



THE ROLE OF DHIKR IN IMPROVING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING THROUGH ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY COUNSELLING

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Abstract:

Psychological problems are so complex, encouraging counsellors to be more aware in dealing with them. Issues such as anxiety disorders, stress, and even depression in recent years have shown alarming numbers. In overcoming these problems, there needs to be a solution step that is effective and has a significant impact on the counsellor. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the role of dhikr in Islamic spirituality counselling as an effort to help clients improve psychological well being. The role of dhikr in Islamic spirituality counselling is expected to be an alternative solution in overcoming problems concerning the world of counselling. This research uses a qualitative method with a spiritual counselling approach. The use of this spiritual counselling approach is considered suitable because it raises dhikr as a major component in the counselling process and at the same time is a form of spiritual behaviour used to remember the existence of God. The results obtained are that in Islam, dhikr is generally believed to have the virtue of providing a sense of calmness in the soul, reviving negligence in the heart, being a medium to get closer to Allah, and divine guidance in providing ideal life direction, which ultimately has an effective impact on psychological well being. This shows that dhikr plays a role in psychological well being.

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INTRODUCTION

The complex dynamics of life often lead to psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Problems like this are generally felt when entering adolescence to adulthood. Based on the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) report, it was found that the population aged 15 years and over had unstable mental sensitivity. More than 19 million people experience emotional disorders such as anxiety and more than 12 million people experience depressive disorders (Muslimahayati & Rahmy, 2021).

Another important report was submitted by the World Health Organization (WHO), that since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic until 2022, the prevalence of anxiety and depressive disorders has shot up at 25% (Widafina & Annatagia, 2023). According to Nasrullah and Sulaiman, the psychological impact caused by covid-19 is not only felt during the pandemic season, but also

during the post-pandemic period (Nasrullah & Sulaiman, 2021). This is due to the habituation of physical distancing which forces a person to minimise social interaction. These various issues become a separate concern for the discourse of counselling as a helping relationship. Within its scope, counselling is not only centred between the counsellor and the counslee, but also between the servant and his God or known as spiritual counselling (Ridho, 2018).

The concept of spiritual counselling essentially combines a psychological therapeutic process with a theological approach. According to Anggraini and Wenda, spiritual counselling is the process of alleviating psychological problems by integrating religious values in the counselling process (Anggraini & Wenda, 2022). Spiritual counselling focuses on addressing the spiritual aspects of the individual, which often involves purification of the soul, activation of spiritual powers, and guidance based on religious teachings. It aims to raise awareness of problems, emphasise the importance of healing, and encourage personal transformation (Tajiri, 2019).

For those facing an existential crisis or life impasse, spiritual counselling can also play a role in increasing stimulus and strengthening self-existence in facing the dynamics of life (Setiawan, 2023). In other words, the treatment carried out in spiritual counselling is not only focused on strengthening the spiritual condition of the self manifested in the process of religious rituals, but also holistically addresses the psychological problems experienced by a client.

The approach in spiritual counselling generally involves religious rituals in the counselling process. These religious rituals become a major aspect in the purification of the soul as a way to get closer to God. In Islam, a religious ritual often used in the counselling process is dhikr. Dhikr is a form of remembering God through prayer or repetition of holy words. In Islamic counselling, dhikr plays an important role in helping individuals shift their attention from worldly concerns to spiritual thoughts, thus helping to control emotions and relieve excessive anxiety (Nurodin & Latifah, 2022).

In various perspectives, dhikr has differentiated meanings. Based on an anthropological perspective, dhikr is interpreted as a hereditary tradition that is always recited by a community group from time to time. This dhikr tradition is carried out in groups involving many people for the purpose of praying to the Creator (Efendi et al., 2023). According to the sociological perspective, dhikr is interpreted as an interactive forum that can foster and cultivate a sense of diversity. Dzikir in this sociological perspective also involves many people, but it is not based on hereditary traditions but only under certain conditions (Dedi, 2022).

In Islam, dhikr is recognised as an important component in spiritual counselling that can help achieve inner peace and help solve problems through fostering positive attitudes and changing behaviour (Zein & Muthi, 2023). Previous research emphasises that regular dhikr can calm and reduce anxiety, especially during difficult times such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidayat et al., 2023). Other studies have shown that dhikr interventions can improve heart failure patients' spirituality and reduce cortisol levels. It also shows the potential to improve mental health and stress management (Muhammad & Omar, 2019). Overall, dhikr is an effective tool as it offers solace, promotes positive change, and assists people in coping with the diverse stressors of life.

Research on spiritual counselling can be found in Sri Suyani and Shanti Wardaningsih's journal entitled 'Spiritual Therapy Approach towards People with Mental Disorder: Literature Review'. As a result, spiritual counselling is essential for treating mental disorders by incorporating bio, psycho, socio and spiritual elements into therapy. Similar research has also been conducted by Mohammad Afshar et al (2021) entitled 'The Effect of Spiritual Counselling on Hope in Patients

with Multiple Sclerosis: A Randomised Clinical Trial'. The study showed that spiritual counselling can significantly increase the level of hope of patients with Multiple Sclerosis and produce positive results. In addition, a study by Nabihah Abu Hanifah et al (2021) entitled 'Religion, Spirituality and Patient Counselling: A Scoping Review' showed that incorporating religion and spirituality into patient counselling can improve patient understanding and adherence to treatment. Ultimately, this can result in better treatment outcomes.

Research that discusses the role of dhikr in counselling education can be found in the journal Esya Heryana et al (2022) entitled 'The Concept of Dhikr as Therapy for Bipolar Disorder' which shows that in Islam, inner peace is promoted by the concept of dhikr contained in the Qur'an. Dhikr therapy helps people achieve balance and calmness. Furthermore, research by Muthiah Ahmad entitled 'Zikr as a Medium of Communication' emphasises that Dhikr is a way to gain inner peace. It enables communication with God and encourages balance and surrender by engaging concepts such as patience, gratitude, and serenity. Overall, Quranic verses and Hadith emphasise the ability of dhikr to create inner peace and mental well-being for every individual.

In line with this information, research that discusses the role of dhikr in the context of spiritual counselling has never been conducted. This kind of research needs to be discussed further to see whether dhikr as a religious ritual is effective in overcoming counselling problems and how effective dhikr is in improving psychological well being. In addition, the findings obtained can be the basis of development research conducted in Islamic spirituality counselling. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyse the role of dhikr as a medium for Islamic spirituality counselling to improve and strengthen psychological well being through the integration of religious values. With this research, it is hoped that it can become a foothold in overcoming psychological problems faced in Islamic spirituality counselling.

METHODS

The qualitative research used by researchers in this study is library research, namely by analysing library data sources or literature in the form of journals, books, and also research results and other scientific works that are still related to the issues raised (Yuliana, 2018). the problem referred to in this study is related to counselling issues such as psychological disorders. In solving these problems, of course, it is necessary to have an approach that is in accordance with the issues raised. Therefore, the researcher in this case used a spiritual counselling approach. The spiritual counselling approach is a counselling method through an integrative process of providing help (helping relationship) by combining helping psychology with a theological approach (Tajiri, 2019). The problem-solving framework refers to the concept of psychological well being.

Data collection was achieved through several steps. First, using paraphrase, which is collecting original data from various sources to be filtered using the author's own language. Second, quotation, which is recording data in accordance with the original data in the data source. Third, synoptic, which is recording data based on the conclusions obtained from the data source. After that, the data collected will be organised in accordance with the sub-discussions. After going through the data collection process, the data set is then analysed in the following ways. First, integration is the unification of two different elements between science and religion so as to form a whole and rounded unity. Second, heuristics, which is an effort to display innovations from the main object of study after describing and analysing thoughts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Urgency of Spiritual Counselling

Spiritually-based counselling services provide an opportunity for individuals to overcome various life problems by using religious principles as the main reference. In the context of modern life, religion is often seen as something taboo and irrational. There is even a tendency to abandon religion as a transcendental guide in life. This stigma, on the one hand, does have a side of truth when the religion presented tends to display violence, radicalism and conservatism (Istati & Hafidzi, 2020). However, it is absolutely not justified because human nature will not be separated from the servant's esoteric relationship with his God. Moreover, religion contains moral values that if abandoned, moral degradation will easily occur in the social context of society (Setyoningsih, 2018). This is the main urgency why counselling combined with spirituality is needed.

In certain cases, the urgency of spiritual counselling is more needed than medical counselling. Cases such as mystical psychological disorders, officials losing their positions, unhealthy economic competition, and mental disorders experienced by the elderly, are cases that are often handled by spiritual counsellors (ustadz). In the first case, it is indeed a spiritual area. However, sometimes there is coercion where a disorder that is supposed to be due to psychological symptoms is forced to appear as mystical symptoms. This is common when someone goes into a trance, when in fact it is a hysteria disorder. According to Saparudin et al., hysteria is a psychological disorder characterised by excessive emotional conditions such as screaming and even convulsions. Hysteria is generally caused by traumatic feelings and hallucinations (Saparudin et al., 2014).

In the second case, the background problem was caused by the loss of office due to an election defeat. The loss of the position caused deep stress. Stress due to defeat experienced by an official is caused by a loss of purpose and internal motivation (Darwis, 2015). This second case can be found in pesantren or spiritual hermitages such as Ujang Bustomi's anti-sadness hermitage (Syahroni, 2024).

The third case has the same background as the first case, namely mystical involvement in trade competition (Nurodin & Latifah, 2022). This mystical involvement is synonymous with pesugihan and witchcraft, causing other traders to experience psychological disorders. Then in the fourth case, the elderly as a counselee (object of counselling) in the background tends to think about the ultimate goal of life, namely the afterlife. Because of this background, medical counselling is sometimes less effective and the involvement of spiritual counselling is more dominant. This is evidenced in research conducted by Ririanty et al (2022).

Implications of Dhikr and Spirituality Counselling

Based on several sources that have been reviewed, dhikr has important implications in Islamic spiritual counselling. The purpose of this spiritual practice is to calm the heart and mind by remembering and praising Allah (Rofiq and Sutopo, 2023). By taking part in dhikr, people can shift their attention from worldly matters to spiritual matters, which helps them control their feelings and reduce the level of excessive worry (Latif, 2022).

Dhikr practice can reduce stress and improve patients' spiritual well-being (Nisbah et al, 2020). As a result of dhikr training, adolescent students experienced a significant increase in subjective well-being. Participants stated that they felt more relaxed, comfortable, calm and grateful (Martin et al, 2018). In addition, listening to Islamic hymns during perioperatively reduced anxiety levels compared to other types of interventions (Sari et al, 2018). Therefore, it is known that dhikr

can help with mental and spiritual health, as it has been associated with stress reduction, better spiritual perception, and emotional control.

Dhikr, a type of spiritual therapy rooted in Islamic principles, hopes to help people with psychological disorders by combining theology and psychology (Ramadani et al, 2023). This method emphasizes the importance of enhancing one's relationship with Allah through acts of worship, calming the heart with remembrance (dhikr), and cultivating positive thoughts to improve spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being. Comparable to the soul purification process in Sufism,

the therapeutic elements of dhikr have been observed to play an important role in improving mental health. This demonstrates the possibility of combining theology and psychology in the problem-solving process. Individuals can benefit from the holistic and dynamic nature of spiritual healing by incorporating dhikr into counseling sessions. Translated with DeepL.com (free version)

Islamic psychotherapy uses the teachings of the Quran and hadith to help clients overcome physical, moral, mental, and spiritual problems. Counselors should concentrate on instilling hope in clients through creating life goals, encouraging them to become more confident, and reducing vulnerability to depression and anxiety (Seprianto et al, 2022). Therefore, counselors must have the ability to actively listen and understand clients, have the ability to provide support, and align guidance with clients' beliefs and principles.

The results of this study support the idea that spirituality plays an important role in Islamic counseling. To enhance clients' spiritual and psychological well-being, dhikr, one of Islam's main spiritual practices, can be incorporated into counseling sessions. The implication is that counselors can use dhikr as a tool to assist their clients in overcoming life's problems, promote inner calm, and strengthen their faith. For example, counselors can teach dhikr relevant to their clients, and from the counseling process, counselors can hold dhikr sessions together to create a supportive and calming atmosphere.

The Role of Dhikr on Psychological Well-Being

Dhikr, an Islamic religious practice that involves remembering God repeatedly, is helpful in improving mental health (Fithry, 2022). Dhikr is very important in Islamic spirituality counseling as it is both a religious act and an effective psychotherapeutic tool (Seprianto, 2022). This shows how important it is to integrate spiritual and psychological aspects into a comprehensive approach to mental well-being (Bastomi, 2022). Studies show that Islamic psychotherapy, which combines the teachings of the Quran and dhikr, helps people in overcoming mental, spiritual, moral, and physical problems (Samsualam, 2022). In addition, dhikr as a religious intervention has been associated with Sufi group members having better psychological health, indicating its therapeutic properties to improve mental health and overall well-being (Hamsyah, 2017). Hence, dhikr can enhance therapeutic effectiveness by addressing both spiritual and psychological aspects, supporting a holistic approach to psychological well being.

Dhikr, a form of spiritual practice that involves repeated chanting or remembrance of the word Allah, has been shown to have positive effects on mental health through various mechanisms. Firstly, dhikr serves as a form of meditation, encouraging relaxation and improving mental focus. Secondly, it provides a spiritual framework for interpreting and overcoming life's challenges, promotes mindfulness, and reduces mental clutter. Ultimately, this spiritual practice can improve mental well-being.

Integrating dhikr into therapy sessions in Islamic spiritual counseling provides Muslim clients with a culturally sensitive and psychologically beneficial approach. Dhikr has a significant positive

effect on psychological well-being. Clients who engaged in regular dhikr practice during Islamic counseling guidance sessions showed improvements in several aspects of psychological well-being, including decreased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as an increased sense of calm, focus, and optimism (Ramadani et al, 2023). These findings indicate that dhikr helps to distract from negative thoughts and calm the nervous system, which is in line with mindfulness and meditation theories in Western psychology. However, dhikr has a deeper spiritual aspect, which may provide a greater sense of closeness to God and meaning in life, thereby improving psychological well-being holistically.

The impact of this research finding has an important impact on psychological well-being by showing that the integration of spiritual practices such as dhikr can strengthen the dimension of spirituality in the concept of psychological well-being. It confirms that psychological well-being does not only consist of mental and emotional aspects but also involves a significant spiritual dimension. In counseling practice, these results imply that a counselor can use dhikr as part of intervention efforts aimed at clients with mental disorders. As part of this, counselors would teach different dhikr techniques to their clients and encourage them to practice them regularly to reduce stress and improve mental well-being.

Socially, the findings prove that dhikr can be an effective tool to support mental health in Muslim communities, de-stigmatizing mental health problems and promoting psychological well-being. By returning to their religion, counselors will help clients feel accepted among others and in line with their cultural and religious context. However, there are some important ethical considerations where clients must give explicit consent and be fully aware of the use of dhikr during counseling sessions. The counselor should ensure that the use of dhikr is based on the beliefs and curiosity of the client and not used coercively or without adequate understanding. In implementing these social and ethical implications, counselors can use dhikr as a tool to enhance the psychological well-being of clients, while upholding all their spiritual and psychological needs.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the role of dhikr as a medium for Islamic spirituality counseling to improve and strengthen psychological well being is studied. The results obtained are that in Islam, dhikr is generally believed to have the virtue of providing a sense of calmness in the soul, reviving negligence in the heart, being a medium to get closer to Allah, and divine guidance in providing ideal life direction, which ultimately has an effective impact on psychological well being. Through the findings obtained in this study, the application of dhikr in counseling is highly recommended. Incorporating dhikr practice in the therapeutic process is also necessary to benefit the mental health of individuals.

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