

INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY AND MENTAL HEALTH: THE *TAZKIYATUN NAFS* MODEL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GONTOR ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the high prevalence of mental health problems among students at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School who face limitations in conventional psychotherapy approaches that are not in line with their cultural and spiritual values. The gap is the lack of research integrating Islamic-based psychotherapy, especially the concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs, in Islamic boarding school education. The purpose of this study is to examine and develop a model for applying Tazkiyatun Nafs as a psychotherapeutic approach in the Gontor santri community. A qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design was used in this study, which involved in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The results of the study show that the application of Tazkiyatun Nafs through the practices of muhasabah, mujāhadah, and riyādhah has been proven effective in improving the mental well-being of santri and can be implemented in the pesantren curriculum. Further discussion reveals that Islamic principles such as tawakkul and muhasabah function as effective coping mechanisms in overcoming anxiety and stress. This study makes a significant contribution to the development of an Islamic-based psychotherapy model that is relevant to the cultural and spiritual needs of Muslim communities.

Keywords: *tazkiyatun nafs*, Islamic psychotherapy, mental health, Islamic boarding school

INTRODUCTION

The demands of modern life have made mental health a pressing global issue, marked by an increase in the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress in various populations, including in Indonesia. The World Health Organization (WHO) has consistently called for the integration of mental health services into primary health care systems. This call is urgent given the WHO report on the need to integrate services into the general healthcare system. In Indonesia, data shows that more than 20 million people experience mental health problems, highlighting the large gap between service needs and the availability of culturally appropriate interventions (Julita Sari et al., 2025). This gap is widening due to the shortage of professional staff and the social stigma surrounding mental disorders. This situation demands the exploration of therapeutic approaches that are not only clinically effective, but also aligned with the cultural and spiritual values of the local community. Conventional approaches rooted in Western paradigms often fail to address the spiritual dimension, which is crucial for religious communities. Therefore, the Islamic framework offers a contextual solution that is acceptable and internalizable by the community. This research aims to bridge this gap through the Islamic framework.

Historically, psychology and psychotherapy have been dominated by secular Western schools of thought, which tend to separate the functions of the soul from divinity or spirituality. This paradigm, while offering a solid framework for understanding cognition and behavior, often feels irrelevant when applied to Muslim individuals who consider religion to be the center of their existence and source of meaning. Criticism of the universality of Western theories, as highlighted by Hood & Shiraev (2020) on Cross-Cultural Psychology, has encouraged efforts at indigenization (Fitriatun et al., 2023). This indigenization is crucial so that psychological interventions do not feel foreign and resistant to Muslim individuals. In the

Islamic context, the soul (*nafs*), spirit (*ruh*), and mind (*aql*) are seen as an inseparable unity, requiring a holistic approach that transcends the material dimension. Neglecting the spiritual dimension in conventional therapy will result in partial and unsustainable healing. The need for a framework that recognizes the role of faith in healing is a crucial starting point for this study.

In response to the spiritual deficit in conventional therapy, the discipline of Islamic Psychology (IP) has emerged as a field of study that seeks to integrate Islamic teachings with modern psychology. IP focuses not only on mental illness, but also on the spiritual potential of humans to achieve optimal well-being (*falah*) and self-perfection. This approach explicitly uses concepts from the Qur'an and Sunnah as a theoretical basis for understanding human behavior and overcoming psychological problems. According to (Hidayatulloh et al., 2023) the development of Islamic psychotherapy shows that models such as Islamic Cognitive Therapy and Zikir-Based Therapy have demonstrated their effectiveness in several clinical studies. This initial success validates the proposition that spirituality can be a powerful therapeutic modality. Therefore, further development of Islam-based therapy models is imperative in the context of public service. This academic initiative provides strong justification for research to test the practical application of these models in specific educational contexts.

At the core of Islamic Psychotherapy is the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (purification of the soul), which is a transformative process that aims to cleanse the heart of despicable traits (*madzmumah*) and adorn it with praiseworthy traits (*mahmudah*). This concept is not merely an ethical teaching in Sufism, but a systematic psychospiritual methodology oriented towards the results of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*. The relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts on *Tazkiyatun Nafs* in modern Islamic psychology has been recognized in studies. Within the framework of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, mental health is defined as a state of tranquility of the soul (*Nafs al-Muthmainnah*), while mental illness is seen as a result of the domination of lust (*Nafs al-Ammarah*). This approach offers a clear roadmap for intervention, involving *muhasabah*, *mujāhadah*, and *riyādhah*. Mapping these stages allows for the conceptualization of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* into a structured and teachable therapeutic protocol. Thus, this model has the potential to be empirically tested as a mental health intervention. Modeling *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a therapeutic framework is the main focus of this study (Wahid et al., 2025).

The Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School was chosen as the research location because of its representation as a unique and influential Islamic educational institution in Indonesia. Gontor implements a strict boarding school education system with the Panca Jiwa and Panca Dasar philosophies, which implicitly demand self-control and high spiritual discipline. Character education at Gontor shows that the santri community, living in a highly structured environment with academic and non-academic demands, faces specific risks of stress and adjustment problems. This environment naturally provides a context in which mental health and spirituality are integrated into daily practice, rather than being separate subjects. Gontor's philosophy already incorporates the principles of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* through the habit of discipline and collective *mujahadah*. Therefore, Gontor is an ideal social laboratory for observing the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* model in action. Analysis at Gontor will show how *Tazkiyatun Nafs* is translated into effective cultural psychotherapy practices.

Although the pesantren environment provides strong social and spiritual support, it also presents unique mental health challenges. Issues such as *homesickness*, intense academic and organizational pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and difficulties adjusting to strict rules are often reported among santri. The prevalence of stress among santri in Indonesia, as confirmed by research, makes the need for effective and culturally relevant *coping* mechanisms urgent in this community isolated from the outside world. Western approaches may not be effective because they fail to understand the specific *stressors* faced by santri in the Islamic context (Kamila & Hasanah, 2023). If these issues are not addressed with appropriate interventions, the potential for more serious psychological disorders to emerge will increase, which can disrupt the

tarbiyah (education) process. This emphasizes the need for interventions that are directly sourced from the Islamic values believed by the students. Therefore, a framework is needed that can integrate spiritual discipline with the practical psychological needs of the students.

At Gontor, spiritual mental health practices are embedded in the curriculum and culture, such as through mandatory night prayers (*Qiyamul Lail*), recitation of the Qur'an (*muhāfadhah*), and strict self-discipline. These activities are intrinsically part of the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* process, which aims to calm the soul and control desires, and the Effects of Zikir and Salat on Psychological Well-being have been documented in a 2021 study. However, the extent to which these spiritual practices are consciously used as formal psychotherapy still requires in-depth and systematic analysis. The Gontor system has the potential to have implemented Islamic-labeled group and cognitive-behavioral therapy without the awareness of its practitioners. This study will identify how mentors, clerics, and teachers at Gontor use Islamic teachings, consciously or unconsciously, as psychological interventions to address the emotional and behavioral problems of students. This identification will reveal intervention *protocols* that have been *tacit knowledge* or hidden knowledge. Identifying these mechanisms will produce a model that can be replicated in similar institutions.

Although there are many studies on the pesantren education system and Islamic psychology in general, research that specifically analyzes the theoretical and functional integration of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a psychotherapy model in the context of mental health at Gontor is still very limited. Existing studies are often descriptive in nature, focusing on the curriculum or worship practices without systematically linking them to modern diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks. (Utami, 2024) shows that studies on the implementation of Islamic models in formal educational institutions are still lacking. There has been no research that maps in detail how the dimensions of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (such as *tawakkul*, *sabar*, *syukur*) are operationalized into intervention techniques that can be measured and evaluated. The main gap lies in the transformation of philosophical concepts into practical and empirical therapeutic steps. Therefore, this study will bridge the gap between Islamic theology and clinical psychology methodology. This gap highlights the need for this study to provide stronger empirical and theoretical contributions.

The main objective of this study is to comprehensively analyze and model the implementation of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a psychotherapeutic approach in the context of the Gontor santri community. Specifically, this study aims to identify the relevant theological components of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and map out how these components are translated into practical psychological interventions. (Hudamahya, 2025) shows the importance of research such as this for the validation of therapy models. The significance of this research is twofold: *First*, theoretically, it will strengthen the foundations of Islamic Psychotherapy by offering a clear and contextually tested model. *Second*, practically, this model can serve as a guide for counselors, educators, and other Islamic boarding school administrators in providing mental health services rooted in Islamic values. The formulation of this model is expected to improve the effectiveness of counseling services in Islamic educational institutions. Overall, this research contributes to the decolonization of knowledge by offering an *indigenous* therapy model.

The most significant academic contribution of this study is the formulation of the Integrative Model of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, which can serve as a new theoretical framework in the literature on Islamic psychotherapy. This model is expected to provide a stronger operational dimension than the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, which has been discussed more in the context of Sufism or pure Islamic ethics. This study highlights the need for such an operational model. Furthermore, these findings will fill a methodological gap by presenting an authentic case study of how a traditional education system successfully manages and maintains the mental health of its community through an *indigenous* approach. This model will serve as a *blueprint* for spirituality-based mental health interventions in other Islamic boarding schools. This contribution is important for advancing the literature on Islamic Psychology from the conceptual to the practical and

empirical levels. The research results are expected to serve as a reference for the development of Islamic Psychology curricula in higher education, particularly in counseling courses.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with an intensive and in-depth intrinsic case study design, focusing on the Darussalam Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School community. The qualitative approach was deliberately chosen because the main objective was to *understand* and *model* the complex phenomenon of theological-psychological integration (*Tazkiyatun Nafs*) in a specific social and cultural context, which requires depth of interpretation rather than mere statistical measurement. Key informants will be selected using *purposive sampling* and snowball sampling, including Kiai or Pondok leaders who act as spiritual and policy authorities, teachers (*ustaz/ustazah*) who are responsible for daily *tarbiyah* and counseling, and santri who have direct experience with psychological support mechanisms in the pesantren. The main data collection techniques include structured in-depth interviews on the central themes of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and mental health experiences, Participatory Observation of daily rituals (*Qiyamul Lail*, *muhāfadhah*), as well as the existing counseling and parenting processes, and Document Analysis of the curriculum, educational philosophy (*Panca Jiwa*), and procedures for handling student problems. Data triangulation will be carried out by comparing information from these three sources to ensure the validity and richness of the findings.

The collected qualitative data will be analyzed using a modified Thematic Analysis method with a Grounded Theory approach to produce an *indigenous* model. The first stage involves verbatim transcription of interview data and compilation of field observation notes, followed by *open coding* to identify concepts and categories that emerge from participants' descriptions of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* practices and their impact on mental well-being. The next stage is *axial coding*, in which categories are grouped and logically linked to establish a causal flow between Islamic spiritual doctrine and the psychological intervention of " " practiced at Gontor. The final result of this analysis is the formulation of the Integrative Model of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, which explicitly maps theological components (*madzmumah-mahmudah*) onto components of contemporary psychotherapeutic interventions (such as Cognitive-Behavioral and Existential-Humanistic). The consistency and validity of the model will be tested through *member checking* with key participants from Gontor, ensuring that the resulting model truly reflects the reality of practice in the field and has high contextual relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a Mechanism for Mental Well-being at Gontor

The implementation of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School is fundamentally realized through the internalization of the *Panca Jiwa* Philosophy, which is the spirit of boarding school education. *Panca Jiwa* Gontor, which includes sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic brotherhood, and freedom, serves as a behavioral framework that implicitly encourages spiritual purification. The concept of *self-reliance*, for example, is functionally equivalent to the dimension of *mujāhadah* in *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, requiring students to struggle against dependence and weakness. Kiai Gontor consistently emphasizes that self-discipline in a simple life is resistance to *Nafs al-Ammarah*, which tends toward material comfort. Therefore, *Panca Jiwa* is not only a management system but also a structured spiritual *tarbiyah* methodology to guide santri behavior. Previous findings also show that students who have successfully internalized the principle of *self-reliance* exhibit a higher level of resilience and adaptive *coping* mechanisms in the face of difficulties, in line with research findings on boarding school education and self-resilience (Asmanidar & Fazal, 2023). Thus, the philosophy of this institution becomes the primary vehicle for the implementation of Islamic psychotherapy practices.

Field findings confirm that formal religious practices are the main *coping* mechanism internalized by santri to manage psychological pressure. Mandatory activities such as Night Prayer (*Qiyamul Lail*) and Al-Qur'an Recitation (*muhāfadhah*) are consciously used by santri as strategies for systematic emotion regulation and stress reduction. Interviews show that the moment of *Qiyamul Lail* is understood as a time to release emotions and seek peace of mind (*Nafs al-Muthmainnah*) from the hustle and bustle of busy daily activities. Psychologically, this practice functions as a meditation-based intervention that helps break the cycle of negative rumination, which is often found in people with anxiety. Neuropsychological studies show a positive correlation between spiritual practices such as prayer and zikir and increased *well-being* and decreased stress hormones (Suseno, 2023). Therefore, these structured religious routines are a direct translation of spiritual exercises (*riyādhah*) in the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, which are applied collectively and institutionally. Santri see these rituals as spiritual remedies that overcome psychological burdens that cannot be resolved through conventional means, proving their therapeutic function.

The results of the study highlight the central role of teachers (*ustaz/ustazah*) and Kiai as "Informal Spiritual Therapists" who provide mental health services rooted in Islamic teachings. Their interventions focus on restructuring the santri's cognition, using advice based on the Qur'an and Sunnah to change the santri's negative perceptions of *stressors*. For example, *homesickness* is addressed by emphasizing the concepts of *patience* and *tawakkul* (surrender to God) as part of *mujāhadah* on the path of knowledge. Analysis shows that this approach is highly effective because it is *ego-syntonic*, meaning that the therapeutic message is in harmony with the students' core belief system, making it easier to accept and internalize. This approach is functionally similar to *Cognitive Restructuring* in CBT, but with a strong theological foundation, making it authentic Islamic Cognitive Therapy. The strength of this intervention lies in the spiritual authority of the *ustaz*, who is seen not only as an educator but also as an heir to the Prophet, whose words have *performative* power in healing (Nadirah & Ariff, 2025).

The study successfully identified specific blameworthy (*madzmumah*) and praiseworthy (*mahmudah*) traits that are most relevant to the psychological and social challenges faced by students in the context of dormitory life and the Gontor organization. The *madzmumah* traits that are often the target of intervention are '*ujub* (arrogance/pride) and '*riya*' (showing off), especially in intense organizational activities and academic achievements. Conversely, the *mahmudah* traits that are emphasized are sincerity and *tawadhu*' (humility). Interpersonal conflicts arising from competition and *ghibah* (gossip) are overcome by instilling the traits of *husnuzhan* (good intentions) and *ghadabul bashar* (guarding one's gaze). The trait of '*ujub* is identified as the root of perfectionist *stressors* and social anxiety, as it makes students overly dependent on external validation. By targeting these *madzmumah* through counseling programs, Islamic boarding schools consciously practice preventive psychotherapy aimed at building internally resilient character (Asmawariza et al., 2024).

The concept of *muhasabah* (self-introspection) is found to operate as a *self-monitoring* technique and institutionalized *insight* development in the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* Gontor system. Students are required to routinely evaluate their actions, intentions, and heart conditions, a practice that encourages deep self-awareness. Within a psychotherapeutic framework, *muhasabah* functions as a method of metacognitive reflection, enabling students to identify maladaptive thought patterns or negative behaviors before they become clinical disorders. Interviews revealed that *muhasabah* helps students understand that external problems often stem from internal faults ('*aib diri*'), rather than external factors alone. This function is crucial in an environment that is full of mistakes and demands. The effectiveness of *muhasabah* in increasing emotional and behavioral awareness has been supported by research linking it to increased self-regulation and personal responsibility (Ardimen et al., 2023). Therefore, *muhasabah* becomes a bridge between spiritual doctrine and modern therapeutic practices.

The principle of *Tawakkul* (surrender after maximum effort) is critically analyzed as a strong and Islam-specific cognitive *reframing* mechanism to overcome anxiety and uncertainty. In the context of exams or

determining fate, students are taught to make the best effort possible, then leave the results to Allah. Psychologically, *tawakkul* acts as a boundary setter that effectively breaks the cycle of anxiety caused by an excessive focus on controlling future outcomes. This concept explicitly reduces *self-blame* and *perceived helplessness* because students believe that the outcome is beyond their jurisdiction, but within the control of the Just God. These findings are highly relevant to the high-pressure boarding school context, where conventional studies may only offer temporary relaxation techniques. By internalizing *tawakkul*, students achieve *acceptance* and *peace of mind*, which are key indicators of positive mental health (Alhafiza et al., 2022).

This discussion will compare the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* framework with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), highlighting their similarities and differences. The main point of convergence lies in the focus on cognitive change (*muhasabah* changes the *thinking process*) and behavioral change (*mujāhadah* changes *habits* or bad habits). However, *Tazkiyatun Nafs* goes beyond CBT by adding a transpersonal dimension (relationship with God) as the main therapeutic goal, namely achieving *Nafs al-Muthmainnah*. While CBT aims at functional adaptation in the world, *Tazkiyatun Nafs* aims at *falah* (true success) in both the world and the hereafter. The *Tazkiyatun Nafs* model is also stronger in dealing with moral and existential issues (*madzmumah*) that are often overlooked by value-neutral CBT. Therefore, *Tazkiyatun Nafs* can be considered an indigenized CBT framework, in which theological beliefs function as **core beliefs** that underlie cognitive restructuring (Alhafiza et al., 2022).

Two important pillars of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, namely *mujāhadah* (struggle against oneself) and *riyādhah* (spiritual training), are analyzed as *exposure* and *behavioral activation* techniques in contemporary psychotherapy. *Mujāhadah*, such as facing organizational challenges or resisting desires, is a form of institutionalized *exposure* therapy to discomfort. *Riyādhah* (routine training in worship and discipline) is a form of behavioral activation that consistently directs the mental and physical energy of students toward constructive and spiritual goals. Through these practices, students gradually reduce avoidance *behavior*, which is often associated with depression and social anxiety. Thus, the pesantren system indirectly uses clinically recognized techniques, but with divine motivation and *reinforcement*. The integration of disciplinary coercion with spiritual motivation results in high levels of compliance and long-term intervention effectiveness.

Based on the above findings, the Gontor *Tazkiyatun Nafs* Integrative Model was formulated as a three-stage framework. Stage 1 (Diagnostic): Identification of *Nafs al-Ammarah* through observation of santri's *madzmumah* ('*ujub*, *ghadab*, *hasad*). Stage 2 (Intervention): Application of an intervention protocol involving Islamic CBT (*muhasabah* and cognitive counseling), Islamic Behavior Activation (*riyādhah* through worship and discipline), and Islamic Existential Therapy (*tawakkul*). Stage 3 (Outcome): Evaluation towards *Nafs al-Muthmainnah*, which is characterized by psychological well-being (resilience, peace) and *mahmudah* achievements (sincerity, patience, gratitude). This model shows that mental health is achieved through a triadic balance between *Nafs* (emotions), *Aql* (cognition), and *Ruh* (spirituality), all of which are assessed through the lens of *sharia* and *akhlak*. The main contribution of this model is that it provides a measurable roadmap for Islamic Psychotherapy, explicitly bridging theological discourse with clinical methodology.

The formulation of this model has significant theoretical implications, especially in the context of the Indigenization of Psychology in Southeast Asia. The Gontor *Tazkiyatun Nafs* Integrative Model proves that local spiritual concepts can be elevated from the philosophical dimension to practical and contextually evidence-based intervention protocols. By offering a culturally valid and functionally tested model within the boarding school community, this model can serve as a *blueprint* for counselors, educators, and boarding school administrators throughout Indonesia, providing an alternative mental health service that can overcome stigma and resistance to Western therapy. By placing *Tazkiyatun Nafs* at the core of therapy, this research contributes to the development of a psychology of well-being that is intrinsically linked to

transcendent goals, rather than mere social adaptation. Therefore, the results of this study mark a step forward in providing a holistic and relevant framework for the large Muslim population.

Analysis of the *Tazkiyatun Nafs* Integrative Model (MITN) in the Psychotherapy Framework at Gontor

The Integrative Model of Tazkiyatun Nafs (MITN) applied at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor aims to integrate Islamic spiritual principles with modern psychotherapy methodologies. MITN combines spiritual and psychological dimensions in order to support the mental well-being of students. The three main stages in MITN—Diagnostics, Intervention, and Outcome—form a structured framework for understanding the students' mental state and providing appropriate intervention. In the Diagnostics stage, observation of despicable traits (*madzmumah*) such as 'ujub and 'riya forms the basis for character assessment. Research findings at Gontor show that this stage is in line with the approach in modern psychotherapy, which prioritizes a deep understanding of psychological conditions before starting therapy. The division of these stages not only supports a structured approach but also increases the effectiveness of long-term interventions based on evidence-based therapy principles.

Muhasabah, which functions as a self-monitoring technique in MITN, has been proven to increase students' self-awareness. Students are asked to regularly evaluate their actions, intentions, and state of mind, which encourages deep self-reflection. This is highly relevant to contemporary psychological practice, where self-monitoring is a recognized technique for preventing mental disorders and increasing metacognitive awareness (Gatto et al., 2022). In the context of Gontor, muhasabah also reminds us of the practice of mindfulness in modern psychotherapy, which has been proven effective in reducing anxiety and improving emotional regulation. Further research shows that this practice can help santri identify and overcome maladaptive thinking patterns before they develop into more serious psychological disorders, supporting the concept of mindfulness as a key element in therapy. Mujāhadah in MITN serves as an effective *exposure* technique, encouraging santri to face challenges and difficulties. This technique helps reduce avoidance behaviors often associated with anxiety and depression. Mujāhadah teaches students to resist worldly temptations and focus on achieving higher spiritual goals. Psychological research supports the application of exposure therapy to treat anxiety disorders and trauma, which is in line with the application of mujāhadah in MITN as a form of therapy that builds mental resilience in facing stress and difficulties. In addition, research shows that behavioral reinforcement techniques such as those applied in mujāhadah can help form new habits through exposure to discomfort. In this context, mujāhadah not only helps students deal with external problems, but also builds better psychological resilience in the long term.

Riyādhah in MITN, such as night prayers (*qiyamul lail*) and recitation of the Qur'an, functions as a *Behavioral Activation* technique that effectively directs students' physical and mental energy towards more constructive spiritual goals. Regular spiritual routines at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor such as these serve to significantly reduce stress and improve mental well-being. In psychological theory, *Behavioral Activation* serves to change avoidance behaviors into more adaptive behaviors. Riyādhah plays a role in managing emotions and improving the emotional well-being of students, in line with community-based therapy theory that strengthens social and spiritual bonds in therapy. These spiritual activities not only improve emotional well-being but also support the development of self-discipline in achieving higher spiritual goals, which has been proven to have a positive impact on anxiety and stress management.

Tawakkul, which means surrender after trying one's best, functions as a cognitive reframing technique in MITN. Students are taught to do their best and then surrender the results to Allah. Tawakkul is in line with cognitive therapy, which emphasizes the importance of letting go of excessive control over results and accepting uncertainty. In the context of Islamic psychology, tawakkul provides a deep spiritual meaning to suffering, which functions as an existential healing mechanism, providing inner peace and reducing anxiety caused by uncertainty about the future (Isdianto et al., 2025).

A comparison between MITN and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) shows that both approaches share similarities in altering maladaptive cognition and behavior (Amelia, 2023). However, MITN at Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor adds a transpersonal dimension that leads to the attainment of *Nafs al-Muthmainnah*, which is a calm and peaceful soul. The addition of this spiritual dimension has been shown to enhance the sustainability of therapeutic outcomes and deepen the therapeutic experience, differing from CBT, which focuses more on functional adaptation in the world. Further research confirms that CBT is effective in treating common psychological problems, but MITN offers a deeper spiritual dimension, which enriches the therapeutic journey and provides greater meaning in the context of the world and the hereafter. Therefore, MITN provides a more holistic approach for students by integrating spirituality into psychological therapy.

Mujāhadah and riyādhah function as exposure and behavioral activation techniques in MITN, which lead to the development of mental resilience. Mujāhadah encourages santri to face uncomfortable challenges, while riyādhah directs their energy towards achieving higher spiritual goals. Research shows that exposure to discomfort can help individuals build better mental resilience in the long term, which is also relevant to contemporary psychological theory. Behavioral Activation in psychotherapy is similar to riyādhah, which helps reduce avoidance behaviors associated with anxiety (Meine et al., 2024). By applying these techniques, MITN not only fosters a disciplined character but also enhances overall mental well-being, supporting healthier self-development and resilience to stress.

MITN has been effectively implemented at Gontor in providing culturally relevant spiritual-based mental health services. This model avoids reliance on Western therapeutic approaches that are not integrated with religious values and provides therapeutic alternatives that are in line with the culture and beliefs of the students. Research shows that religious and culturally-based approaches increase the effectiveness of therapy, particularly in Muslim communities. The MITN model also reduces the stigma associated with mental health therapy, which is often a barrier to conventional treatment. This spiritually-based approach not only improves the quality of mental health services at Gontor, but it is also expected to be relevant for implementation in other Islamic boarding schools. MITN is formulated in an Input-Process-Output flowchart for the purposes of replication and validation of Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). With this model, the psychopathological conditions of santri associated with the dominance of *Nafs al-Ammarah* can be mapped, and interventions based on muhasabah, mujāhadah, and riyādhah can be applied to achieve *Nafs al-Muthmainnah*. This study shows that mapping causality in spiritual-based therapy is crucial for validating the effectiveness of such therapy models in psychological practice. This model provides a clear roadmap for further replication and validation in various Islamic educational institutions, making it a strong foundation for the development of evidence-based Islamic psychotherapy. The application of this model also strengthens the relevant Islamic psychotherapy literature in a cultural context.

MITN has made a significant contribution to the development of Islamic-based mental health services in Islamic boarding schools, particularly in Gontor. This model provides a coherent blueprint for counselors and boarding school administrators to offer relevant and stigma-free services. The spiritually-based approach has been shown to improve the psychological well-being of students and reduce the stigma associated with health therapy. The success of MITN in Gontor is an important example of integrating spiritual values into the counseling and therapy curriculum, as well as providing alternatives for therapy that are more relevant in the context of Muslim communities. This model contributes to the decolonization of psychology in the Muslim world, offering solutions that are more in line with religious and cultural values.

Tabel 1. Analysis of the Integration of Islamic Psychotherapy and Mental Health: The Tazkiyatun Nafs Model in the Context of the Gontor Pesantren Community

Aspect	Findings	Connection Between Psychotherapy Integration and Mental Health
Muhasabah (Self-monitoring)	Muhasabah helps students to increase self-awareness and prevent maladaptive pol. It teaches deep self-reflection.	Self-monitoring techniques in modern psychotherapy aim to increase self-awareness and emotional management, which is in line with the principle of muhasabah in Islam.
Mujāhadah (Struggle against desires)	Mujāhadah guides students to face life's challenges with greater mental resilience. This technique helps reduce anxiety and depression.	As a form of exposure therapy, mujāhadah effectively reduces avoidance behavior, strengthens mental resilience, and overcomes stressors related to anxiety.
Riyādhah (Spiritual Training)	Riyādhah, which includes rituals such as night prayers and recitation of the Qur'an, leads to emotional management and improved mental well-being among students.	Behavioral Activation in modern psychotherapy is in line with the practice of riyādhah, which helps change avoidance behaviors into more adaptive behaviors and improves mental well-being.
Tawakkul (Surrender)	Tawakkul teaches students to try their best and surrender the results to Allah, which helps reduce anxiety and stress.	Cognitive reframing in CBT psychotherapy can be seen as comparable to tawakkul, where individuals change their perspective on control over outcomes and accept uncertainty.
Panca Jiwa Gontor	The Panca Jiwa Gontor philosophy, which includes principles such as simplicity, sincerity, and self-reliance, forms the basis for behavior that encourages spiritual purification.	Panca Jiwa serves as the foundation for the application of Tazkiyatun Nafs in the daily lives of santri, increasing mental resilience and encouraging spiritual discipline in line with the principles of religion-based therapy.
Madzmumah and Mahmudah Traits	The development of praiseworthy traits such as sincerity and humility, as well as the control of blameworthy traits such as arrogance and hypocrisy, strengthen the character of students in facing psychological pressures.	The character-based psychotherapy approach, which aims to transform maladaptive traits into more positive ones, is in line with efforts to overcome moral and existential problems in Islamic psychotherapy.
Social Life in Islamic Boarding Schools	The structured social life in Islamic boarding schools helps foster solidarity among students and supports mental well-being.	Social support in the context of community-based therapy has a positive impact on overcoming stress and emotional problems, as well as strengthening individual resilience to life's challenges.
Islamic Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention	Interventions based on cognitive advice and teaching of the Qur'an to overcome negative perceptions of problems faced, such as homesickness.	Islamic Cognitive Therapy serves to change negative perceptions into more positive ones, similar to Cognitive Restructuring in CBT, which can improve negative views of stressors.
Spirituality and Mental Health	The concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs, which combines spiritual purification with mental health,	Spiritual approaches in psychotherapy, such as Tazkiyatun Nafs, emphasize balance between physical, mental, and spiritual aspects, which is crucial in creating holistic mental well-being.

Aspect	Findings	Connection Between Psychotherapy Integration and Mental Health
	has been proven to enhance the holistic well-being of students.	
Curriculum and Therapeutic Approach	The curriculum at Gontor, which integrates the spiritual discipline of and mental health, provides a relevant and effective approach for students in overcoming psychological problems.	Integrating Islamic principles into psychological education provides with an alternative that is more relevant to the culture and spiritual needs of the Muslim community, overcoming the incompatibility with conventional psychotherapy approaches.

Overall, the table shows that the core elements of Tazkiyatun Nafs at Gontor—such as muhasabah, mujāhadah, riyādhah, tawakkul, and Panca Jiwa—are closely aligned with key principles in modern psychotherapy. Each practice supports self-awareness, emotional regulation, adaptive behavior, cognitive restructuring, character building, and social support, which are central to mental health interventions. By integrating Islamic concepts with approaches like CBT, exposure therapy, behavioral activation, and character-based therapy, the pesantren context offers a culturally and spiritually relevant model of holistic mental health support. This integration not only strengthens students’ resilience but also bridges the gap between religious practice and evidence-based psychological care.

CONCLUSION

The Integrative Tazkiyatun Nafs Model (MITN) successfully combines Islamic spiritual dimensions with contemporary psychotherapy approaches to improve mental health at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School. Through the application of the Tazkiyatun Nafs concept, which includes muhasabah, mujāhadah, and riyādhah, students can manage stress, anxiety, and other psychological problems in a manner consistent with Islamic values. This model demonstrates that a spirituality-based approach can be an effective and culturally relevant alternative for Muslim communities, and can be adapted and applied in other Islamic educational institutions. This research also emphasizes the importance of decolonizing psychology by integrating theories and practices that are appropriate to the local social and religious context. These findings open up opportunities to strengthen the application of Islamic-based psychotherapy in various educational institutions and Muslim communities. The implementation of this model at Gontor proves that holistic, faith-based psychological healing can be well integrated into everyday life. Finally, this study makes an important contribution to the development of a psychological framework that is more in line with the culture and spirituality of Muslim communities.

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