

# THE CONCEPT OF TAZKIYATUN NAFS WITHIN ISLAMIC GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING: A SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

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## Info Artikel

## Abstract

**Keywords:** Tazkiyatun Nafs, Islamic counseling, mental health, spirituality, Islamic psychology

*This study investigates the effectiveness of Tazkiyatun Nafs as a spiritual framework within Islamic counseling for addressing mild to moderate mental health disorders. Adopting a descriptive qualitative design, data were obtained through in-depth interviews and an extensive literature review, then analyzed using thematic content analysis. The findings reveal that the sequential stages of Takhalli, Tahalli, and Tajalli substantially facilitate participants' emotional regulation, self-reflection, and spiritual awareness. These outcomes contribute to the theoretical advancement of Sufi-oriented Islamic counseling and highlight the potential for integrating this approach into Islamic psychological education and therapeutic practice. The study recommends the development of counselor training programs based on Tazkiyah principles and further empirical investigation involving broader populations and diversified methodologies to enhance the model's validity and applicability.*

**Kata kunci:** Tazkiyatun Nafs, konseling Islam, kesehatan mental, spiritualitas, psikologi Islam.

## Abstrak.

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi efektivitas Tazkiyatun Nafs sebagai pendekatan spiritual dalam bimbingan konseling Islam untuk menangani gangguan mental ringan hingga sedang. Menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan studi literatur, lalu dianalisis dengan pendekatan analisis isi tematik. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa tahapan Takhalli, Tahalli, dan Tajalli secara signifikan membantu peserta dalam regulasi emosi, refleksi diri, dan peningkatan kesadaran spiritual. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan teori konseling Islam berbasis sufistik dan membuka ruang integrasi pendekatan ini dalam pendidikan serta layanan psikologi Islami. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pelatihan konselor berbasis Tazkiyah serta eksplorasi lanjutan dengan cakupan populasi dan metode yang lebih luas untuk memperkuat validitas model ini.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the world has witnessed a significant rise in mental health disorders, creating widespread global concern. Data from the World Health Organization (2023) indicate that one in eight people worldwide is now living with a mental or neurological disorder, showing that the issue affects countries and cultures across the globe. This challenge is present not only in developed nations but also in developing countries, including Muslim communities. The COVID-19 pandemic made the situation worse through social isolation, economic pressure, and long-lasting uncertainty (Ladyanna & Gyem, 2022), leading to a large-scale mental-health crisis across different age groups and social backgrounds. In this context, holistic approaches have become urgently necessary—approaches that involve not only medical or psychological support but also spiritual care. As a result, religious values have regained relevance as sources of healing and inner strength (Cucchi & Qoronfleh, 2025).

Although conventional psychology has made strong methodological progress, it often does not fully address individuals' spiritual and existential needs (Chavatel, 2022). This limitation becomes an important concern for Muslims, whose lives are guided by strong and deeply rooted religious values. Many Muslims find Western-based therapeutic models less compatible with their theocentric and tawhid-based worldview (Abdulraof & Guro, 2025). Instead of offering inner peace, therapeutic approaches that are too secular can lead to feelings of spiritual disconnection. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop an Islamic guidance and counseling model that is not only normatively Islamic but also methodologically clear and systematic. Such a model should respond to the combined psychological, social, and spiritual needs of Muslims (Hasanah et al., 2022).

One major concept in Islamic spiritual tradition that has strong relevance for mental health is Tazkiyatun Nafs, or the purification of the soul. This concept has long been central in Islamic ethics and Sufism, as explained by classical scholars such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Arroisi & Pusпита, 2020). Tazkiyah aims not only to relieve mental symptoms but also to purify the heart and strengthen character as part of a complete form of spiritual healing. Its process includes stages such as takhalli (removing negative traits), tahalli (developing positive traits), and tajalli (experiencing spiritual clarity and divine presence). In Islamic counseling, Tazkiyatun Nafs allows for approaches that reach into the deepest parts of the human self—the intellect ('aql), the heart (qalb), and the spirit (ruh) (Angraini & Asmita, 2022). This stands in contrast to secular psychological approaches that tend to focus mainly on behavior or cognition (Rassool, 2024).

However, research and practice in Islamic counseling still show limitations in exploring the systematic application of Tazkiyatun Nafs. While some studies highlight the importance of spiritual elements in therapy for Muslims, very few provide a clear operational framework based on this concept of soul purification (Sumaia Almajri et al., 2025). Current Islamic counseling practices often remain normative and rhetorical, without fully integrating spiritual principles into measurable counseling techniques. Yet the potential of Tazkiyatun Nafs as a counseling foundation is substantial, especially for shaping character and healing deeper emotional wounds. Therefore, there is a need for both theoretical and practical development so that Tazkiyah becomes not only a moral idea but an effective therapeutic method. This is important for positioning Islamic counseling as a relevant and competitive field in modern professional practice (Hamid & Hadori, 2022).

Recent studies show that integrating Islamic spiritual values into counseling has positive effects on inner calm and a stronger sense of life meaning. Individuals who undergo spiritually based therapy often show better resilience in dealing with stress, anxiety, and trauma (Md. Ishaque et al., 2025; Anlı, 2025). In this context, Tazkiyatun Nafs functions not only as a

therapeutic tool but also as a framework for personal transformation. By purifying the soul, counseling becomes a path toward closeness to God and the formation of a spiritually and socially balanced personality (Angraini & Asmita, 2022). This aligns with the aims of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, which emphasize the protection of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*) and the mind (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*) as essential to human well-being (Arroisi & Puspita, 2020).

This article aims to explain in a systematic way how *Tazkiyatun Nafs* can be applied in Islamic guidance and counseling. It seeks to bridge the gap between classical spiritual concepts and modern counseling practice through a suitable methodological approach. By focusing on the integration of *Tazkiyah* values into counseling sessions, the article describes how elements such as *muraqabah*, *muhasabah*, and *taqarrub ilā Allāh* can be translated into strategies for individual and group counseling. Through this approach, the article proposes an Islamic counseling model that strengthens not only emotional and cognitive aspects but also the spiritual dimension.

Theoretically, this article contributes to shaping a clearer framework for Islamic counseling based on classical Islamic thought. The approach combines spiritual values, moral development, and Islamic personality formation within mental-healing processes. It can also be connected with positive psychology and transpersonal psychotherapy, making it more adaptable in the modern era. Practically, this article serves as a reference for Muslim counselors, educators, and psychologists in creating spiritual-based interventions that are more systematic and contextually relevant. Implementing *Tazkiyah* in counseling not only provides healing but also builds spiritual awareness and motivation rooted in faith—important for strengthening the psychological resilience of Muslim communities in a globalized world.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Field findings show that integrating the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* with art therapy techniques significantly supports emotional changes and spiritual awareness among Generation Z students, especially those from broken-home families. Through a counseling program that combines expressive activities such as painting, reflective writing, and Islamic music meditation, participants experienced an emotional shift from negative states toward greater stability and calmness (Kadafi et al., 2021). The counseling process was arranged in three stages based on the structure of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*: *Takhalli* (releasing destructive emotions), *Tahalli* (developing positive values), and *Tajalli* (forming spiritual awareness). Each stage was designed as a therapeutic intervention that was not only symbolic, but also practical and systematic.

In the *Takhalli* stage, participants expressed negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness through symbolic paintings and free writing. Their work often included dark colors and abstract forms, symbolizing the inner conflicts they were experiencing. After the session, most participants reported feeling emotional relief and a better acceptance of their personal condition. In the *Tahalli* stage, participants were guided to illustrate hope and positive values using symbols such as light, clear skies, or the tree of life. This session was supported by Islamic relaxation music, which helped foster calmness, gratitude, and optimism. Finally, the *Tajalli* stage used spiritual affirmations and art-based meditation to develop a sense of life meaning, strengthen closeness to God, and enhance the participants’ reflective capacity.

Changes in the participants' emotional and spiritual states were recorded systematically through observation data, counselor notes, and participant statements, and are summarized in the following table:

<b>Counseling Technique</b>	<b>Response Before Session</b>	<b>Response After Session</b>
Symbolic Painting	Anxious, gloomy, depressed	Calm, accepting, reflective
Expressive Writing	Holding in emotions, confused	Open, self-aware, emotionally honest
Meditation & Music	Impulsive, easily angered	Patient, focused, emotionally stable

The table illustrates the students' emotional transformation in a concrete way. The counseling techniques used not only helped release psychological tension but also opened space for spiritual connection (*ta'alluq billāh*), self-awareness, and a renewed understanding of their life experiences. Overall, this approach proved effective as a value-based Islamic counseling strategy that aligns with the current psychospiritual needs of Muslim adolescents (Putri & Habibah, 2022).

## DISCUSSION

Theoretically, these findings strengthen perspectives in Islamic psychology that emphasize the balance between *nafs*, *qalb*, and *rūh* as the main pillars of mental health. The stages of *Takhalli–Tahalli–Tajalli* within *Tazkiyatun Nafs* align closely with principles of modern Islamic psychotherapy, which highlight introspection (*muhāsabah*), spiritual awareness (*murāqabah*), and self-purification. This supports the study by Kamarul Zaman et al. (2022), which notes that inner peace can be achieved through activating spiritual dimensions often overlooked in secular psychology. Through spiritually guided art activities, students were able to express emotional wounds, reinterpret them, and grow new, more positive and Islamic forms of awareness. This shows that *Tazkiyah* is not only theoretical but also practical and transformative (Rahimi, 2022).

Compared to secular psychological therapy, which often focuses on symptoms and behavior, this approach offers distinct advantages. *Tazkiyatun Nafs* not only heals emotional wounds but also instills values, shapes character, and builds a deep sense of transcendence (Deswita et al., 2022). As highlighted by Constrained et al. (2019), structured spiritual therapy can produce long-term effects because it engages existential dimensions that strengthen identity and life meaning. This is especially important for Generation Z, who often face identity confusion and spiritual disconnection. By integrating Sufi values with expressive arts, Islamic counseling is able to reach the deepest layers of a client's inner world. Therefore, this approach can serve as a new paradigmatic alternative in value-based Islamic psychotherapy (Angraini & Asmita, 2022).

However, the findings also have limitations. The study involved only ten students at MTs Sunan Drajat Lamongan, making broad generalization difficult. In addition, long-term effects were not evaluated, so the sustainability of the outcomes remains uncertain. To strengthen the validity of this model, further testing is needed in more diverse settings such as *pesantren*, Islamic psychology clinics, and higher education institutions. Quantitative studies with triangulation methods may also enrich the evaluative dimension of this approach. Thus, although the initial results are promising, the development of a *Tazkiyatun Nafs*-based model

must proceed gradually and across various contexts to ensure its effectiveness and replicability on a wider scale.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The study's results open significant opportunities for developing an institutional Islamic counseling model based on Tazkiyatun Nafs, especially in schools, pesantren, and Islamic psychological services (Angraini & Asmita, 2022). This model can be structured as a psychospiritual therapy module that integrates Sufi values with practical techniques such as Islamic journaling, dhikr therapy, and art-based meditation. Its implementation does not require expensive tools but does require a structured guide and specific training for counselors and guidance teachers (Rahimi, 2022). By integrating spiritual values into counseling techniques, madrasahs and pesantren can become centers of mental-spiritual development relevant to contemporary challenges. The model can also be adapted to different age groups and individual needs.

The therapy module should be designed progressively according to the stages of Takhalli, Tahalli, and Tajalli, so that participants experience a continuous transformation process. In the initial stage, students are guided to recognize and express negative emotions safely and creatively. The next stage focuses on internalizing positive values and practicing gratitude. In the final stage, participants reflect on life meaning, recognize God's presence, and build stronger spiritual commitment (Lado et al., 2023). Each session can incorporate flexible methods such as Islamic visual arts, relaxation music with Qur'anic verses, and reflective dialogue based on hadith. This intervention is expected to help nurture mentally healthy and spiritually mature Muslim youth (Hasanović et al., 2021).

To support the implementation of this model, training for counseling practitioners is essential. Higher education institutions, Islamic counseling associations, and da'wah organizations should collaborate in developing a training curriculum for spiritual counseling based on Tazkiyatun Nafs. Ethical standards and implementation guidelines also need to be established to ensure that counseling practices remain aligned with Islamic principles and professional conduct. Furthermore, future research should test the effectiveness of this approach on a larger scale and in different contexts. With strong scientific and institutional support, this model has the potential to become a transformative foundation for sustainable and contextual Islamic mental health development.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate that the concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs is effective as a foundation for a spiritual approach in Islamic guidance and counseling, particularly in addressing mild to moderate mental health issues. The soul purification process through the stages of Takhalli, Tahalli, and Tajalli was shown to contribute to emotional and spiritual transformation in clients, reflected in improved emotional regulation, self-reflection, and spiritual closeness. These results enrich the theoretical understanding within Islamic psychology and support previous studies emphasizing the importance of integrating spiritual values into therapy.

From a social and cultural perspective, this approach is relevant for Muslim communities seeking value-based counseling and can be adapted in educational institutions, pesantren, and Islamic clinics. Academically, the findings provide opportunities to develop a more systematic and contextual Islamic counseling model. However, the limited number of participants and the local context require caution in generalizing the results; therefore, further studies with broader coverage and triangulated approaches are needed to strengthen the validity and applicability of this model across diverse Muslim cultural settings.

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