachings' roots in the Qur'ān, specifically in verses such as 91:9-10 and 37:83-84, DD contends that the achievement of *tazkiyat al-nafs* and *taṣfiyat al-qalb* does not necessarily require the guidance of a Murshîd, as most scholars do not follow Tarekat. DD further notes that organizations like Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Islam (Persis) have also rejected Tarekat, with only NU overshadowing it (DD, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent HH echoed a similar sentiment to DD, elaborating that "Most of the scholars reject Tarekat. The great scholar Ibn Taimiyah also sentenced Tarekat to be a heretic and a *kafir*" (HH, personal communication, June, 2023).

The negative Salafist campaign against *tarekat* has failed because most respondents accepted it after lectures. They cited various Qur'anic verses such as 72:16 as the basis for the need for *Tarekat*, verse 18:17 that discusses the role of the *Wali* Murshîd, and 16:43 and 21:7, which emphasizes the need to seek guidance from *ahl-dbiker*, specifically the Murshîd. Qur'anic



verses such as 5:35 and 2:143 concerning the need to seek *Al-Wasīlata* (Murshīd) and the people led by *Wasīṭā* (Murshīd) were referenced. Respondents also referred to a hadith (Tirmidhi, 2013; Abudawud, 2013; Ibumajah, 2013) on the obligation to obey the representative/successor of the Prophet Muhammad (*al-khalafā al-rāshidīn al-mahdiyyīn*). Even respondents who initially had a positive attitude towards *tarekat* eventually joined it. However, one Respondent intending to join TQN hesitated to choose a Murshīd who fit the criteria because finding a Murshīd *al-kāmil-mukammil* (perfect and can perfect students) was challenging. For Ibn ‘Arabī, His vicegerent (*khalīfa*) as divine *Wakīl* possible by the theomorphic nature of the human being, a child of the primordial Adam, fashioned in the image of God. *Khalīfa* descends through various degrees of perfection, to all levels and strata of human society (Khalil, 2023). The past, from 1980-2010, Abah Anom was an *al-kāmil-mukammil*, and various groups, including academics and Muhammadiyah leaders, became his students (Ridwan, 2015; Abror & Arif, 2021). However, Abah Anom did not appoint a successor, resulting in several Murshīd claims as his successor. One Respondent found a Murshīd *al-kāmil-mukammil* and became his disciple, Kiai Muhammad Anwar Muttaqin. According to Yahya et al. (2022) most lecturers and various groups from big cities joined Tarekat Shaṭṭāriyah Jogomerto, Nganjuk, Indonesia. Another respondent viewed Abah Gaos as the Murshīd of TQN Suryalaya, Abah Anom successor (Mughtar, 2019).

Only one Respondent had a negative attitude towards Tarekat. This is in line with Wahabi/Salafis, who consider tarekat as an influence outside of Islam and heretical (Sahin & Asroor, 2021; Wagemakers, 2017). The negative campaign of Salafis against Sufism was unsuccessful because most respondents, including those with a negative attitude, accepted Tarekat after lectures. Notably, most scholars practice Sufism without Tarekat, and Nursi referred to Sufism as a way to recognize the essence of faith and the Qur'an as a guide. This is meant to attain proximity to Allah and bear witness to Him as the Sunnah of the Prophet provides guidance (Nursi, 2017; Munandar et al., 2020). The Sufism movements without *tarekat* are evident in various countries, including Turkey and Indonesia (Khamami, 2016; Fahrudin et al., 2022). In Indonesia, Muhammadiyah, a religious movement leaning towards Salafism, leads this movement (Beck, 2014; Masrur, 2019). Buya Hamka, a charismatic figure in Muhammadiyah, introduced modern Sufism in the past (Hutama et al., 2021).

### ***Respondents' attitudes towards Dhikr-tarekat and Talqin-dhikr***

The subsequent chart illustrates the profile of students' attitudes towards Dhikr-tarekat and Talqin-dhikr before and after studying Sufism.

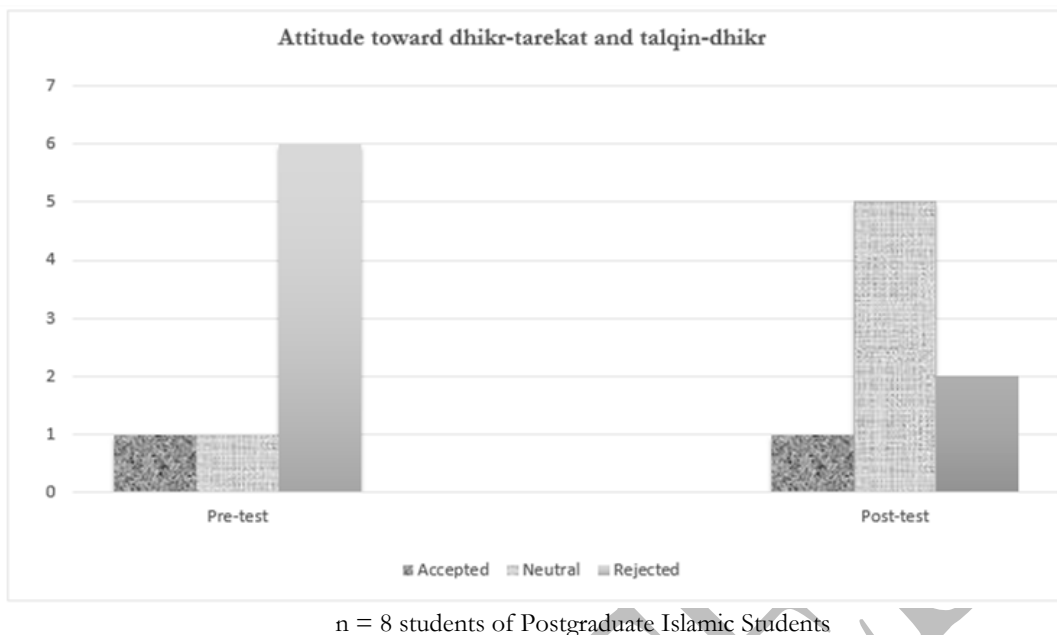


Figure 2. Respondents' Attitude toward *dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr*

Chart 2 depicted above illustrates that prior to the lectures (pre-test), the majority of respondents declined *dhikr-tarekat* and *talqin-dhikr* (*dhikr* taught or whispered in secret by a *Murshid*). Specifically, only one respondent accepted these practices, while another remained neutral. Following the lectures (post-test), more than half of the respondents exhibited a lukewarm disposition (though leaning towards acceptance), with only one expressing full acceptance, and two rejecting these practices.

The following viewpoint is based on the documentation study and interviews about respondents' attitudes towards *dhikr-tarekat* and *talqin-dhikr* before lectures (pre-test). In the interview, participant AA elaborated on the components of *dhikr*, mentioning *ṭayyiba* (good sentences) such as *subhana Allāh* (Glory to Allah), *alhamdu li Allāh* (praise be to Allah), *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but Allah), and *Allāh akbar* (Allah Most Great), as well as other *ṭayyiba* sentences like reading the *Qur'ān*. AA clarified that *dhikr-tarekat* involves *dhikr* taught or *talqin*-ed by a *Murshid*. AA expressed a neutral stance, stating an inability to either blame or justify *dhikr-tarekat* and *talqin-dhikr* (AA, personal communication, February, 2023).

BB provided insights into the understanding of *dhikr*, emphasizing the remembrance of the name of Allah, *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, and the words of *ṭayyiba*. Furthermore, BB differentiated *dhikr-tarekat* as the form of *dhikr* taught or *talqin*-ed by a *Murshid*. Although BB acknowledged the goodness of the *dhikr-tarekat* recited by a *Murshid*, personal practice of it had not been undertaken (BB, personal communication, February, 2023).

Similarly, EE shared that *dhikr* involves the remembrance of Allah's name and *ṭayyiba* words. Drawing a parallel, EE explained *dhikr-tarekat* as *dhikr* *talqin*-ed by a *Murshid*. EE expressed the view that *dhikr* recitation is free and need not necessarily align with *dhikr-tarekat*, recited by a *Murshid*. EE highlighted the diversity of written *dhikr* by scholars, suggesting the need for individual choice. However, EE also mentioned the existence of heretical opinions about *dhikr-tarekat* among scholars, particularly regarding practices like reciting *dhikr* a thousand times and headshaking, which are associated with *Tarekat* but lack Quranic or Hadith evidence. This perspective was also shared by five other respondents with differing views: CC, DD, FF, GG, and HH (EE, personal communication, February, 2023).

Following the lectures (post-test), a transformation occurred in the respondents' comprehension and attitudes toward dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr. Respondent AA assumed a neutral stance, expressing an understanding of dhikr as the remembrance or mention of Allah's name and ṭayyiba sentences, specifically subhana Allāh, alhamdu li Allāh, lā ilāha illā Allāh, and Allāh akbar. Additionally, AA characterized dhikr-tarekat as talqin by a Murshīd, asserting the goodness of all forms of dhikr, including dhikr-tarekat, talqin-dhikr in the form of oral dhikr (dhikr jahr), and heart dhikr (dhikr khafy) from a Murshīd. Although AA did not personally practice these, the acknowledgment of their goodness remained. AA referenced the argument of dhikr jahr, emphasizing the significance of saying lā ilāha illā Allāh, which aligned with the essence of dhikr khafy. Qur'ān 7:205 was cited to support the concept of calling upon one's Lord in the heart with humility and fear, without raising one's voice. Three other respondents echoed a similar response with varied expressions: EE, FF, and GG (AA, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent BB provided a positive response, defining dhikr as the remembrance of the heart directed towards Allah. BB emphasized the necessity of knowing Allah before engaging in dhikr, drawing an analogy to understanding sparrows before attempting to shoot them. The source of information about dhikr, according to BB, is ahl al-dhikr, identified as the Murshīd, as indicated in the Qur'ān 16:43 and 21:7 ("fas'alū ahl al-dhikri inkuntum lā ta'lamūn"). BB asserted that to know God, one should seek guidance from ahl al-dhikr, a concept synonymous with talqin-dhikr in Tarekat terms. Specifically, BB highlighted the importance of dhikr khafy, emphasizing the need to inquire from ahl al-dhikr for knowledge. The Qur'ān verse 7:205 ("wadzkur rabbaka fi nafsika tadharru'an wa khifatan wa duna al-jahri min al-qauli") was cited to support the idea of mentioning the Lord in the heart with humility and fear, without raising one's voice (BB, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent CC provided a response similar to others, with a nuanced interpretation of Qur'ān 7:205. According to CC, "wadzkur rabbaka" does not translate to "mention the name of your Lord" but rather "remember (Substance) your Lord" (CC, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent DD, on the other hand, presented negative responses to the concept of dhikr-tarekat. DD defined dhikr as remembering or being aware, emphasizing the concrete form that involves mentioning the name of Allah and reciting ṭayyiba sentences. DD expressed disapproval of dhikr-tarekat, specifically mentioning practices that include shaking the head hundreds of times. The Qur'ān was cited to detail various forms of dhikr, encompassing mentioning the name of Allah, reading or studying the Qur'ān, performing ṣalāt, and participating in Friday ṣalāt as acts of remembrance (DD, personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent HH expressed a perspective on dhikr emphasizing its essence as carrying out God's messages. Using an analogy, HH likened this to a wife instructing her husband to remember her during her journey. According to HH, remembering the wife involves recalling her messages, understanding her requests, and addressing her needs, rather than simply mentioning her name. This perspective highlights the active and purposeful nature of dhikr as understood by HH (HH, personal communication, June, 2023).

Many respondents exhibited a neutral or positive stance towards dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr, with two individuals embracing a positive attitude and aligning themselves as followers of Tarekat. Even those who remained indifferent often held a favorable view, theoretically accepting it, and some even practicing dhikr-tarekat without talqin-dhikr. The practice of dhikr, encompassing verbal and internal recitation, is in accordance with the teachings of Shykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani, involving both spoken and contemplative forms (Haykal, 2011; Khaerani et al., 2018). Additionally, practices such as reciting Asmaul Husna

(Agustina et al., 2020) and engaging in joint dhikr during majelis taklim (Hasan, 2012; Sakr et al., 2022) contribute to the diversity of dhikr practices.

However, a common challenge faced by many individuals is finding a qualified and complete Murshîd, extending the meaning of Murshîd to encompass any credible, pious, and knowledgeable scholar. Notably, a study demonstrated the effectiveness of sufism courses in enhancing the religiosity of Islamic graduates, with Gitosaroso (2015) finding a positive impact on undergraduate students. Sufism-based Islamic education has been associated with increased religiosity, morality, religious moderation, and resistance to religious radicalism (Rahmat et al., 2016; Rahmat & Yahya, 2020, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2021). It is worth noting that only one respondent expressed a negative attitude towards dhikr-tarekat and talqin-dhikr, aligning with the Wahabi/Salafi perspective, which considers tarekat and its doctrines as heretical due to external influences on Islamic practices (Sahin & Asroor, 2021; Wagemakers, 2017). This viewpoint resonates with the stance of some Salafis who may be unaware that Ibn Taymiyyah, a revered figure among them, was himself a follower of Tarekat Qadiriyyah (Sirriyeh, 2013).

### ***Respondents' Attitudes towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd***

The graph below illustrates the profile of students' attitudes towards Dhikr-tarekat and Talqin-dhikr before and after studying Sufism.

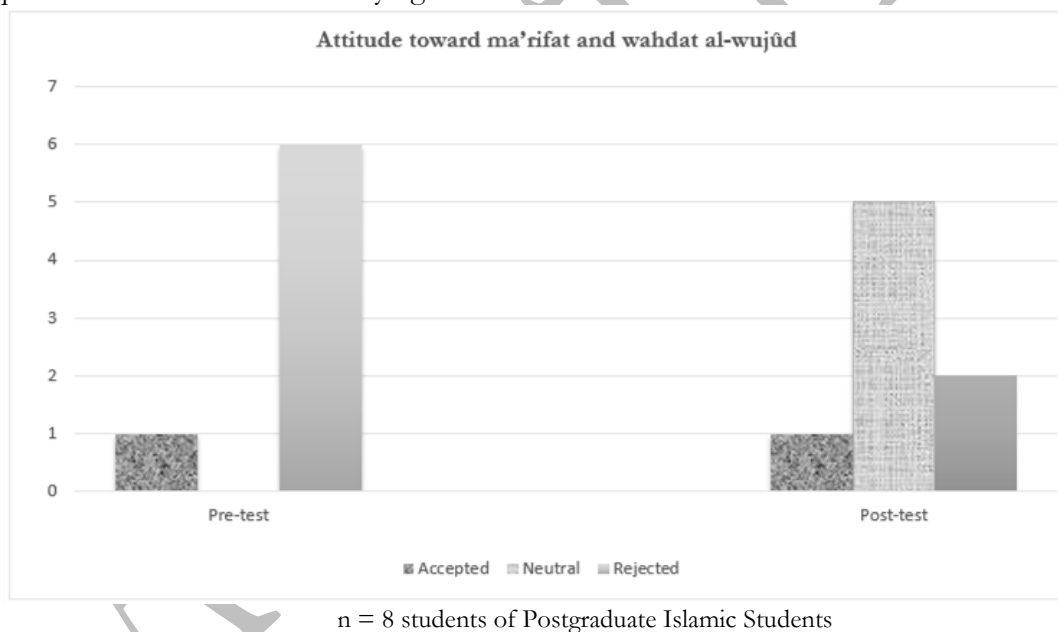


Figure 3. Respondents' Attitude toward *ma'rifat and wahdat al-wujûd*

The data depicted in Chart 3 indicates that prior to the lectures (pre-test), nearly all respondents held a negative view towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd, with only one expressing acceptance. Following the courses (post-test), over half of the respondents remained neutral (but leaned towards acceptance), one accepted it, and two rejected it.

AA shared his perspective on Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd as part of the pre-test documentation and interview study. According to AA, Ma'rifat involves acquiring direct knowledge from Allah through accurate revelation and inspiration. However, he highlighted the challenge of discerning the authenticity of such knowledge, particularly when it pertains to Allah's Essence. AA expressed concern that the concept of Ma'rifat is often considered misleading by scholars because confirming the legitimacy of knowledge gained through

inspiration, especially related to Allah's Essence, is inherently problematic and may be susceptible to misinformation or influences from sources like the devil (AA, document and personal communication, February, 2023).

The concept of Wahdat al-wujūd, denoting the unity of human beings with God, is colloquially expressed as "Manunggaling Kawula Gusti" in Java. However, scholars generally regard this concept as misleading, as exemplified by the case of Al-Hallaj, the leader of Wahdat al-wujūd in Baghdad. Al-Hallaj's proclamation of "Anā al-Haqq" led to his execution, with scholars burning his body and casting the ashes into the river. A similar fate befell Javanese Sufi Shaykh Siti Jenar, who was sentenced to death by Wali Songo (AA, document and personal communication, February, 2023). This perspective was also shared by six other respondents: CC, DD, EE, FF, GG, and HH.

BB contributed to the discussion by defining Ma'rifat as the direct knowledge from Allah acquired by a Sufi. He also mentioned another term for this knowledge, *ladunni science*, signifying knowledge obtained through inspiration rather than formal learning. According to BB, a pious person may attain Ma'rifat in the form of good motivation, as indicated in the Quranic verse "fa alhamahā fujūrahā wa taqwāhā" (91:8).

Wahdat al-wujūd, signifying the unity of human beings with God, is a concept that sparks controversy and elicits diverse opinions among scholars. In Indonesia, the popular term for this concept is *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. Al-Hallaj, the leader of Wahdat al-wujūd in Baghdad, stirred controversy by proclaiming himself "Anā al-Haqq," translating to "I am the Truth." This declaration led shari'a scholars to advocate for Al-Hallaj's death sentence, resulting in the burning of his body and the disposal of ashes into the river.

Likewise, Shaykh Siti Jenar, a Javanese Sufi, faced execution by Wali Songo. However, historical accounts present conflicting information, suggesting that Al-Hallaj's death sentence may have been influenced by his political activities. Wali Songo's statement that "Shaykh Siti Jenar is a believer in Allah, kāfir in the eyes of humans" adds another layer of complexity, indicating that in the sight of Allah, Shaykh Siti Jenar is a believer but is perceived as an infidel by humans (BB, document and personal communication, February, 2023).

This study collected data after the lectures (post-test) to explore a transformation in the respondents' comprehension and attitudes towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujūd. This was attained by observing document and analysing interviews.

Respondent AA adopted a neutral stance, defining Ma'rifat as the direct knowledge of God's Self through *kashf* or *gnosis*, wherein Allah reveals Himself to the chosen servant. The scholarly community presents differing perspectives on the validity of Ma'rifat, with some deeming it misleading due to the absence of Quranic and Hadith evidence and its susceptibility to influence from other religions. However, proponents argue for its legitimacy, citing the hadith cautioning believers about hunches and emphasizing the believer's ability to see with the light of Allah.

Regarding Wahdat al-wujūd, often construed as the unity of humans with God, a prevalent Javanese term is *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*. However, Shaykh Muhyi interprets it as *wahdat al-shuhūd*, signifying an agreement of witness between man and God. Consequently, Al-Hallaj's declaration "Anā al-Haqq" is understood as "I witnessed Allah." Emphasizing *wahdat al-shuhūd*, the concept of Wahdat al-wujūd is considered correct, not misguided (AA, document and personal communication, June, 2023). This perspective was also shared by four other respondents: DD, EE, FF, and GG.

BB respondents provided affirmative insights into the topics: Ma'rifat is understood as the direct knowledge of God through *kashf* or *gnosis*, denoting Allah's self-revelation to the chosen servant. This profound understanding, akin to that of Prophets, Saints, and perhaps the Murshid, emphasizes the rarity of Ma'rifat attainment. In contrast, Wahdat al-wujūd signifies

the unity of humans with God, where the servant experiences an immersion in God's essence. Drawing parallels to the experiences of Al-Hallaj and Shaykh Siti Jenar, Wahdat al-wujûd is perceived as a state where humans and God face or witness each other, known as wahdat al-shuhûd (BB, document and personal communication, June, 2023).

Respondent CC shared a comparable viewpoint, asserting that knowledge of God is acquired through the Murshid rather than individual kashf. He highlights the pinnacle of achieving Wahdat al-wujûd, expressing extraordinary happiness as the essence of heaven is realized in meeting God. However, CC notes that Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd are typically reserved for Prophets, Rasuls, and Wali beloved of Allah during their earthly existence, with other believers anticipated to experience it before death (CC, document and personal communication, June, 2023).

In contrast, DD respondents presented negative perspectives. Ma'rifat is characterized as the direct knowledge of Allah's Essence through kashf/gnosis without intermediaries. DD rejects this concept, labeling it hazardous and misleading, as there is no evidence supporting it in the Qur'an or Hadith. Similarly, Wahdat al-wujûd, defined as the unity of humans with God, is criticized by DD. They dismiss this belief as lacking support from the Qur'an or Hadith. DD cites historical instances, such as the execution of Al-Hallaj in Baghdad and Shaykh Siti Jenar by Wali Songo, as evidence of the perceived danger and misleading nature of this belief (HH, document and personal communication, June, 2023).

In conclusion, the post-test results following lectures revealed a diverse range of perspectives among respondents concerning Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd. Respondent AA, maintaining a neutral stance, elucidated Ma'rifat as the direct knowledge of God's Self through kashf or gnosis, sparking scholarly debates on its validity. The discussions revolved around the absence of concrete Quranic and Hadith evidence, with some scholars cautioning about its potential influence from other religious sources. Nonetheless, proponents defended Ma'rifat, citing the relevance of a hadith emphasizing the believer's ability to discern with the light of Allah. The view articulated by AA resonated with four other respondents, namely DD, EE, FF, and GG.

BB respondents contributed affirmative insights, characterizing Ma'rifat as a profound understanding of God through kashf, akin to the experiences of Prophets, Saints, and the Murshid. Wahdat al-wujûd, interpreted as the unity of humans with God, was perceived as a state where humans and God mutually face or witness each other, emphasizing the concept of wahdat al-shuhûd. Respondent CC echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the significance of acquiring knowledge of God through the Murshid and emphasizing the extraordinary happiness associated with achieving Wahdat al-wujûd. However, CC acknowledged that such experiences are typically reserved for Prophets, Rasuls, and Wali beloved of Allah during their earthly existence.

In contrast, DD respondents expressed negative perspectives, rejecting Ma'rifat as a hazardous and misleading concept lacking support from Quranic or Hadith sources. They similarly criticized Wahdat al-wujûd, dismissing its validity due to the absence of supporting evidence. DD cited historical instances of executions, such as that of Al-Hallaj in Baghdad and Shaykh Siti Jenar by Wali Songo, as evidence of the perceived danger and misleading nature associated with these beliefs. Overall, the post-test results underscore the nuanced and diverse nature of opinions on Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd among the respondents, reflecting the complex landscape of Sufi doctrines.

Most participants exhibited either neutral or positive attitudes towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd. Two individuals with positive inclinations even became followers of Tarekat. Those who were apathetic towards the concepts still maintained a favorable view, supporting their stance with references from the Qur'an, such as the verse "The faces of the believers on

that day (in Paradise) will be radiant. It is in their Lord that they look" (Qur'an 75:22-23), and the hadith "Beware of the hunches of a believer, for he sees with the light of Allah" (Tirmidhi, 2013), which suggests the possibility of direct knowledge from Allah. Additionally, they believe that Prophets, Apostles, and beloved saints of Allah have achieved Ma'rifat and encountered Wahdat al-wujûd, citing the experiences of figures like Ibn `Arabi, Al-Hallaj, and Shaykh Siti Jenar. Notably, Shaykh Said Nursi, despite generally rejecting Sufism and tarekat, concludes that ma'rifat is the pinnacle of Sufism (Sahin & Asroor, 2021). However, two respondents expressed negative attitudes, aligning with Salafis who perceive Tarekat and its doctrines as heretical due to their perceived deviation from Islam. According to Salafi beliefs, Ma'rifat is acquired through gnosis/kashf, a concept not recognized in Islam, as emphasized by scholars like Hilal (2002), Anwar (2002), Ibrahim (2002), and Wagemakers (2017). On the contrary, Khozin Afandi (2009) critiqued this perspective, asserting that the essence of Sufism lies in exploring how human nature connects with God through talqin-dhikr facilitated by a Murshîd. Afandi contends that Ma'rifat commences with talqin-dhikr under the guidance of a Murshîd.

While the present study provides valuable insights into respondents' attitudes towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd, it is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations that may impact the generalizability of the findings. The study's scope primarily involves a specific demographic or community, and therefore, caution should be exercised when extending these conclusions to broader populations with diverse cultural or religious backgrounds. The sample size, though informative within its context, might not fully represent the vast diversity of perspectives that exist regarding Sufism and related concepts. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported attitudes and interpretations introduces a potential for subjective bias, as participants may interpret concepts like Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd differently. The study design, focusing on post-test evaluations, offers a snapshot of participants' views after exposure to specific information, potentially neglecting long-term and dynamic changes in perspectives. Considering these limitations, future research endeavors should aim for more extensive and diverse participant samples, employ mixed-methods approaches, and explore longitudinal aspects to enhance the robustness and applicability of findings.

Building upon the limitations identified in the present study, avenues for further research emerge to deepen our understanding of students' attitudes towards Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd. First, an expansion of the participant demographics could enhance the generalizability of findings by incorporating diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, providing a more comprehensive picture of attitudes within broader populations. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys may offer a richer exploration of individual interpretations and experiences related to these concepts. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track changes in attitudes over an extended period, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how perspectives evolve beyond the immediate post-test phase. Exploring regional variations in attitudes towards Sufism and related doctrines may uncover unique cultural influences that shape these perspectives. Lastly, a comparative analysis between different schools of thought within Islam, such as Salafism and Sufism, could yield valuable insights into the varying theological positions on Ma'rifat and Wahdat al-wujûd. These suggestions aim to address the identified limitations and pave the way for more comprehensive and nuanced investigations into the complex realm of Islamic spirituality.

## CONCLUSION

The lectures on Sufism course provided in master's programs in IRE effectively countered the anti-Sufism perspective promoted by the Salafi movement, as revealed in the findings of the present study. Students in this study highlighted the presence of hadiths emphasizing the imperative to obey the Murshîd, considered the representative and successor of Prophet

Muhammad (al-khulafā al-rāshidīn al-mahdiyyīn). It was notable that Ibn Taymiyyah, a prominent Salafi figure, had a history of studying under a Murshīd. While most students had not directly studied under a Murshīd, their reluctance did not necessarily indicate a rejection of the Murshīd's existence. Rather, it was attributed to the challenge of finding an al-kāmil-mukammil Murshīd, meeting specific criteria. However, a minority of students did report success in identifying a Murshīd fitting these criteria. The majority of students expressed acceptance of fundamental Sufi doctrines, including dhikr-tarekat, talqin-dhikr, Ma'rifat, and Wahdat al-wujūd. The implications underscore the importance of maintaining Sufism courses within IRE master's programs.

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