



The Pedagogy of Delayed Divine Response: A Sufi Perspective on Spiritual Education in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam

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ABSTRACT

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The phenomenon of delayed divine response to prayer often generates disappointment, anxiety, and spiritual uncertainty among contemporary Muslims, particularly within a culture that emphasizes instant gratification and immediate outcomes. This study aims to analyze the concept of delayed divine response to prayer in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam by Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari and to examine its relevance to contemporary Muslim spirituality. Employing a qualitative approach with a library research design, the study utilized Al-Hikam as the primary source, supported by the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Sufi literature, and contemporary scholarly works. Data were collected through documentary research and analyzed using data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. The findings reveal that delayed divine response should not be interpreted as divine rejection but as a form of spiritual pedagogy (*tarbiyah rūhiyyah*) that cultivates patience (*sabr*), contentment (*ridā*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*). This process strengthens spiritual awareness, psychological resilience, and religious commitment. The study concludes that delayed divine response functions as a transformative mechanism of spiritual growth. Theoretically, it contributes to Islamic spiritual education and Sufi studies by integrating classical Sufi teachings with contemporary perspectives on spirituality, resilience, and religious coping.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of twenty-first-century life has intensified the need for spiritual resilience among individuals and communities. Rapid technological advancement, globalization, social competition, and the culture of instant gratification have transformed the way people perceive success, fulfillment, and meaning in life. While these developments provide unprecedented opportunities for access to information and personal

achievement, they also contribute to growing levels of anxiety, stress, uncertainty, and existential dissatisfaction (Alsaied, 2024; Annisa et al., 2025; Rahimi & Oh, 2024). Recent studies indicate that material progress does not automatically lead to psychological well-being; instead, many individuals experience spiritual emptiness despite living in highly connected and technologically advanced societies (Wijaya et al., 2025). Consequently, scholars have emphasized the importance of spiritual education as a means of fostering inner stability, moral awareness, and resilience in the face of life's challenges (Ghazali et al., 2025). Within Islamic thought, spirituality functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a framework through which individuals cultivate meaning, hope, and emotional balance. Therefore, examining spiritual concepts that contribute to human resilience is increasingly important for contemporary society.

One of the most significant spiritual challenges faced by many Muslims concerns the experience of delayed divine response to prayer. In contemporary religious practice, prayer is often associated with expectations of immediate results, leading some believers to experience disappointment, doubt, frustration, or even spiritual insecurity when their supplications are not answered according to their preferred timing (Gatsiou et al., 2024; Mustaghfiroh et al., 2025; Rawasiyah Rawasiyah, 2025). This problem is exacerbated by modern cultural tendencies that prioritize efficiency, speed, and instant outcomes in nearly every aspect of life. As a result, delayed answers to prayer are frequently interpreted as indications of divine rejection or personal inadequacy rather than as meaningful spiritual experiences. Such interpretations may weaken religious commitment, reduce spiritual confidence, and create psychological distress among believers. Consequently, there is a growing need for educational and theological perspectives capable of helping Muslims reinterpret delayed divine response in constructive ways that strengthen faith and promote spiritual maturity rather than discouragement and despair.

This issue can be observed in contemporary Muslim communities where prayer often functions not only as an act of worship but also as a coping mechanism for personal, social, and economic difficulties. Empirical studies have shown that prayer contributes significantly to psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and resilience during periods of uncertainty (Achour et al., 2026). Nevertheless, many believers continue to struggle when confronted with unanswered or delayed prayers, particularly in situations involving health crises, economic hardship, family problems, or personal aspirations. In these circumstances, individuals frequently question the meaning of their supplications and the nature of God's response. This phenomenon highlights the need for a deeper understanding of prayer beyond its instrumental function as a means of obtaining desired outcomes. Rather, prayer should be understood as a transformative spiritual practice that shapes human character, strengthens

religious consciousness, and cultivates trust in divine wisdom. Such an understanding is particularly evident within the Islamic mystical tradition, where spiritual growth is often linked to experiences of waiting, surrender, and inner transformation.

Scholarly discussions concerning prayer and spirituality have expanded considerably in recent years. Previous studies have demonstrated that prayer serves important psychological, emotional, and spiritual functions, including stress reduction, emotional stability, meaning-making, and religious coping (Achour et al., 2026). Within the Sufi tradition, scholars such as Al-Ghazali and other classical Muslim thinkers have emphasized prayer as an expression of servitude, dependence upon God, and spiritual purification. Furthermore, contemporary studies on Sufism have highlighted its contribution to moral education, spiritual development, and psychological resilience in modern society (Rahayu et al., 2025; Ansori et al., 2026). Research on Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari's **Al-Hikam** has similarly revealed the relevance of its teachings for cultivating inner peace, self-awareness, and spiritual maturity. These studies collectively establish the importance of prayer and spirituality as resources for personal development and well-being within contemporary Muslim contexts.

Despite these valuable contributions, important gaps remain within the existing literature. Most previous studies have focused primarily on the virtues of prayer, its psychological benefits, or the broader educational values of Sufi teachings. Relatively little attention has been devoted to examining delayed divine response as a specific process of spiritual pedagogy and character formation. Existing research tends to approach prayer from theological, psychological, or educational perspectives separately, without integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive framework capable of explaining how experiences of waiting contribute to spiritual transformation. Furthermore, studies on *Al-Hikam* generally emphasize ethical teachings and spiritual cultivation without specifically exploring the pedagogical significance of delayed answered prayers. Consequently, the formative role of delayed divine response in nurturing patience (*sabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), contentment (*ridha*), and spiritual resilience remains insufficiently explored. Addressing this gap is important because contemporary believers increasingly encounter challenges that require deeper spiritual resources for navigating uncertainty and disappointment.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari's Seventh Wisdom in *Al-Hikam* with contemporary theories of spirituality, spiritual resilience, and religious education. Unlike previous studies that primarily investigate the benefits or outcomes of prayer, this research conceptualizes delayed divine response as a form of spiritual pedagogy through which believers undergo inner transformation and moral development. The study argues that delayed answers to prayer are not manifestations of divine

rejection but educational processes designed to cultivate patience, trust, surrender, contentment, and spiritual maturity. Based on this perspective, the research addresses the question of how the concept of delayed divine response in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam contributes to the spiritual formation of contemporary Muslims. It is hypothesized that the experience of waiting for divine response functions as a transformative mechanism that strengthens religious commitment, enhances psychological resilience, and deepens spiritual awareness. Therefore, this study contributes theoretically to Islamic spiritual education and Sufi studies while providing practical insights for addressing contemporary spiritual and existential challenges.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design. This approach was selected because the focus of the study was to explore concepts, meanings, and educational values embedded in Sufi teachings regarding the phenomenon of delayed divine response to prayer. Since the object of analysis consists of textual and conceptual materials rather than observable social behavior, library research was considered the most appropriate method for examining and interpreting the spiritual, educational, and existential dimensions contained in classical Islamic texts. Through this approach, the study sought to develop a comprehensive understanding of how Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari's teachings contribute to contemporary discussions on spiritual education, religious resilience, and Muslim spirituality.

The research was conducted in a library setting by utilizing various academic and textual sources. The primary source of data was Al-Hikam by Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari, particularly the Seventh Wisdom (al-Hikmah al-Sabi'ah), which discusses delayed divine response to prayer. This text was selected because it represents one of the most influential works in the Sufi intellectual tradition and provides a profound explanation of the relationship between supplication, divine wisdom, and spiritual development. Secondary data were obtained from the Qur'an, authentic Hadith literature, classical and contemporary Sufi writings, scholarly books, and peer-reviewed journal articles related to Islamic spirituality, spiritual education, religious experience, and spiritual resilience.

Data were collected through documentary research. The researcher systematically identified, selected, and reviewed relevant primary and secondary sources. The process involved intensive reading, note-taking, classification of textual evidence, and documentation of concepts related to delayed divine response, patience (*sabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), contentment (*ridha*), spiritual growth, and resilience. The collected data were then organized according to themes and conceptual categories that emerged from the textual analysis.

Data analysis adopted the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and

Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data condensation stage, textual data from Al-Hikam and supporting sources were selected, simplified, focused, and categorized according to the objectives of the study. In the data display stage, the condensed data were organized systematically through thematic matrices, conceptual mapping, and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among key concepts. Finally, in the verification stage, interpretations were continuously reviewed and refined by comparing evidence across multiple sources, enabling the formulation of comprehensive conclusions regarding the educational and spiritual significance of delayed divine response to prayer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Concept of Delayed Divine Response in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of delayed divine response in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam should not be understood as a rejection of prayer, but rather as a form of spiritual education that guides believers toward deeper religious maturity and a closer relationship with Allah. This finding is consistent with the perspectives of Al-Ghazali, who viewed prayer as an expression of 'ubudiyah and human dependence upon God, as well as with the studies of Achour et al. (2026) which highlight the role of prayer in fostering psychological well-being, hope, and spiritual resilience. However, this study extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that the delay in divine response itself serves as a pedagogical mechanism through which believers cultivate patience (*sabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and contentment (*ridha*). Rather than focusing solely on the outcomes of prayer, Ibn 'Atha'illah emphasizes the transformative spiritual process embedded within the experience of waiting, thereby shifting the meaning of prayer from an instrumental practice to a pathway of inner formation.

The findings also support previous studies by Rahayu et al. (2025), Ansori et al. (2026), and Afifi et al. (2026), which emphasize the continuing relevance of Al-Hikam in nurturing spiritual awareness and psychological resilience in contemporary society. The similarity lies in the recognition that spiritual growth often emerges through experiences that challenge human expectations rather than immediately fulfill them. Nevertheless, this study contributes a distinctive perspective by highlighting the phenomenological dimensions of delayed divine response. The experience of waiting generates three interconnected forms of transformed consciousness: awareness of human limitations, awareness of divine presence, and awareness of meaning behind life events that initially appear unfavorable. Consequently, delayed divine response is not merely a passive experience of postponement but an active process of spiritual transformation that

deepens faith and reshapes the believer's understanding of reality.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the development of Islamic spiritual education and Sufi studies by reinterpreting the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam through the lenses of contemporary spirituality and spiritual resilience. Unlike previous studies that tended to examine prayer from theological, psychological, or educational perspectives separately, this research integrates theological, spiritual, and existential dimensions into a comprehensive analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that delayed divine response functions as a form of divine pedagogy that redirects individuals from an anthropocentric orientation, centered on personal desires and expectations, toward a theocentric orientation grounded in submission to divine wisdom. This perspective enriches contemporary discussions on Islamic spirituality by emphasizing that spiritual development is shaped not only through achievement and fulfillment but also through uncertainty, waiting, and surrender to God's decree.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for contemporary Muslim societies that are increasingly influenced by instant-gratification culture, uncertainty, and psychological pressures. Understanding delayed divine response as a process of spiritual education can help individuals reinterpret disappointment, anxiety, and unmet expectations in a more constructive and meaningful way. The teachings of Ibn 'Atha'illah provide a valuable framework for strengthening psychological resilience, cultivating emotional stability, and maintaining hope amid life's challenges. Therefore, the concept of delayed divine response in Al-Hikam possesses not only theological significance but also practical relevance for spiritual counseling, character education, and the cultivation of religious resilience. It offers a contextual and transformative model of spiritual growth that enables believers to perceive waiting not as a sign of divine rejection, but as a meaningful journey toward greater faith, self-transcendence, and spiritual maturity.

Delayed Divine Response as Spiritual Education

The findings of this study reveal that delayed divine response to prayer in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam should not be understood merely as a theological issue concerning whether supplications are accepted or rejected, but rather as a process of spiritual education (*tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*) aimed at cultivating religious maturity and strengthening the relationship between human beings and Allah. This finding is consistent with the perspectives of Al-Ghazali, who viewed prayer as an expression of servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*) and human dependence upon God, as well as Al-Qushayri, who emphasized prayer as a spiritual station (*maqām*) that purifies the soul and deepens submission to divine will (Ghazali et al., 2025). Similarly, Ibn Arabi argued that every prayer receives a response, although the form and timing may differ from human expectations.

However, this study extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that delayed divine response functions as a structured pedagogical process through which believers are educated to transcend outcome-oriented religiosity and develop a deeper awareness of divine wisdom. Theoretically, this finding enriches contemporary discussions on Islamic spiritual education by positioning delayed divine response as an intentional mechanism of spiritual formation rather than a passive experience of waiting (Albustomi & Baharun, 2025; Kia & Majesty, 2025; Misnatun & Ummah, 2023).

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that delayed divine response contributes significantly to the development of patience (*ṣabr*), which emerges as a central dimension of spiritual resilience. This finding aligns with previous studies that describe patience as an active spiritual capacity involving self-regulation, perseverance, and trust in divine decree (Safitri, 2025). Consistent with contemporary studies on spirituality and resilience, the present research confirms that patience enables individuals to cope constructively with uncertainty, disappointment, and existential challenges. Nevertheless, this study differs from earlier psychological approaches by highlighting that patience in Ibn 'Atha'illah's thought is not merely a coping strategy but a transformative spiritual virtue cultivated through continuous engagement with prayer and divine waiting. From a theoretical perspective, this finding strengthens the integration between Sufi spirituality and contemporary theories of resilience. Practically, it suggests that spiritual educators, counselors, and religious leaders may utilize Sufi teachings to help individuals reinterpret delayed outcomes in life as opportunities for personal growth rather than signs of failure or abandonment.

Another important finding concerns the role of contentment (*riḍā*) as a spiritual response to delayed divine fulfillment. The results support previous research demonstrating that contentment contributes to emotional stability, psychological well-being, and reduced anxiety (Mahendra & Hasibuan, 2025). Similar to classical Sufi scholars, Ibn 'Atha'illah emphasizes that believers should trust that every divine decree contains wisdom beyond immediate human comprehension. However, this study highlights a distinctive contribution by showing that *riḍā* functions not only as acceptance of reality but also as a transformative process that reorients individuals from self-centered expectations toward a God-centered worldview (Nasrin et al., 2025; Zainal Abidin et al., 2025). This finding expands existing literature on Islamic spirituality by illustrating how delayed divine response becomes a medium through which believers learn to interpret life events through the lens of divine wisdom. In practical terms, the concept of *riḍā* offers a valuable framework for addressing contemporary issues such as stress, frustration, and the pursuit of instant gratification, which increasingly characterize modern society.

The study also demonstrates that delayed divine response nurtures trust

in God (tawakkul), a concept that occupies a central position within both classical Sufi thought and contemporary Islamic psychology. Previous studies have identified tawakkul as an effective form of religious coping that promotes psychological resilience and emotional well-being. The present findings support this view while extending it by showing that tawakkul develops through the believer's gradual realization that ultimate outcomes belong entirely to Allah. In Ibn 'Atha'illah's framework, prayer is not intended to compel divine action but to cultivate surrender to divine wisdom. This interpretation differs from instrumental understandings of prayer that emphasize the fulfillment of personal desires. Theoretically, the findings contribute to a more holistic understanding of prayer by integrating theological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Practically, they provide contemporary Muslims with an alternative perspective for navigating uncertainty, helping them maintain faith, optimism, and emotional balance when confronted with unanswered expectations.

Overall, the findings indicate that Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari offers a comprehensive and integrative understanding of delayed divine response that synthesizes the theological insights of Al-Ghazali, the spiritual purification framework of Al-Qushayri, and the existential perspective of Ibn Arabi. While previous studies have largely focused on the virtues, psychological benefits, or theological dimensions of prayer, this research demonstrates that delayed divine response functions as a form of spiritual pedagogy designed to cultivate *ṣabr*, *riḍā*, and tawakkul simultaneously. This perspective represents an important theoretical contribution to Islamic spiritual education by framing prayer as a transformative process of character formation and religious development. Practically, the findings suggest that the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam remains highly relevant for contemporary Muslim societies facing crises of meaning, existential anxiety, mental health challenges, and the culture of immediacy. Through this lens, delayed divine response is understood not as divine rejection, but as a meaningful spiritual journey that fosters resilience, emotional maturity, and deeper intimacy with Allah.

The Relevance of the Concept of Delayed Divine Response for Contemporary Muslim Spirituality

The findings of this study demonstrate that Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari's concept of delayed divine response remains highly relevant to the spiritual and psychological challenges faced by contemporary Muslims. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of spirituality and religiosity in fostering mental health, reducing stress, strengthening resilience, and promoting spiritual well-being (Afiani & Haririe, 2024; Achour et al., 2026). Similar to the arguments of Rahayu et al. (2025), the present study confirms that spiritual values such as patience (*sabr*), contentment (*riḍā*), and trust in God (tawakkul) contribute significantly to emotional stability and inner peace.

However, this research extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that these virtues are not merely outcomes of religious commitment but are systematically cultivated through the experience of delayed divine response, which functions as a process of spiritual pedagogy designed to transform the believer's consciousness and relationship with Allah (Fahmadia & Maulida, 2025; Moslimany et al., 2024; Nisak & Ishari, 2025; Tarannum, 2023).

The findings also correspond closely with Pargament's theory of religious coping, which explains that individuals utilize religious beliefs and practices to interpret adversity and manage life stressors. Similar to positive religious coping strategies, Ibn 'Atha'illah's teachings encourage believers to maintain hope, trust divine wisdom, and preserve their relationship with God despite unmet expectations. Nevertheless, an important distinction emerges between the Sufi perspective and contemporary psychological approaches. While religious coping theory primarily focuses on adaptation, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being, Ibn 'Atha'illah views delayed divine response as a means of cultivating spiritual maturity and nearness to Allah (qurb ilallah). Thus, psychological benefits such as reduced anxiety and increased resilience are regarded as consequences of spiritual growth rather than its ultimate objective. This finding contributes a transcendental dimension that is often absent from contemporary psychological interpretations of spirituality.

Furthermore, the study reveals that delayed divine response functions as a transformative mechanism through which believers develop patience, contentment, and trust in God simultaneously. This finding supports previous Sufi scholarship that interprets prayer as a means of spiritual purification and self-transformation rather than merely a vehicle for obtaining desired outcomes (Ghazali et al., 2025). However, unlike earlier studies that primarily discuss the virtues of prayer in general terms, the present research specifically identifies delayed divine response as a pedagogical process that facilitates the internalization of spiritual virtues. Theoretically, this finding enriches contemporary discussions on Islamic spiritual education by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates classical Sufi teachings with modern theories of spirituality, resilience, and religious coping. It also expands the understanding of prayer from an instrumental practice toward a transformative spiritual experience that shapes both character and consciousness.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that Ibn 'Atha'illah's teachings offer valuable guidance for addressing contemporary challenges such as uncertainty, anxiety, existential crises, and the culture of instant gratification. By understanding delayed divine response as an expression of divine wisdom rather than divine rejection, contemporary Muslims may reinterpret adversity and unfulfilled expectations as opportunities for spiritual growth and personal development. This perspective can be applied within religious education, spiritual counseling, pastoral care, and mental health interventions that

incorporate faith-based approaches. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam provides a holistic framework through which delayed divine response contributes not only to psychological resilience and spiritual well-being but also to the cultivation of spiritual maturity and deeper intimacy with Allah, which remains the ultimate goal of the Sufi path.

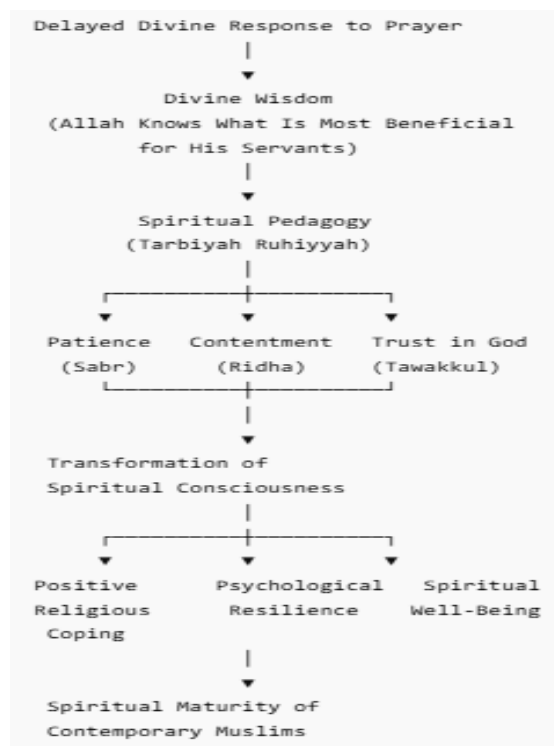


Figure 1. Analysis of Delayed Divine Response to Prayer in Al-Hikam

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework derived from this study, showing that delayed divine response to prayer, as interpreted through the Seventh Wisdom of *Al-Hikam*, should not be understood as a sign of divine rejection but as an expression of divine wisdom (*hikmah ilahiyyah*) functioning as a process of spiritual education (*tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*). Through this process, believers cultivate the virtues of patience (*sabr*), contentment (*riḍā*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*), which contribute to the transformation of spiritual consciousness. In contemporary Muslim life, this transformation strengthens positive religious coping, psychological resilience, and spiritual well-being, ultimately fostering spiritual maturity and leading individuals toward deeper intimacy with Allah (*qurb ilallah*), the ultimate objective of spiritual development in the Sufi tradition.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the concept of delayed divine response to prayer in the Seventh Wisdom of Al-Hikam by Ibn 'Atha'illah al-Sakandari constitutes

a form of spiritual pedagogy (*tarbiyah rūḥiyyah*) that guides believers toward spiritual maturity through the cultivation of patience (*sabr*), contentment (*riḍā*), and trust in God (*tawakkal*). The most important finding of this research is that delayed divine response should not be interpreted as divine rejection but as an expression of divine wisdom that functions as a transformative process of spiritual formation, enabling believers to develop deeper awareness of God, stronger religious commitment, and greater psychological resilience. The study contributes to the advancement of Islamic spiritual education and Sufi studies by integrating classical Sufi teachings with contemporary perspectives on spirituality, religious coping, and resilience, thereby offering a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding prayer beyond its instrumental function. Nevertheless, this research is limited by its reliance on textual and library-based analysis focused primarily on the Seventh Wisdom of *Al-Hikam*. Future studies are therefore encouraged to explore empirical dimensions of this concept through qualitative field research, psycho-spiritual investigations, or comparative analyses involving other Sufi traditions and contemporary Muslim communities to further examine the practical implications of delayed divine response for spiritual development, mental health, and religious resilience in modern society.

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