

Islamic Spiritual Counseling for the Elderly: Preparing for a Righteous Death (Husnul Khotimah) at Nursing Home X in Cirebon

Rina Kurnia¹, Faika Maudina²

¹²UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon

rinakurnia@uinssc.ac.id faikamaudinaa@gmail.com

Corresponding Autor: Rina Kurnia

Article History: Recived: 2025, 09, 01; **Revised:** 2025, 09, 22; **Accepted:** 2025, 10, 20.

Abstract: This study focuses on Islamic spiritual counseling for elderly residents at Nursing Home X in preparing for a righteous death (husnul khotimah). In Islam, death is perceived as a transition to the afterlife; therefore, it is essential for Muslims to engage in spiritual preparation. The elderly phase of life, marked by physical and mental decline, poses significant psychological challenges, including anxiety and loneliness. Utilizing a qualitative approach and narrative method, this research explores the implementation of spiritual counseling comprising Qur'anic recitation, dhikr (remembrance of God), and religious sermons and its impact on the elderly's readiness for death. The findings reveal that these activities not only strengthen the elderly's spiritual connection with Allah SWT but also foster inner peace and a sense of hope. Elderly individuals who participated in the spiritual counseling reported increased mental preparedness for death and a heightened sense of mutual support among fellow residents. Islamic spiritual counseling serves as a vital instrument in enhancing the elderly's quality of life, enabling them to experience old age with greater meaning and serenity. These findings emphasize the necessity of integrating spiritual counseling into elder care programs at Nursing Home X to support their psychological and spiritual well-being.

Keywords: Islamic Spiritual Counseling, Elderly, Husnul Khotimah, Death Preparedness, Spiritual Well-Being of the Elderly

INTRODUCTION

Every living being will inevitably face death. In Islamic perspective, death is not merely the end of worldly life, but rather the beginning of a new existence in the hereafter. Therefore, Muslims are encouraged to continuously prepare themselves spiritually to die in a state of *husnul khotimah* a good and blessed ending marked by faith and the pleasure of Allah SWT.

Old age represents the final stage in the human life cycle, characterized by a decline in physical, mental, and social functioning. According to the World Health Organization, (2002), an *elderly* person is defined as someone aged 60 years or older. WHO classifies the elderly into three categories: *young old* (60–74 years), *old old* (75–89 years), and *very old* (90 years and above). At this stage, many older adults begin to confront the reality that their worldly life is nearing its end.

One of the most important aspects for a Muslim entering old age is spiritual preparedness for death, with the hope of achieving *husnul khotimah*. As stated in the hadith of the Prophet: "*Increase your remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures (death)*" (HR. Tirmidhi). A righteous death (*husnul*

khotimah) is the aspiration of every Muslim, implying a passing that occurs in a state of faith and under the forgiveness and mercy of Allah SWT.

However, during this stage of life, individuals often experience various changes, both physically and psychologically. At this age, awareness of death increases significantly, and many elderly individuals begin to reflect on the meaning of life and prepare themselves for its final phase.

A preliminary interview with one of the elderly residents at Nursing Home X in Cirebon revealed:

“Before coming to the nursing home, I felt that life was empty. I didn’t know where my life was headed. My days passed by, just working and taking care of the household. Moreover, I have diabetes, which makes me even more afraid of facing death. I also feel lonely—my husband has passed away, and my children are busy with their own families and work.”

The condition experienced by the elderly at Nursing Home X in Cirebon is commonly found among older adults who have lost their spouses and whose children are preoccupied with their own lives. This situation often leads to feelings of loneliness and a loss of direction in life. Based on the interview above, the anxiety experienced by the elderly is rooted in a loss of life’s meaning, a lack of family support, a sense of spiritual inadequacy, and the burden of chronic illness.

If death related anxiety among the elderly is left unaddressed, it can have serious consequences across various dimensions of their lives. Psychologically, elderly individuals may experience depression, a loss of motivation, and a profound sense of emptiness due to the absence of life’s meaning. Prolonged anxiety can trigger sleep disturbances, uncontrollable fears, and a sense of *hopelessness*.

From a physical perspective, chronic anxiety can weaken the immune system, exacerbate degenerative diseases, and lead to fatigue caused by prolonged stress. Socially, anxious elderly individuals tend to withdraw from their surroundings, avoid interactions, and perceive themselves as burdens to their families and communities. The spiritual impact is equally significant; the elderly may experience doubts in their faith, a sense of spiritual inadequacy, and fear of not achieving a *husnul khotimah*. In such conditions, spiritual needs become critically important. Elderly individuals require guidance that can offer them peace, certainty, and hope for the afterlife.

Islamic spiritual counseling is one approach that can help the elderly prepare themselves spiritually for death. At Nursing Home X, this form of counseling serves not only as a formal religious activity but also as a means of psychological recovery and spiritual readiness. It allows elderly residents to face death with serenity, sincerity, and hopeful anticipation of Allah’s mercy. This counseling is conducted on Fridays and includes activities such as Qur’anic recitation, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), congregational prayers, religious study sessions, end-of-life reflections, and personalized spiritual counseling. In addition, emotional and social elements such as compassionate engagement, empathetic communication, and moral support are integral parts of the counseling process. Through these activities, elderly participants can deepen their relationship with Allah SWT, strengthen their faith, and face old age with tranquility and spiritual preparedness.

Nursing Home X is a social institution that houses eight elderly individuals, all aged 65 or older, mostly from extended family backgrounds. The majority were placed in the home by their children, who are either unwilling or unable to provide direct care. Family visits are generally irregular, with some residents receiving visits only occasionally and without a predictable schedule. This condition fosters feelings of loneliness, alienation, and even existential anxiety, particularly as death draws near.

The home's primary funding comes from the Muhammadiyah organization, and families are not charged for the care provided. Although basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare are met, the spiritual needs of the residents often receive insufficient attention. In reality, spirituality is a vital dimension that supports the elderly's quality of life especially in helping them prepare for death with calmness and steadfast faith.

METHODS

Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach using a narrative method. The qualitative approach aims to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspectives in a deep and meaningful way (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). In this context, the narrative method was utilized to explore individuals' experiences through the stories they shared, as storytelling is a natural way for humans to express their experiences, thoughts, and emotions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative approach enables researchers to understand the identity and worldview of participants through the narratives shaped by their life experiences. This process also includes a critical analysis of the events experienced by participants, allowing for a comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the realities they live.

Structure

The research was conducted through a series of systematic steps, beginning with the selection of participants who had relevant experiences related to the focus of the study namely, elderly individuals participating in Islamic spiritual counseling at the nursing home. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, observations, and the analysis of personal documents or spiritual records belonging to the elderly. The data analysis process was carried out narratively, using a thematic approach to identify patterns and meanings within the participants stories, and a structural approach to examine the flow and structure of their narratives. The findings were then compiled into cohesive narratives to effectively convey the participants spiritual and psychological experiences.

Support

This study provided a safe and supportive space for participants to share their spiritual experiences in preparing for *husnul khotimah*. The researcher served not only as a data collector but also as an active listener who respected the participants' religious values, cultural backgrounds, and emotional conditions. This approach fostered trust and comfort, facilitating the elderly's spiritual reflection as a meaningful part of their life journey.

Outcomes

Through this method, the study aimed to obtain a profound understanding of the significance of Islamic spiritual counseling for the elderly in facing death, as well as how this practice contributes to inner peace, spiritual preparedness, and social support. The findings also illustrate how elderly individuals interpret their experiences in religious and existential terms, and highlight the vital role of spiritual counseling in enhancing their psychological and spiritual well-being in later life.

RESULTS

1. Profile of Nursing Home X

Nursing Home X is a social institution dedicated to caring for and assisting elderly individuals who no longer have families or are unable to live with their families for various reasons. Located at Jalan Karangmalang RT 01 RW 09, Sunyaragi Subdistrict, Kesambi District,

Cirebon City, West Java, the nursing home is strategically positioned in the city center, making it easily accessible for volunteers, donors, and family members who wish to visit. It is managed by Muhammadiyah, one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, which has a strong commitment to social and religious services. Since its establishment in 1979, Nursing Home X has served as a refuge for elderly people for more than four decades.

Before the reformation era (around the 1990s), the home accommodated up to 30 residents, reflecting the high level of public trust in the services provided. However, over time, due to various social and economic changes, the number of residents has significantly declined to only 8 individuals. This decrease may be attributed to several factors, including greater family awareness of elderly care, changes in social policy, or limitations in the facility's capacity and resources.

The residents of the nursing home are generally elderly individuals who either have no family or were placed there by their families due to economic difficulties. Many of them face financial hardships and are unable to meet their daily needs independently, while their families lack the capacity to provide adequate care at home.

Nursing Home X provides not only basic needs such as shelter, food, and basic health services but also addresses the spiritual needs of its residents. This spiritual emphasis is a distinctive feature of the facility, given its Islamic organizational foundation. The spiritual approach plays a vital role in supporting the elderly as they approach the end of life with calmness and faith, particularly in preparing themselves for a *husnul khotimah* (a good and blessed death).

2. Implementation of Islamic Spiritual Counseling

Islamic spiritual counseling is one of the main programs regularly conducted at Nursing Home X as part of the spiritual care provided to the residents. Based on direct observation and interviews with the home's management, staff, and several residents, it was found that this counseling activity is held biweekly, with schedules adapted to the physical condition and readiness of the participants.

The primary objective of this program is to strengthen religious values in the daily lives of the elderly and to provide deep spiritual guidance in preparing for death peacefully and faithfully (*husnul khotimah*). Conducted in a modest yet solemn atmosphere, this program has become a highly anticipated moment for most residents.

The Islamic spiritual counseling activities at Nursing Home X include several core components:

a. Group Qur'anic Recitation

The session typically begins with a group recitation of the Qur'an held in the home's multipurpose room. Elderly residents who are still able to read the Qur'an take turns or read together. Those who are unable to read due to age-related limitations or visual impairments participate by listening attentively and reflectively. In addition to strengthening their connection with Allah SWT, this activity also fosters a sense of community and spiritual tranquility among the residents.

b. Religious Sermon by the Head of the Home

Following the Qur'anic recitation, the session continues with a spiritual sermon (*siraman rohani*) delivered by the Head of the Nursing Home. The head of the institution possesses a strong religious background and is affiliated with the Muhammadiyah organization. The sermon typically covers themes such as:

- 1) The virtues of performing good deeds in old age
- 2) The importance of repentance and increasing acts of worship
- 3) Understanding death and the aspiration for *husnul khotimah*
- 4) Strengthening faith and religious conviction in the final stage of life

The sermons are delivered in a simple, gentle language, adapted to the cognitive levels of the elderly audience. This style of delivery makes the residents feel acknowledged, motivated, and spiritually strengthened.

c. Collective Prayer and Dhikr

To conclude the series of activities, the participants engage in collective prayers and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), led by the staff or a visiting religious figure. The prayers usually contain supplications for forgiveness, ease in living out the remainder of their lives, and the hope of dying in a state of *husnul khotimah*. This activity is conducted in a serene, solemn, and peaceful atmosphere, offering significant inner peace for the elderly participants. They report feeling more mentally and spiritually prepared to face each passing day in their old age.

Overall, the implementation of Islamic spiritual counseling at Nursing Home X is not merely a religious routine but serves as a meaningful spiritual development program that touches the innermost aspects of the elderly's lives. This program provides them with hope, tranquility, and a renewed sense of purpose, fostering the spirit to continuously draw closer to Allah SWT.

3. Elderly Responses to the Spiritual Counseling Program

The Islamic spiritual counseling activities routinely carried out at Nursing Home X have received highly positive responses from the residents. Based on interviews with several elderly participants, the majority expressed that the program helped calm their hearts, uplift their spirits, and enhance their readiness to face the end of life with sincerity and acceptance.

The elderly feel that the counseling gives them the opportunity to draw closer to Allah SWT, improve their religious practices, and reflect on the meaning of life and death. The program acts as a form of spiritual rejuvenation, enriching their inner selves and cultivating gratitude, patience, and trust in divine will.

Below are selected quotes from interviews with several residents:

a. Mrs. S (72 years old):

"I feel calmer after joining the religious study sessions. It reminds me again of the true purpose of life. I hope I can pass away in a good state husnul khotimah."

b. Mrs. AS (70 years old):

"Every time there's a spiritual counseling session, I feel like I'm back home—like the old days when I used to attend studies at the mosque. I feel closer to Allah and more prepared for death."

c. Mrs. DA (68 years old):

"When I join the group Qur'an recitation, my heart feels at ease. Even though I'm old now, I still want to improve myself. I pray that Allah forgives my sins."

d. Mrs. JI (78 years old):

"I really enjoy the sermons. The head of the home speaks so gently it moved me to tears. I've realized how important it is to prepare for a good death."

e. Mrs. LO (71 years old):

“After doing dhikr together, I feel at peace. I don’t feel alone anymore. Everyone here is also waiting for their time to be called by Allah, but we are learning not to be afraid.”

f. Mrs. SA (80 years old):

“At this age, I’m so grateful that I can still join the religious study sessions. I always pray to die in a state of husnul khotimah. This program really helps me stay mindful of Allah.”

In general, the responses from the elderly indicate that the spiritual counseling activities have had a profound psychological and spiritual impact. In addition to being a means of worship, these sessions also strengthen their mental resilience in facing the realities of aging and approaching death.

Moreover, the program fosters a sense of community and mutual support among the residents, reducing the feelings of loneliness that many elderly individuals experience. With consistent spiritual development, the residents feel calmer, more prepared, and more surrendered to God’s will, while still maintaining hope for a peaceful and blessed end of life under the mercy of Allah SWT.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the regular implementation of Islamic spiritual counseling at Nursing Home X plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual preparedness of elderly residents in facing death. These activities foster inner peace, a sense of surrender (*ikhlas*), and a strengthened spiritual connection with Allah SWT. This is reflected in the positive responses from the residents, who stated that spiritual counseling helps them accept the realities of aging with greater calm and hope for a *husnul khotimah* (a good and blessed death).

This program serves as a meaningful substitute for social or religious roles that the elderly may no longer actively perform in the broader community. Routine practices such as group Qur’anic recitation, listening to religious sermons from the head of the home, and engaging in collective prayers and *dhikr* function as spiritual media that enhance psychological resilience and bring peace as they approach the end of life. This is supported by (Rababa et al., 2021), whose research shows that spiritual/religious interventions are strongly associated with reduced death anxiety and improved spiritual well-being in elderly and chronically ill patients. Interventions that focus on strengthening faith, improving the quality of worship, fostering spiritual hope, and practicing religious rituals (*dhikr*, prayer, reflection on the meaning of life) are linked to decreased fear of death and increased acceptance of life’s end.

These findings align with the concept of Islamic spiritual counseling as explained by Adz-Dzaky in (Aunurrafiq, 2020), which states that spiritual guidance aims to develop the intellectual, emotional, and faith-based potential of individuals so they can independently resolve life challenges based on the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Spiritual counseling operates at the *meaning level*, helping elderly individuals to discover, affirm, or reconstruct the meaning of their lives, thereby reducing existential anxiety such as fear of non-existence, regret, and hopelessness (Fereydouni & Forstmeier, 2022). This concept is also consistent with Viktor Frankl’s logotherapy (1946), which posits that finding meaning in life reduces existential emptiness that often triggers death anxiety.

In this context, elderly residents who live permanently at the nursing home undergo a process of spiritual development as a provision to conclude the final phase of life with peace and dignity. These findings address the research question of how Islamic spiritual counseling can assist the

elderly in preparing for death in a *husnul khotimah* state, while also reinforcing the assumption that spiritual approaches can positively impact the psychological condition of elderly individuals in institutional care.

Practically, these findings provide important recommendations for nursing home managers, religious organizations, and policymakers in the field of elder care and social welfare. Islamic spiritual counseling should be integrated as a core component of eldercare programs not merely as a complementary activity. Practices such as Qur'anic recitation, religious study sessions, spiritual sermons, and *dhikr* can serve as emotional healing tools and spiritual hope-building mechanisms that help elderly individuals live more meaningfully.

This form of spiritual guidance not only strengthens their relationship with Allah SWT, but also reduces anxiety, feelings of loneliness, and fear of death. The residents feel more mentally and spiritually prepared and more sincere in accepting their aging process. These findings suggest that a consistently applied spiritual approach can serve as an effective strategy for supporting the elderly toward a peaceful, meaningful, and dignified end of life.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Islamic spiritual counseling plays a vital role in preparing the elderly to face death with peace, sincerity, and strengthened faith. Conducted regularly at Nursing Home X, the program—through Qur'anic recitation, religious sermons, *dhikr*, and collective prayer—helps residents reduce anxiety, overcome feelings of loneliness, and enhance spiritual readiness for *husnul khotimah* (a good and blessed death).

The counseling not only fulfills the elderly's spiritual needs but also provides psychological comfort and emotional support, helping them find meaning and acceptance in the final stage of life. It fosters a sense of calm, gratitude, and closeness to Allah SWT, replacing fear of death with hope and faith in divine mercy.

Overall, Islamic spiritual counseling serves as an effective and holistic approach in elderly care—integrating religious, psychological, and social dimensions. It is recommended that such programs be institutionalized as a core component of geriatric care, ensuring that the elderly can live their remaining years with dignity, peace, and spiritual fulfillment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We express our deepest gratitude to all therapists and elderly participants who consistently followed the schedule and engaged sincerely in the spiritual counseling process, committing themselves to the behavioral changes they consciously chose. Special thanks are also extended to all team members and facilitators who collaborated in analyzing the behavioral dynamics of each participant and provided constructive feedback throughout the counseling process.

REFERENCES

- Ahmadi, A. (2005). *Psikologi Umum dan Agama*. Rineka Cipta.
- Aulia, S. P. (2020). *Pengaruh Bimbingan Agama terhadap Kesiapan Menghadapi Kematian pada Lansia di UPT Pelayanan Sosial Tresna Wredha Khusnul Khotimah Pekanbaru [Skripsi]*. Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.
- Aunurrafiq, Z. (2020). *Implementasi Bimbingan Rohani Islam Dalam Mengatasi Kesepian Pada Lansia Di Panti Wreda Siti Khadijah Cirebon [Skripsi]*. 104.

- Beni, H. (2021). *9663-27134-1-Sm (1). 4(2)*, 183–192.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Daradjat, Z. (1996). *Ilmu Jiwa Agama*. Bulan Bintang.
- Fadli, M. R. (2021). Memahami desain metode penelitian kualitatif. *Humanika*, *21(1)*, 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v21i1.38075>
- Fereydouni, S., & Forstmeier, S. (2022). An Islamic form of logotherapy in the treatment of depression, anxiety and stress symptoms in university students in Iran. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *61(1)*, 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01495-0>
- Geneva. (2004). *Ageing And Health*. World Health Orgazation.
- Karni, A. (2018). Subjective Well-Being Pada Lansia Asniti Karni *. *Syi'ar*, *18(2)*, 84–102.
- Kurniasari, P. (2018). *Hubungan Antara Pemberian Bimbingan Rohani Islam Melalui Dzikir Dengan Peningkatan Kesiapan Lansia Dalam Menghadapi Kematian Di Panti Sasana Tresna Werdha Yayasan Dharma Bhakti Wonogiri [Skripsi]*. Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta.
- Kusumastuti, A., & Khoiron, A. M. (2019). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *11(1)*, 1–14.
- Nuryati, N. (2018). Bimbingan Rohani Islam Dan Perasaan Tenang Lansia (Study Kasus Lansia PKH Kecamatan Trucuk Klaten). *Hisbah: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Dan Dakwah Islam*, *15(1)*, 85–98. <https://doi.org/10.14421/hisbah.2018.151-07>
- Rababa, M., Hayajneh, A. A., & Bani-Iss, W. (2021). Association of death anxiety with spiritual well-being and religious coping in older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Religion and Health*, *60(1)*, 50–63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01129-x>
- Ritonga, M. A. R. (2024). *Pelaksanaan bimbingan keagamaan dalam menghadapi kecemasan terhadap kematian pada lansia di ponpes kasepuhan raden rahmat banyu biru ambarawa [Skripsi]*. Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo Semarang.
- Setiadi, O. (2020). Kematian dalam Perspektif Al-Aquran. *Jurnal Al Asbriyyah*, *6(1)*, 45–62.
- World Health Organization. (2002). *Active aging: A policy framework*. Geneva: WHO.