

CHAPTER 3

THE BACKGROUND OF WOMAN PRACTITIONERS IN ILIT MANARAH

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the background of woman practitioners in ILIT Manarah and reasons for their participations in *sulūk*. The personal background information of six informants involves their personal details and also as *sulūk* practitioners of Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah in ILIT Manarah under the supervision of Syeikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. The reasons of their participation in *sulūk* practice can be divided into two main categories which are external and internal influences. The *sulūk* practice of Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah is obligatory for their followers at least once in a lifetime. The *sulūk* practice that supervised by Syeikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek comprises of the four main elements which include; 1) individual practices (*dhikr sirr*); 2) concentration (*tawajjuh*); 3) manners in *sulūk* (*‘adab*) and Islamic spiritual treatment. The *sulūk* practice enables its practitioners to achieve *ma‘rifatullah* by going through specific destinations (*maqām*) in their spiritual journey. However, the participation among the woman practitioners is still at the intermediate level which does not reflect their actual number of overall population. Thus, the reasons of the informants’ participation in *sulūk* practice provide a fruitful discussion for the researcher to better understand the phenomenon.

3.1 Information Background

3.1.1 Informant A – Zainun

Zainun is a teacher in a government school around Negeri Sembilan and is in her 50s. She graduated from local university and majoring in literature. Previously, she and her husband attended a *haul*⁴ of *syekh*'s *tarīqah* at a *pesantren*⁵, Indonesia. The *haul* was attended by many *tarīqah* teachers including a *kiyai* named Kiyai Romo. Her husband had expressed his intention to the Kiyai Romo to become his disciple because she and her husband at that time were interested in learning the *tasawwuf* in more depth. However, the Kiyai Romo had suggested to him to study with a *sheikh* of the *tarīqah* in Malaysia. Kiyai Romo did not tell in detail the information about the *sheikh*, which resulted in their search taking quite a long time because there were many *shuyūkh*⁶ in Malaysia.

Finally, one day Zainun and her husband saw an advertisement regarding a *tasawwuf* lecture given by a *sheikh* of the *tarīqah* on social media. Therefore, her husband had shown the advertisement to the son of the Kiyai Romo who was his acquaintance to inquire about the *sheikh* who had been mentioned by his father. The son of Kiyai Romo had told them that he was the *sheikh* mentioned by his father some time ago. Therefore, Zainun and her husband went to the mosque in Nilai to attend a lecture delivered by Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. At the end of the program, she and her husband had met with the *sheikh* to express their intention to be his disciples. Sheikh

⁴ A *haul* is an annual Muslim ritual to commemorate the death of an eminent figure, including a saint (*wali*) Assegaf, U. F. (2020). *Alkhairaat: A Study on its Hadhrami Background and Roles in Educational Reform in Eastern Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation, The Australian National University (Australia)).

⁵ A place for Islamic teaching with a traditional Islamic system in the Indonesian archipelago.

⁶ Plural for the term *sheikh*.

Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek had told them to attend the *tawajuh* ceremony held in Putrajaya and contacted Mr Rahman as the host. As a result, she and her husband finally *bai'ah* to the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah on 30 December 2014 in Putrajaya and had a *sulūk* on 15 December 2015 in Kuantan.

Currently, her husband is actively assisting Tuan Guru Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek in editing the videos of Tuan Guru's talks and lectures on social media. They are both blessed with four sons and all of them have sworn allegiance (*bai'ah*) to the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah.

Zainun stated that her family was not from *tasawwuf* background studies, let alone the *tarīqah* group. However, his sister who lives in Terengganu is the follower of Tarekat Ahmadiyya. Her mother-in-law is also a *tarīqah* practitioner and an active person who contributes in managing *daurah* events. Her daughter-in-law also swore allegiance to Kiyai Romo in Indonesia after marrying her eldest son.

3.1.1.1 Background as a Tarekat Practitioner

As a practitioner of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah, Zainun and her family members ensure that they always practice the *dhikr* that was taught by *sheikh* at least once a day. The time set for *dhikr* depends on her daily schedule and flexibility. She is used to *dhikr* right after the *Asr* prayer on Sunday, while after Subuh prayer during weekends even she is in her menstrual period. She is strict about the daily *dhikr* towards her children and always reminds them to perform it every single day. Some of her children are pursuing their studies at public universities in Malaysia and some of them are continuing their studies at boarding schools in Indonesia. The boarding school is under the supervision of Kiyai Romo who is the *sheikh* of the Tarekat

Naqsyabandiyyah but in a different branch. According to her, she and her husband have never skipped their daily *dhikr* since they performed *bai'ah*.

She would always attend the *tawajjuh* ceremony with her family because it is an important event of the *tariqah*. Due to time and distance constraints, she only manage to focus on the *tawajjuh* ceremonies that are held around Negeri Sembilan and the surrounding areas. Before attending her first *tawajjuh* ceremony, she first made some research regarding the ceremony by reading a few *tasawwuf* books. Therefore, she did not feel awkward and clumsy when she first experienced *tawajjuh* ceremony. There is no significant difference between the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by *sheikh* and the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by his *khalifah* as not all *tawajjuh* ceremonies are led by the *sheikh* himself.

She and her family have not watched television since she had *bai'ah* to Tuan Guru, in fact she has donated her television to others. She also prefers to spend her time listening to the *sheikh's* lectures on the internet rather than listening to the radio or any songs. She and her family would prefer to listen to the lectures and religious talks delivered by the *sheikh* compared to other religious talks because they believe that is delivered by him already covers all other fields of knowledge.

She once experienced the Islamic spiritual treatment method which was introduced by the *sheikh* when her son fell ill due to witchcraft. She used to run a small business in the past and that there were parties not comfortable with their business and suspected sending a black magic to her family. However, the incident finally urged her husband to learn the method of Islamic spiritual treatment and eventually became one of the practitioners. The *sheikh* had sent her husband to Kazakhstan along with several

other pilgrims for a month to serve people there. After returning to Malaysia, her husband is now actively treating patients around Negeri Sembilan.

3.1.2 Informant B - Natasha

Informant B or Natasha is a student who still continuing her studies in Doctorate in the field of Islamic studies at one of the public universities in Malaysia. She had previously pursued her studies at the Bachelor's Degree level in the field of Aqidah and Religion and subsequently studied at the Master's Degree level. She is 29 years old from and Selangor. She is a lecturer at a local university and still unmarried. She is the sixth child of nine siblings and has five step-siblings. She studied Islam in primary and secondary school. Although both her parents did not have background in religious studies, but she and her other siblings had been enrolled to a religious school.

She got to know about *tariqah* while studying in the second year of her Bachelor's Degree at the university. She was then exposed to the subject of *tasawwuf* in which it was one of the compulsory subjects at the university. Coincidentally, the lecturer who taught her the *tasawwuf* subject at that time was a practitioner of Sufism practices. At the beginning, she only studied the subject for examination purposes only, but eventually she began to enjoy studying it. Her lecturer suggested that she and her friends to attend the *tawajjuh* ceremony which led by Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. In 2015, she and her friends officially *bai'ah* (swore allegiance) to the *sheikh*.

Her family has a history of following the heretical group (al-Arqam) which was declared illegal by the Islamic Religious Department at that time. Therefore, her parents did not oppose at the beginning of her involvement in the *tariqah* because her parents were well-informed about the existence of Sufi *tariqah* in Malaysia. She joined *sulūk*

for the first time a few months after her *bai'ah* during the month of Ramadhan in Pahang with her other friends. She managed to be persistent when joining *sulūk* every time it was held even not in a full period. After her family members joined the *sulūk*, she often had a chance to *sulūk* either with both her parents or her siblings.

3.1.2.1 Background as a Tarekat Practitioner

She also practices her daily *dhikr* at least once a day everyday. However, due to work constraints, she sometimes forgets to recite the *dhikr*. Therefore, she would take an initiative to replace the *dhikr* with other *sunnah* practices such as by reciting *istighfar* and *sholawat*. According to the *sheikh*, there is no *qada'* (replacement) if a *salik* skips his/her daily *dhikr* because the time that has left cannot be replaced. She usually takes about an hour after Subuh prayer to recite *dhikr* and *tahlil* if she has enough time. She practices the *dhikr* alone in the bedroom so that she could concentrate more.

Among the challenges that she used to face during *dhikr* was when she wanted to focus on remembering Allah and to maintain her feet during *dhikr*. According to her again, her mind faced difficulties to focus on remembering of Allah whenever her mind was still thinking about worldly matters. The sitting position during *dhikr* was also challenging because it required her either to sit *tawaruk* left, right or *tahiyat awal* during the *dhikr*. However, she managed to *istiqamah* practicing the *dhikr* even though she sometimes did not totally focus on remembering of Allah. According to her again, *nafs* and *syaiton* were among the main factors that prevented her from reciting *dhikr*. Her body sometimes felt hard to recite *dhikr* and tend to postpone the *dhikr* which she eventually forgets to recite the *dhikr* on that day.

She would attend the *tawajjuh* ceremony held in Astana Budi every Friday. She makes sure to attend on that day even when she is tired because the *tawajjuh* ceremony is the place where she can finally meet with the *sheikh*. In addition, she rarely goes to other *tawajjuh* ceremonies that are held far from her place such as around Negeri Sembilan or in other states. She would go to the *tawajjuh* ceremony by herself because the place is not really far from her house. At the beginning of her involvement in the *tarīqah*, she often went to *tawajjuh* ceremonies with her friends, but when they started working, each of them became busy with their life. After attending the *tawajjuh* ceremony for so long, it finally became her routine every week. She also said that there was a difference between the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the *sheikh* and the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the *khalīfah* in terms of *suhbah* with the *sheikh*. Furthermore, she would also feel more enthusiastic if the *tawajjuh* was led by the *sheikh* because she could report to him if there was any issues.

She still continued her daily activities as usual such as watching the television and so on but not so often. She also watched a series of *sheikh*'s lectures either during live streaming on Facebook and You Tube or attended it physically. She seemed lenient in her daily diet because as long as the food was not harmful then it was suitable to be eaten.

Among the *sunnah* practices that done by her were those recommended by the *sheikh*, namely *sunat taubat* bathing, the *sunat hajat* prayer, the *sunat taubat* prayer, and *solawat* to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for 1500 times a day. However, there were times when she did not manage to perform all the practices due to busyness. She also recited surah *al-Ikhlās* and *Istighfar* whenever she had free time. She also pointed out that she was more inclined to multiply the practices taught by the *sheikh* such as

daily *dhikr* and *tahlil* as much as possible compared to other *sunnah* practices like *qiamullail* and so on. She also read conference paper that was written by *sheikh* in the field of *tasawwuf* and Islamic spiritual treatment as the title of her study also about the Islamic spiritual treatment.

3.1.3 Informant C – Hidayah

Informant C or Hidayah is a 59 years old married housewife. She has taken the *bai'ah* at the age of 42 in Kuantan. She was the second child of two siblings and has a sister. She comes from a family that has basic religious background in education. Her father has passed away and her mother is a housewife who rarely leaves the house. She studies in a non-religious school and only studies about Islamic religion at a *madrasah* in Kuantan. At that time, she has obtained permission from her husband to go out to study at the *madrasah*.

She decided to take *bai'ah* to the *tarīqah tasawwuf* with a *tarīqah* teacher in Kedah because she wanted to learn the science of *tasawwuf* in practice. Her husband did not participate in the beginning of her involvement in *tarīqah*, but after a long time they both finally practiced the teachings of *tarīqah* together. According to her, she had obtained permission from her teacher who were in Kedah to *bai'ah* to Tuan Guru Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek as they were from the same teacher line.

3.1.3.1 Background as a Practitioner

She practices daily *dhikr* taught by Tuan Guru at least once a day. Her husband is a person who is committed in *dhikr* and motivated her the most because her husband *istiqāmah* in *dhikr* every morning and evening. She also feel the difference if the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the *sheikh* himself and the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the

caliph. If the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the *sheikh*, then there will usually be a lecture by the *sheikh*, and the *jema'ah* would also served with special dishes from the usual day. The *tawajjuh* ceremony in Kuantan is usually held three times a week and she would attends every *tawajjuh* ceremony. She also has an opportunity to discuss about her patients with the *sheikh* as she is also a practitioner of the Islamic spiritual treatment. She is also one of the instructors who trained the new participants of *sulūk* and also the person that is responsible for any matters that related to *sulūk* participants.

3.1.4 Informant D - Jasmin

Jasmin is a 33 years old woman from Pahang and still single. She holds a Master's Degree in Biology from one of the public universities and currently worked as a beauty consultant. She takes *bai'ah* with Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek in March 2022 in Sungai Cincin, Gombak. She has studied at a regular government school which did not have a specific religious stream from primary and secondary school. Her family background is also from non-religious stream. She is the sixth child of seven siblings. She has participated in *sulūk* for not more than five times since she took *bai'ah*.

One of the main reasons that prompted her to join the *tarīqah* was because of her interest in *tasawwuf* knowledge in depth. Among the reasons of her meeting with Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek was that she saw several posters of Tuan Guru's lecture on social media. Prior to that, she joined a religious group that do not have a clear lineage of *murshīd* and which not recognized by an authoritative body. She has a misunderstanding of the definition of *sheikh mursyid* which she thinks that a *sheikh* should be someone who is not very prominent in the general public because of the ascetic and *tawadhu'* attitude. Therefore, she is deceived by the propaganda and joined a *dhikr* group that she only know through *Facebook* apps. She is given daily tasks that

must be done by each followers such as reciting certain *dhikr* at a specific times. She joined this deviant *dhikr* group along with her friends. Once she found that this *dhikr* group was unrecognized and deviant, she and her friends immediately left the group.

3.1.4.1 Background as a Practitioner

She would practices *dhikr Ism al-Dzat* Allah which is obtained during *sulūk* at least once a day. The time set aside for *dhikr* is uncertain according to her spare time, sometimes in the morning and sometimes at night alone in the bedroom. She do not experience any difficulty when reciting *dhikr* because she feel that the practice of *dhikr* of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah is easier to practice compared to the *dhikr* that was practiced when joining the previous deviant *dhikr* group. The previous deviant *dhikr* group required her to get up at 2 am every day for a few hours to perform *dhikr* and it was quite difficult to do. If she cannot recite *dhikr Ism al-Dzat* on a certain day, then she will *qada'* at the next day. She rarely skips her daily *dhikr* unless there is something unavoidable or busy with work. Among the initiatives taken to always recite *dhikr* is with a strong determination within herself. She joined the *tariqah* voluntarily without coercion from others. Among the things that need to be taken into consideration if she wants to be devout in *dhikr* is to leave out illegal things such as neglectful entertainment. Apart from that, she also practices *dhikr* even during her menstrual period. The condition of the body is very weak at that time because it cannot perform prayers and other general worship, therefore *dhikr* is very important.

The *tawajjuh* ceremony that is held in Pahang is three times a week managed by Ustaz Zul, the *khalifah* to Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. Therefore, she would attends every *tawajjuh* ceremony because the surau is only a few meters from her house.

She goes to *tawajjuh* alone as the surau is not really far from her house. She feels very

happy every time she attends it and feels calm after going to *tawajjuh*. Reciting *dhikr* during *tawajjuh* makes her happy because of the brotherhood and sisterhood is really strong. Due to the distance constraints, the *sheikh* rarely has a chance to visit her place, but it is not a problem as there is no difference between the *tawajjuh* ceremony conducted by the *khalifah* or *sheikh*.

She rarely watches TV and listens to the radio or listens to songs. She would listen to the *sheikh's* lectures but not too often because she also listens to other religious lectures. In terms of nutrition, she prefers to eat anything including meat as usual. Among the practices that she persistent every day is to recite the Al-Quran and *solawat* to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as recommended by the *sheikh*. Throughout the *sulūk*, she did not experience any problems in reciting *dhikr*. Therefore, she has never tries the method of Islamic spiritual treatment which is taught by the *sheikh*. She also never visited Pusat Rawatan Islam Manarah since she takes *bai'ah*.

3.1.5 Informant E - Maria

Maria (late 20 years old) is a diploma student in education. Previously, she pursued her studies in Communication at one of the Islamic universities at the Bachelor's Degree level. She first know about the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah through her sister. Her sister is a follower of the *tarīqah* since she studied at her degree level. Even so, she only joined *sulūk* after *bai'ah* for a while due to work constraints. Currently she works at a telecommunications company as an operator. She has already participated in *sulūk* less than five times since she takes *bai'ah*.

3.1.5.1 Background as a Practitioner

Due to the work constraints, she sometimes forget to recite daily *dhikr* as suggested by the *sheikh*. Therefore, she will oblige herself to attend the *tawajjuh* ceremony held near her house in Astana Budi every Friday. She would drives to Astana Budi after returning from work even though she is tired. She opined that if her car has reached at the *tawajjuh* ceremony then she has no reason not to attend the ceremony.

3.1.6 Informant F - Insyirah

Insyirah is a 27 years old and currently works at a well-known animation company. She graduated from a private university in the field of Animation. She is the eldest of four siblings and the only daughter in her family. She becomes the follower of Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah in 2019 during the *sulūk* program at ILIT Manarah. She attended a religious school when she was in primary school, and continued her studies at conventional secondary school from form one to form three. That is because, she and her family moved to the Philippines for work and she continued her schooling at an international school there for four years. Muslims are minority in the Philippines and she is the only one who wears *hijab* at her scholl even though there are other Muslim students. The school practices the teaching of Christianity as their official religion by holding special ceremonies on certain days but does not involves any students from other religious background.

However, she has returns to Malaysia after done with her schooling and lives with her grandfather. Her father is the first individual in the family to practice the teaching of Sufism when they are still in Miri, Sarawak. Her father becomes the follower of Tarekat Rifa'iyah when he was introduced by his peer and still practices it even

when they moved to the Philippines. According to her father, the practice of *tasawwuf* had saved him from negligence while in the country. Her acquaintance with Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek begin when his younger brother has diagnosed ill as a result of being bewitched. Therefore, her father has sought Islamic spiritual treatment in Manarah and he finally finds out about the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah and decides to swear allegiance (*bai 'ah*) to the *sheikh*. After her sick brother and her mother *bai 'ah* to the *sheikh*, then she finally also takes *bai 'ah* during the *sulūk* program at ILIT Manarah. She only managed to participate in *sulūk* for not more than five times since she takes *bai 'ah*.

3.1.6.1 Background as a Practitioner

She practices daily *dhikr* after Subuh time every day in her bedroom to be more focused and calm while reciting *dhikr*. She often goes to *tawajjuh* ceremonies around Seremban. She feels that there is a slightly difference between the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by Tuan Guru and the *tawajjuh* ceremony led by the *khalīfah* but it was not a big issue.

3.2 Summary of the Informants' Background

In conclusion, the information background of the informants comprises of several themes which includes; 1) age; 2) education background; 3) marital status; 4) employment status and the background as a *sulūk* practitioner.

Age: Based on the informant's background, three of the informants were on their late 20 (Informants B, E and F). Meanwhile, both informant A and C were in their late 50. There was also an informant (informant D) which aged around early 30 years old.

Education Background: All of the informants were from educated group either as a degree holder or even Master's degree level. Informant A, C, E, and F were graduated from university in their degree level. Meanwhile, informant B and D pursued their studies until Master's degree level. Five of them were from Islamic education background either primary or secondary school.

Marital Status: Two of them were already married including informant A and C, meanwhile the rest of them were still single (informant B, D, E, and F).

Employment Status: Two of the informants worked in a public sector. Informant A and B currently worked as a government servant in an educational institution. Meanwhile, informant D, E and F were giving their services at a private sector.

Practitioner: As for their involvement in this Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah, it can be divided into two categories which included a group of below than five years and a group of five years and above. Three of them already joined this *tariqah* for almost more than five years and the rest of them only joined the *tariqah* for not more than five years since they took *bai'ah* with Tuan Guru. Meanwhile, three of them which included informant A, B and C also participated in *sulūk* for more than five times and the rest of them (informant D, E and F) have joined *sulūk* for not more than five times. Majority of them also said that they always listen to Tuan Guru's lecture either using online platform or physically attending it. For the informant C and D, they used to attend *tawajjuh* ceremony three times a week in Kuantan because of the schedule that has been stated. Meanwhile, informant A, B, E and F mentioned that they will make sure to join the *tawajjuh* ceremony at least once a week. As for an individual *dhikr*, they

believed that it was crucial to practiced it at least once per day as the majority of the informants also mentioned that they practiced it daily.

Spiritual Issues: The informants of the study are believe to have their own personal issues that arise in their life especially when involving their emotional and spiritual issues. Zainun who worked as a teacher also experienced a stressful situation when her son diagnosed ill. She and her family need to undergo Islamic spiritual treatment for some period to finally recovered. Natasha and Maria also experienced a physical and spiritual issues resulted from the deviant group that she and her family joined. She believes that the aura of the deviant group also plays a significant roles in her emotional issues. In addition, Jasmin who also participated in a deviant religious group believes that she encountered with depression and she often sees a doctor and takes medication recommended by the doctor to reduce her depression. Meanwhile, Insyirah believes that she also experienced a hassle during her studies which causes her emotional instability.

3.3 Reasons of the Woman Practitioners Participated in the *Sulūk* Practices

3.3.1 External Influences

3.3.1.1 The Inspirations from *Sheikh* of the *Tarīqah*

Among the reasons that motivate the informants to participate in *sulūk* is due to two main factors, namely external and internal factors. Zainun joined *sulūk* because it is a suggestion from the *sheikh* of the *tarīqah*, Tuan Guru Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. According to her,

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Zainun: *masa nak suluk tu, anak saudara suami nak kahwin..kita nak pergi suluk ke nak pergi majlis..pastu dengar senior-senior cakap, kalau awak tak pergi awak minta izin dengan Tuan. Pernah ada kes kalau orang tu sampai sudah..tak bersuluk....jadi suami kata, takpelah kita tak payah la..jadi kita tak balik la Indonesia..*

This *sulūk* practice is highly recommended for every practitioner of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah Khalidiyyah at least once in a lifetime. Because it is held at a specific time and period, followers who have a free time should make the best use of the opportunity. Based on Zainun's experienced, she actually has another plan, which was to attend the wedding of her husband's nephew in Indonesia during the *sulūk* program. However, she make up her mind and asked the *sheikh* for a permission to attend the *sulūk* because she never attended it since she takes *bai'ah*. In Sufism, *sheikh murshid* is very important. It is regarded that someone who has followed the path of guidance but has not been guided by a *sheikh* is considered sinful (Akhmansyah, 2015).

She believes that if she refused to attend *sulūk* at that time, she may not be able to do it in the future. This is because, prioritizing worldly matters that are not important over things that are beneficial in the hereafter may prevent someone from receiving Allah SWT's guidance. Hence, it is important for the followers of any *tarīqah* to follow the guidance of their *sheikh* without any hesitation. A well-known Sufi said that, "Whoever studies *tarīqah* without a *sheikh murshid*, the devil is his instructor." Aside from that, there is another notion that one cannot reach to God (*wushūl*) without the assistance of a *sheikh murshid*. There is a dread of being lost in reaching God without a *sheikh murshid* based on those beliefs.

3.3.1.2 The Influence from a Lecturer

In general, not all public universities in Malaysia perceived *Aqidah* and *Tasawwuf* subject as their compulsory subject. According to Natasha, her university was one of them. Therefore, each student has been exposed to the subject in accordance with the level of education that the students should learn. However, not all students who study the subject have an interest and tendency to delve into the subject except a few. However, she and her few friends are among those who deeply interested in learning this field of *tasawwuf*. The lecturer that teach her the subject also plays a significant roles in her spiritual and *sulūk* journey.

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Natasha: *kita tengah cuti sem..jadi pensyarah saya tu dia cadangkan lah pergi lah suluk..walhal masa tu kita dalam keadaan masih mencari-cari je sebenarnya..macam suluk tu benda apa kita tak tahu.*

Natasha can be classified as fortunate student because her lecturer is a hardcore practitioner of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah and the disciple of Tuan Guru Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek.

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Natasha: *kalau ikutkan..first kenal secara teori la, kalau teori tu di Universiti lah..masa sana, memang ada subjek Tasawwuf. Tapi masa tu belajar untuk peperiksaan jela (ketawa) tapi jadi minat tu bila..emm..ada pensyarah yang mengajar Tasawwuf tu dia bawa kita dekat..emm..apa..majlis-majlis ilmu yang sebenar*

lah..yang memang mengamalkan. Jadi dekat situ nampaklah macam ada minat-minat sikit..jadi bila minat tu lah yang kita dah belajar kan teori, jadi nak belajar la praktikal. Masa tu cuba-cuba je, macam ajak-ajak, tapi bila dah amal.. tu lah..dah tahu..owh tarekat ni memang ada (bercakap sendiri)..masa belajar tu rasa tarekat tu tak wujud (ketawa kecil). Perasaan tu..owhh..ada ke Tasawwuf ni (bercakap sendiri)..

Therefore, the role of a teacher in educating her students is the same as the role of parents in educating their children. If the teacher's morals and beliefs are correct, then the result of his education is also good. Therefore, it is important for a person to associate and learn with someone who has a clear faith and good morals (Noor Hisham, 2011).

3.3.1.3 The Influence from Peer Group

Youth are the most important asset of the country because they are the hope for future leadership. Therefore, the future of the society and the development of a country depends on the leadership to be elected (Abdullah, 2006; Turiman et al., 2008; and Mohd Fuad & Junaidi, 2012). Hence, the development of the youth becomes an important aspect to be studied in accordance with its significant roles in the future. Among the factors that influence a person's morals and behavior are their friends (Mohd Ismail, 2005; Azhar, 2006).

This is also proved by the results of an interview with Hidayah. She believes that her friend is one of the reasons of her participation in *sulūk*. She has previously been stuck with a deviant group that does not have a clear *sanad* of *murshid* and was

not recognized by the Islamic religious authority. Even so, she eventually came to her senses and became a follower of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah. Her friend is an individual who invited her to join *sulūk* after performing *bai'ah*. At that time she does not know anything about *sulūk* but she finally make it as all her friends also agreed upon it.

3.3.1.4 The Influence of Family Member

Maria and Insyirah are both joined the *sulūk* because of the influence of their family members who first joined the *tarīqah* and *sulūk*. Referring to the results of a study conducted by Rohana Tan, Norhasni Zainal Abiddin & Andi Suwirta (2016), the majority of respondents (94.8%) in this study agreed that parental behavior becomes the example to the Islamic morals of youth. Not only specific to the parents, U. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Theory of Human Ecology, which argued that factors or forces in the immediate environment gives an impact to human behavior and development. The microsystem is the initial level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, and it includes everything in the child's immediate environment that has direct interaction with them, such as parents, siblings, teachers, and school peers.

Maria joined *sulūk* after seeing her two sisters joined the *sulūk* practice. In addition, her two sisters are the closest individuals to her as both her parents are in Perak. Her sisters give a lot of advices before she joined *sulūk* for the first time.

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Maria: *sebelum suluk yang first, tanya kak suha..kena buat apa ni..kak cakap kena ingat Allah..*

It was also supported by Insyirah who mentioned about the significant roles of family members in spiritual journey of a *salik* especially her parents who were responsible for her involvement in *sulūk*. According to her,

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Insyirah: *mama tarik pergi suluk..dia bagi saya kertas yang kaifiyat tu kan, nanti awak bawak ni dan awak baca..saya macam ni apa benda ni kan..okay la..*

Her association with the *sheikh* begin when her younger brother became unwell as a result of being afflicted. As a result, her father sought Islamic spiritual treatment in Manarah, where he eventually learned the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah and vowed loyalty (*bai'ah*) to Sheikh Dr Haji Jahid bin Haji Sidek. After her ailing brother and mother take *bai'ah* to the *sheikh*, she then also *bai'ah* during the *sulūk* program at ILIT.

3.3.2 Internal Forces

3.3.2.1 Self-Empowerment

In this context, internal factors are counted as self-desires that exert a significant influence on the actions of the informant. Hidayah has a deep interest in *tasawwuf* and *tarīqah*. Therefore, she would attends *sulūk* for ten days and going through all the specific destinations of remembrance (*dhikr*) that have been set.

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Hidayah: *bila Tasawwuf,kita belajar teorinya..ini gitu semua..amalan dia apa? Amalan tu zikir la..*

Meanwhile, Maria also emphasized that she joined *sulūk* to explore more about the *maqāmat* of *dhikr* which could not be achieved without practicing *sulūk*. A person who has been *sulūk* for ten days will be able to increase the *maqām* of *dhikr* as practiced by the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyyah Khalidiyyah.

Researcher: *Macam mana boleh masuk suluk?*

Maria: *sebelum suluk memang dah banyak kali tawajuh. Tak pernah tahu ada wuquf qalbi..*

Thus, this is the main reason for Maria to join *sulūk* after takes *bai`ah* with Tuan Guru. In order to achieve the levels of *dhikr* that have been set, the *sulūk* participants need to practice *dhikr* in a certain number and meditate (*tafakkur*) under the supervision of a *sheikh*. It is a spiritual training that requires a high level of *mujāhadah* and requires strong mental and physical strength because it is bound by strict *sulūk* guidelines and *‘adab*. However, if a person has the determination and good intentions then it does not feel difficult to implement.

3.4 Conclusion

For the conclusion, four of the informants believed that external influences played an important roles in their *sulūk* participation which included the role of *sheikh* of the *tarīqah*, lecturer, acquaintance, and also their family members. Meanwhile, only two of them believed that their *sulūk* journey are because of their willingness to enhance their self-empowerment. It can be concluded that the *sulūk* practitioners are from those who prioritize education as they are among educated person. They are also among those who have Islamic background education and non-Islamic background education. They are also in their late 20s, early 30s and late 50s which showed that the various generation

that participated in *sulūk*. However, most of them have also experienced a stressful situation in their life which lead to their participation in *sulūk*.

