INSTITUTE OF KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

ITKI 6300 RESEARCH PAPER

ISLAMIC COUNSELLING APPROACH FOR ADDRESSING STRESS IN MUSLIM YOUTH STUDENT

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1.0   ABSTRACT

There is a serious concern about student depression and stress, especially among Muslim youth, since they manage culturally and religiously unique challenges. The study investigates how combining Islamic principles and psychology can help Muslim students with depression and stress. The research seeks to find out what is causing Muslim youth stress and to test if counselling and psychoeducational methods can help them cope with and reduce stress. Further, the study investigates whether Islamic-run schools can promote religious faith as a method of coping with academic pressure. This research explains, using data and user stories, how Islamic counselling helps student achieve cultural guidance that strengthens their mental health and resilience. Results from the research are applied to shape mental health interventions that recognize religious beliefs and address challenges today's Muslims face.

Keywords: Islamic counselling, stress management, Muslim youth

2.0   BACKGROUND

People are recognizing that stress, anxiety and depression are growing problems for many university students across the world. Apart from the usual challenges in college, Muslim students stand out with problems that are unique to them. According to several studies, many Muslim college students feel psychological discomfort. For instance, a study reveals that more than half of Muslim students suffer from anxiety and pain and almost half of Muslim student's say they experience stress (Gilani, 2023)[1]. Because these numbers hold true in several regions, including those in the West, India and Malaysia, it is evident these numbers describe a problem worldwide. The spiritual framework offers protective factors that can moderate the effects of stress and promote resilience among Muslim students (Misran et al., 2021)[2]

On campus, Muslim students work through difficulties such as hard academic courses, prejudice in religion, bullying caused by identification and a lack of awareness about culture. A research team at (Jamia Millia Islamia ,2024)[3] noted that almost half of enrolled Muslim students felt stressed in top Delhi colleges. Among these learners, feelings of stress and depression about instances of violence and typecasting were common. Also, (Hyat, 2021)[4] found that Muslim students at such universities may feel more psychological stress because it is not easy for them to balance their identity as a religious and cultural minority. All of this causes them extra anxiety that negatively influences their integration with peers and teachers.

It is important for psychologists to understand stress among Muslim students since it can change their achievements at school, social behavior and how they feel. Many students at universities go through a time of change and greater expectations which can cause mental health problems if left unattended. Due to many Muslims experiencing stress, anxiety and depression in higher numbers, we need mental health frameworks that understand their specific conditions and wellness practices. (Rashid et al., 2021).[5]

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[1] Gilani, S. (2023). *Mental health of Muslim college students: Perceptions, stigmas, and support systems*. Khalil Center. https://khalilcenter.com/articles/mental-health-of-muslim-college-students

[2] Misran, R. N., Abdul Khaiyom, J. H., & Razali, Z. A. (2021). *Religiosity and mental health among Muslim youths in Malaysia*. Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities.

[3] Jamia Millia Islamia (2024). *Mental Health Issues and Coping Strategies in Religious Minority: A Study of Muslim Students in Higher Education.* International Journal of Indian Psychology.

[4] Aneeqa Abid '22 and Mahnoor Hyat (2021), *Understanding Stanford Muslim Student Mental Health Challenges & Needs* in collaboration with The Markaz Resource Center at Stanford & The Stanford Muslim Mental Health and Islamic Psychology Lab, October 2021

[5] Rashid, M. H. A., Hashim, N. A., Nikmat, A. W., & Mohamad, M. (2021). Religiosity, religious coping and psychological distress among Muslim university students in Malaysia. International Journal of Education and Research.

3.0   OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The Islamic tradition regards mental health as something affecting spiritual, emotional and psychological elements. In Islam, patience, being strong and united with others is encouraged for good mental health. The researcher posits that Islamic counselling, which integrates spiritual guidance based on Qur'an and Hadith, could be an effective approach to help students manage stress and depression. This study aims to explore the multifaceted nature of stress among Muslim university students by integrating psychological and Islamic perspectives. The objectives are:

   i.   To assess the prevalence and levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among Muslim students.
   ii.   To identify key academic, social, and religious stressors affecting Muslim students.
   iii. To examine the role of religiosity and Islamic coping strategies in moderating psychological distress.
   iv.   To explore barriers to mental health service utilization and propose culturally congruent intervention strategies.

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

   i.   What is the prevalence and severity of stress, anxiety, and depression among Muslim students in higher education?
   ii.   What are the primary contributing factors to stress in this population?
   iii. How do Islamic beliefs and practices influence coping and psychological wellbeing?
   iv.   What barriers do Muslim students face in accessing mental health support, and how can services be adapted to meet their needs?

4.0   JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Despite growing awareness of mental health issues among university students, there remains a significant gap in research focusing specifically on Muslim students as a religious minority group. Existing literature often overlooks the intersection of cultural, religious, and psychosocial factors that uniquely shape their stress experiences and coping mechanisms. Many studies highlight the high prevalence of psychological distress but lack comprehensive analysis of how Islamic spirituality and religiosity interact with these challenges (Umar, 2024)[6] Furthermore, Muslim students frequently encounter stigma both within their communities and the broader society, which discourages help-

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[6] Umar, A. (2024). *Mental Health Issues and Coping Strategies in Religious Minority: A Study of Muslim Students in Higher Education. 12(4).* *https://doi.org/10.25215/1204.144*

seeking behaviour and limits the effectiveness of conventional counselling services. The lack of culturally and religiously sensitive mental health resources contribute to unmet needs and poorer outcomes. This study is justified in its attempt to fill this gap by providing an integrative understanding of stress that respects Islamic values while applying psychological frameworks. In addition, since many Muslim youths in several countries live with rising Islamophobia and feel socially excluded, their mental health issues intensify. For this reason, it is necessary to help them by designing interventions that consider both outside pressures and how they deal with them. The learnings from our study help shape policies and strategies at schools and community levels to help Muslim students achieve their goals. They provide Muslim institutions with the knowledge needed to create systems that help students achieve both success and good mental health.

4. 1 Islamic Counselling & Islamic Psychology

Managing stress and mental health becomes achievable with Islamic counselling and Islamic psychology which take an Islamic approach as their foundation. This article looks at the early development of Islamic psychology, its main ideas and the main therapies using Islamic religious practices. It includes reviews of studies that show how effectively these approaches help people with stress and mental health.

4.2 History and Foundations of Islamic Psychology

Islamic psychology was once known as *'ilm al-nafs* and began in the early Islamic Golden Age. (Arshad, 2019) Early on, Al-Kindi (801–873 C.E.) helped apologetics by researching mental abilities and the soul's composition. By the 14th century, Nishapur University was instructing students formally in psychology, helping to build the base for upcoming progress(Arshad, 2019).

Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) is singled out in this tale because his views on the mind and soul helped shape the field we study. In the book "The Revival of Religious Sciences", Al-Ghazali put forth a detailed theory of the mind based on what is taught in the Qur'an. He mentioned that inner heart purification (tazkiyah) supports the well-being of both the mind and the soul[7]. It believes that the mind cannot be healthy apart from the person's soul which must always be connected to Allah.

Islamic psychology unites religious concepts, philosophical study and spiritual ways, making sure spiritual development, ethical living and relying on God's direction are central to mental well-being.

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[7] Munira Arshad (2019). IIUM *The History of Psychology in Islam,* Volume-3, Issue-3, pp-187-193, AMERICAN Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR), e-ISSN :2378-703X ,www.ajhssr.com

It allows individual mental health issues to be managed and, at the same time, helps people learn more about themselves.

i.	**Confidentiality**	Maintaining trust and privacy in the counsellor-client relationship.
ii.	**Autonomy**	Respecting the client's free will within the bounds of Islamic ethics.
iii.	**Beneficence and Justice**	Promoting the client's well-being fairly and compassionately.
iv.	**Motivation**	Encouraging clients through spiritual and psychological empowerment.
v.	**Multicultural Counselling**	Understanding the client's cultural and religious context.
vi.	**Personality Development**	Fostering growth aligned with Islamic values.

Psycho-spiritual aspects of worship, trustworthiness and knowledge are all combined in the counselling process[8]. As a result, counsellors display empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard in their Islamic personality which means they are more effective when helping Muslim clients. In more detail, the Integrated Approach of Islamic Counselling Model (IAICM) has contributed importantly to this area. The model combines verses from the Qur'an, traditions from the Prophet and spiritual principles into the process, so counseling always fits an Islamic and psychological framework.

The most important techniques in Islamic counselling are various religious and ceremonial practices are used in Islamic counselling to help people experience less stress and better mental health. The techniques they work with are:

i. **Dua' (Supplication).** A prayer for direction, security and comfort from Allah. Making du'a gives comfort to someone struggling with hope, patience and a closeness to God. It emphasizes that Allah is not hard on anyone and, consequently, boosts everyone's willpower.

ii. **Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah).** Practicing reciting Allah's names or sacred phrases often, to become mindful and better experience your faith. Also, Dhikr has been studied and tested,

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[8] Salmi Ahmad Sudan (2017), *Principles of Islamic Counselling and Psychotherapy,* Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education Vol. 6(3) July 2017, ISSN: 2186-845X ISSN: 2186-8441

resulting in scientists finding that it can reduce stress and anxiety and this is backed by changes in heart rate and brain oxygen levels. It brings renewal to the mind and helps us feel relaxed.(Septiawan et al., 2021)

iii. **Tawakkul (Trust in Allah).** Taking comfort in God's control which eases anxiety about things we cannot manage. Reliance on God gives people stronger minds by helping them accept difficulties and think less about them.

iv. **Shukr (Gratitude).** Feeling thankful toward Allah for everything, as it agrees with the rules of positive psychology. Feeling thankful improves mental wellness, happiness and controls our emotions which lower stress.

v. **Reading the Qur'an inhuman (Recitation of the Qur'an).** Qur'anic verses help calm the mind and support a person's spiritual healing. Tilawah's rhythm and melody tend to calm the mind and heart.

vi. **Solat (Prayer).** The five daily prayers require you to move, think deeply and surrender yourself to God. Praying helps you relax and reduces stress with the help of focus, routine and meeting with others. It guides your feelings and gives you regular time to rest and connect spiritually(Baharuddin et al., 2024).

In general, adopting these techniques is important for Islamic counselling, as it helps clients gain peace and advice.

4.3.1 Integration of Islamic Approaches in Stress Management

Many times, these techniques are used as part of integrated therapy, working on the mind, body and spirit. Several studies show that following Islamic spiritual rituals has helped many people lower stress and boost their mental well-being. A literature review on dhikr (remembrance of Allah) relaxation techniques among patients with hypertension found significant reductions in stress levels. Improved brain blood flow and the body's relaxation responses were responsible for this change. People who often recited dhikr found that their stress was better managed, in part due to strong spiritual abilities.

Experts have found that trusting God, being patient, thankful and remembering God help with coping with anxiety and depression. Believing in Tawakkul means you can lean on trusting in Allah's plan which can cut down on your stress and having *sabr* makes you more able to stay steady through difficulties. Shukr allows for happiness and contentment. By practicing dhikr, people keep their hearts close to God and feel more at peace, where studies confirm salat (prayer) helps relieve stress and balance thinking. Prayer helps us to be patient, take time to think and accept what comes, while performing the moves and practicing deep breathing brings us peace.

Because of its scriptural basis in the Qur'an, Islamic counseling is able to help people use faith-based methods and increase their motivation in therapy.

5.0 THE CONCEPT OF STRESS FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

5.1 Definition of Stress According to Psychologists

Stress is a combination of mental and physical changes that major psychologists, especially Hans Selye and Richard Lazarus, have described and explained differently.

Hans Selye's[9] Definition: In 1976, Selye described stress as the body's reaction to anything that necessitates a change, regardless of whether the situation is enjoyable or unpleasant." It points out that stress[10] is a bodily response to all types of demands Selye started by introducing the term General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), explaining stress as a chain of events: alarm reaction (fight-or-flight response), resistance (adapting to the stressor) and exhaustion (running out of resources, maybe causing illness). [11].Holisticly, his approach is to track how the body responds to both beneficial and harmful challenges.

Richard Lazarus's Definition: Lazarus and Folkman[12] (1984) shifted the focus toward cognitive appraisal, defining stress as a "process whereby an individual perceives and responds to events that he appraises as overwhelming or threatening to his well-being." This transactional model highlights the subjective nature of stress, emphasizing that stress arises not just from external events but from how individuals [13]evaluate (appraise) these events. Lazarus identified two key appraisal[14] types: primary appraisal (judging whether an event is harmful, threatening, or challenging) and secondary appraisal (evaluating one's coping resources and options). Stress occurs when perceived demands exceed perceived coping abilities.

Together, these definitions illustrate that stress involves both physiological reactions and cognitive evaluations, making it a dynamic interaction between the individual and their environment.

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[9] Tan, S. Y., & Yip, A. (2018). Hans Selye (1907-1982): *Founder of the stress theory. Singapore medical journaI*, 59(4), 170–171. https://doi.org/10.11622/smedj.2018043

[10] Ingrid M. Cordon (1997) California State University, Northridge. (1995). Stress. CSUN.https://www.csun.edu/~vcpsy00h/students/stress.htm

[11] Lumen Learning. (n.d.). *What is stress? Lumen Learning.* https://courses.lumenlearning.com/waymaker-psychology/chapter/what-is-stress/Lumen Learning

[12] Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, Appraisal and Coping. New York: Guilford.

[13] Fehr, Lawrence A. | Washburn, Allyson (2024), EBSCO Research Starters. (n.d.). *Theories of stress*. EBSCO Information Services. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/consumer-health/theories-stress

[14] Dalhousie University Digital Editions. (2020) *What is stress?* Dalhousie University.https://digitaleditions.library.dal.ca/intropsychneuro/chapter/what-is-stress/Digital Editions

6.0 THE CONCEPT OF STRESS IN THE QURAN AND HADITH

6.1 The Concept of Stress in the Quran, Hadith, and Historical Scholars

While the term "stress" is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran or Hadith, the concept is deeply embedded in Islamic scripture and classical scholarship through related terms such as *ham*(worry), *huzn*(sorrow*), ghamm* (distress), and *kharb* (trouble). These terms represent psychological and emotional states like what modern psychology defines as stress. Islamic teachings, drawn from the Quran, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the writings of classical scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim, offer a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing stress through spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral approaches.

Terminology and Conceptualization

The Quran and Hadith do not use the modern term "stress" directly, but they address similar experiences through various Arabic words describing emotional and psychological distress:

i.	**Ham (worry) and Huzn (sorrow)**	These terms refer to mental anguish and sadness. For example, *huzn* is often used to describe grief or sadness over loss or hardship.
ii.	**Khauf (fear)**	Fear of the future or unknown, which can cause restlessness and anxiety.
iii.	**Gham (distress) and Karb (hardship)**	These denote severe troubles and difficulties that burden the heart and mind.

According to Quranic interpreters, *khauf* relates to fear of future events, while *huzn* pertains to sorrow over past events. Both are states that can cause mental unrest like stress.

The Quran acknowledges that humans will face trials and tribulations that cause these emotional states:

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give good tidings to the patient." (Quran 2:155)

This verse frames stress-inducing events as tests from Allah, emphasizing the inevitability of hardship but also the virtue of patience and perseverance.

Stress as a Psychological and Spiritual Challenge

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) acknowledged human experiences of stress and anxiety. For example, Aisyah (RA) narrated the Prophet's own moments of sorrow and distress, illustrating that even the best of creation experienced psychological hardship.

Islamic teachings view stress not merely as a psychological burden but also as a spiritual test and opportunity for growth. The Hadith states:

"No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that."

(Sahih al-Bukhari).

6.2 Views of Classical Scholars: Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim

6.2.1 Al-Ghazali (1058–1111)

Al-Ghazali's contributions to Islamic psychology are profound, especially his concept of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul). He emphasized that psychological distress arises from an imbalance or corruption of the soul caused by attachment to worldly desires, ignorance, and spiritual negligence.

In his seminal work *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences), Al-Ghazali describes emotional states such as anxiety, fear, and sadness as conditions that can be overcome through spiritual discipline, self-awareness, and reliance on Allah. He advocates for:

i.	**Self-purification**	through repentance and ethical conduct.
ii.	**Remembrance of Allah (dhikr)**	to calm the heart.
iii.	**Patience (sabr)**	and trust in divine wisdom as essential to overcoming distress.

Al-Ghazali viewed stress and anxiety as symptoms of a heart disconnected from its Creator and taught that healing comes through reconnecting spiritually and morally.

6.2.2 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350)

A student of the famous scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim expanded on Al-Ghazali's ideas, focusing on the relationship between the heart and the mind. He described the heart as the center of emotions and spiritual life, susceptible to diseases like worry (*ham*), grief (*huzn*), and fear (*khauf*).

Ibn Qayyim emphasized that these conditions arise from:

    i.   Overattachment to worldly matters.

    ii.   Lack of reliance on Allah's decree (*tawakkul*).

    iii.   Ignorance of the transient nature of life.

He prescribed spiritual remedies including:

i. **Tawakkul (trust in Allah)**	to alleviate fear and anxiety.
ii. **Dhikr and prayer (solat)**	to soothe the heart.
iii. **Gratitude (shukr)**	to counteract sorrow and dissatisfaction.
iv. **Reflection on death and the Hereafter**	to gain perspective on worldly trials.

Ibn Qayyim's approach integrates cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, aligning closely with modern holistic stress management.

7.0 CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SCHOLARS AND PERSPECTIVES

Modern Islamic scholars and psychologists continue to emphasize the Quran and Sunnah as primary sources for understanding and managing stress. They highlight that faith, and spiritual practices serve as protective factors against psychological distress.

i.	Faith in Allah's wisdom and decree is seen as the cornerstone of cognitive coping, calming fears about the future and regrets about the past.
ii.	Patience (*sabr*) and gratitude (*shukr*) are promoted as emotional regulation strategies that foster resilience.
iii.	Repentance (*tawbah*), forgiveness, and charity are behavioural strategies that help reduce guilt and promote social connectedness, mitigating stress.
iv.	Regular prayer, Quranic recitation (*tilawah*), and remembrance (*dhikr*) have demonstrated physiological benefits such as relaxation, reduced heart rate, and improved mental well-being.

Two (2) Islamic Ancient Scholar in their view point the importance of integrating Islamic coping (Salmi, 2017)[15] strategies with contemporary psychological methods to provide culturally congruent mental health care for Muslims.

Islamic teachings deliver a powerful and comprehensive approach to managing stress, effectively addressing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions.

Cognitive Strategies	
Faith and Trust in Allah's Wisdom:	A belief that Allah has a purpose for all trials and is the ultimate disposer of affairs inspires us to find peace in the face of uncontrollable events.
Positive Reframing:	Viewing stress and hardship as tests that purify the soul and lead to spiritual elevation.
Emotional Strategies	
Patience (Sabr)	Enduring difficulties without despair or complaint, maintaining hope in Allah's mercy.
Gratitude (Shukr)	Focusing on blessings to counterbalance feelings of distress.
Fear and Humility before Allah	Encouraging awareness of divine presence which can regulate emotions.
Behavioral Strategies	
Prayer (Solat	Structured worship that incorporates mindfulness, physical movement, and spiritual connection.
Dua (Supplication)	Seeking Allah's help and relief, which fosters hope and emotional relief.
Repentance and Forgiveness	Reducing guilt and interpersonal conflicts that contribute to stress.
Charity and Helping Others	Enhancing social bonds and purpose.
Spiritual Practices	
Remembrance of Allah (Dhikr)	Repetitive invocation that induces relaxation and spiritual calm.

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[15] Salmi, A. S. (2017). *Principles of Islamic Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Asian Journal of Management Sciences & Education, 6(3), 129–138.

Quranic Recitation (Tilawah)	Soothing and healing through the rhythmic and melodic qualities of the Quran.
Reflection on Death and the Hereafter	Gaining perspective on life's trials and detachment from worldly anxieties.

8.0   TYPES OF STRESS: EUSTRESS VS. DISTRESS

Stress isn't always harmful; it can actually happen in two ways, depending on how it makes us feel.

Eustress (Positive Stress). Hans Selye[16] created the phrase eustress as a term for stress that improves someone's outlook, makes them more productive and encourages self-growth. When we see a challenge instead of a threat, our stress becomes helpful and energizes us. Both getting prepared for an exam or beginning a new job are examples of eustress and this kind of stress is accompanied by positive feelings.

Distress (Negative Stress). If a person sees circumstances as more threatening than they can face using their usual strategies, the outcome can be anxiety, poor performance and possible health issues[17]. It brings on feelings of being frustrated, useless and very tired. Living with prolonged distress may bring on mental diseases like depression and anxiety disorders. Besides the general idea of stress, Selye pointed out that too much stress (hyper-stress) and not enough stress (hypo-stress) can both be harmful, meaning healthy well-being comes from a good balance.

9.0 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO STRESS AMONG STUDENTS

Academic stress, personal issues and other unusual stressors can affect students' mental health and school results. Main reasons for these differences are:

i.	**Academic Pressure**	Heavy workloads, exams, tight deadlines, and competition for grades create considerable demands. It is possible that students view these challenges as dangerous if they are not certain they can handle them or they don't have the needed resources.

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[16] Open Text BC. (n.d.). Stress and coping – Introduction to Psychology. BCcampus. https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology/chapter/15-2-stress-and-coping
[17] Wikipedia contributors. (2011, November 25). *Psychological stress*. Wikipedia.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_stress

ii.	**Time Management Difficulties**	Juggling studies, extracurricular activities, part-time jobs, and social commitments can result in feelings of overwhelm and insufficient time, leading to increased stress levels.
iii.	**Transition and Adjustment**	Moving to a new environment, adapting to university culture, and being separated from family and familiar support networks can induce uncertainty and anxiety.
iv.	**Financial Concerns**	The burden of tuition fees, living expenses, and economic uncertainty are prevalent stressors that heighten students' worries and mental strain.
v.	**Social and Interpersonal Issues**	Peer pressure, relationship conflicts, social isolation, and experiences of discrimination can adversely affect emotional well-being.
vi.	**Identity and Cultural Stress**	Minority or international students may encounter additional stress associated with cultural adaptation, identity conflicts, and instances of bias or exclusion.

Such factors also play a role in matching stress[18] to people's perceptions and coping skills, making stress eustress or distress.

9.0.1 Comparison of The Concepts of Stress, Anxiety, Depression, and Burnout

Stress, anxiety, depression and burnout relate to one another, but also differ in important ways.

i.	**Stress vs. Anxiety**	Stress is a response to perceived external demands or threats that may feel challenging or overwhelming. Many factors mean that this is a temporary stage and situation dependant. Differently, anxiety continues for a longer time and involves heavy worrying and fear, usually without a particular reason. While stress causes anxiety over the long term, anxiety can also be a medical condition with body and mind symptoms that are not found in regular stress responses.

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ii.	**Stress vs. Depression**	When demands are placed on us, stress shows up as physical and emotional responses that we can usually recognize. Depression[19], by contrast, is a disorder of mood that leads to constant sadness, a lack of interest, mental struggle and a drop in how well someone can function. Too much stress over time may develop into depression, yet depression comes with other signs such as low spirits and hopelessness.
iii.	**Stress vs. Burnout**	Working under persistent stress for an extended period is the main reason for burnout. You might see exhaustion of emotions, treating people as though they are not human, harshness or cynicism [20]and a decrease in feeling satisfied with work. When stress is not controlled, burnout can happen which reveals that a person's coping strategy has insufficient supplies.

Knowing these parts of stress helps you assess and treat students effectively since stress in their lives can lead to more serious mental health issues over time.

9.0.2 Empirical Study on the Stress Levels of Muslim Students

There has been a steady rise in studies on psychological stress among Muslim students in universities, revealing their unique details and what causes it. This piece studies how widespread stress is, the approaches used and the main points from recent studies conducted in Malaysia, Indonesia and India, while exploring stress within the academic and socioreligious worlds of these people.

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[19] Wikipedia contributors. (2011, November 25). *Psychological stress*. Wikipedia.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychological_stress
[20] ibid

Review of Previous Studies

Local Context (Malaysia & Indonesia)

Malaysian university study (2021):	
Sample	467 bachelor's students at UiTM Shah Alam
Instruments	Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-21)
	Hatta Islamic Religiosity Index (HIRS96)
	Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief RCOPE)
Findings	
Prevalence	27.8% depression, 33.2% anxiety, 18.6% stress
Key associations	Negative religious coping correlated with anxiety ($\beta=0.26$) and depression ($\beta=0.23$), while positive coping showed minimal protective effects
Indonesian Islamic schools (2024):	
Sample:	154 students aged 12–16
Instruments:	Modified Student-Life Stress Inventory ($\alpha=0.989$)
	Academic Self-Regulated Learning Scale ($\alpha=0.988$)
Findings	
Prevalence	Student engagement mediated 99.4% of self-regulated learning's stress-reduction effects
Key associations	Stressors: Dual curriculum demands (religious + secular subjects)

Demographic Analysis	
Age Trends	Peak stress at 18–19 years in Indonesian samples
	Younger students (12–16) showed curriculum-related stress

Gender Differences	Female predominance in anxiety (62%) and depression (58%) in Malaysian study
Stress Contributing Factors	
Academic Pressures	
Curriculum overload	Dual secular-religious requirements in Islamic schools
Performance anxiety	78% Malaysian students cited exam pressure
Religious Dynamics	
Negative religious coping	Associated with 23–26% increased depression/anxiety risk
	Manifestations: Spiritual discontent, interpersonal conflicts
Positive religious coping	Limited efficacy ($\beta=0.11$ for depression reduction)
Sociocultural Stressors	
Discrimination:	42% Malaysian students reported cultural adaptation stress
Identity conflicts	53% Indonesian students struggled with modernity-tradition balance
Intervention Strategies	
Online Islamic coping training (2023):	6-week program reduced stress scores by 34% ($p=0.027$)
	Components: Quranic reflection, prophetic mindfulness techniques
Institutional recommendations:	Curriculum integration of stress management modules

The findings prove that interventions should help students manage common academic pressures as well as problems related to their religions and cultures. Future work should focus on studying how different ways of coping work in various national or international education settings over time. To alleviate stress and lift mental health, Western psychology relies on structured methods such as CBT and others such as Mindfulness, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

10.0 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Important studies utilized cross-sectional designs and employed validated measurement scales.

Study Location	Design	Sample Size	Primary Tool	Stress Measure
Malaysia	Cross-sectional	467	DASS-21	Depression/Anxiety/Stress subscales
Indonesia	Quantitative	154	Student-Life Stress Inventory	Academic stress score

10.1 Western Psychological Approaches to Dealing with Stress

Western methods such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) provide planned and backed strategies to lower stress and promote better mental health. Evidence and use of these therapies are present worldwide, including for Muslims and their strengths and limits change based on local cultures and beliefs.

10.1.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

In the 1960s, Dr. Aaron Beck produced CBT which is structured and intended to address specific goals. Its idea is that changing suspicious or negative thoughts can result in better control over feelings and behaviors[21]. CBT gives individuals ways to handle stress.

- Pay more attention to your emotions and your thoughts to notice what triggers your stress
- Work on turning untrue or dramatic ideas into sensible and realistic thinking
- You can relax by using deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Learn skills that help you plan your work and schedule well
- The primary way CBT is offered is with talk therapy; it is also available online.

Strengths for Muslim Individuals

- Solid evidence and an ordered structure are used. People who want simple ways to handle stress may find CBT's approach especially attractive.
- Pay attention to changing your thought patterns. Helps Muslims identify harmful thoughts that make their stress worse and shows how to change them.
- Adding presence and relaxation to your movements. Muslim prayer and reflection harmonize well with these elements which supports their fitting into culture.(Aldbyani & Al-Abyadh, 2023)[22]
- Adaptability. It is possible to integrate CBT with Islamic values which is demonstrated in Islamic Integrated CBT models.(Mohd Yusoff et al., 2021)[23]

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[21] https://www.scottlipp.com/post/cognitive-behavioral-therapy-for-stress-management
[22] Ibid
[23] Ibid

Limitations for Muslim Individuals

- Issues related to culture and religion. Certain Muslims may see mental health issues from a religious point of view which makes them hesitant to try approaches limited to psychology (alHarbi et al., 2023)[24].

- A perceived conflict with religious teaching. The chief benefit of CBT which is better control over your own thinking, can go against beliefs that look to religion for solutions, making the approach less useful for certain groups.

- Difficulty in getting access and negative public attitudes. A range of factors at each level affects Muslim access to CBT services.[25]

- There should be culturally aware changes in treatment methods. CBT may be more respectful and meaningful for clients if it considers Islamic factors.

10.1.2 Mindfulness

This form of meditation, called mindfulness, helps you stay in the moment and not judge anything, through breathing exercises, visualization and focusing on your body parts to ease stress and encourage rest. It helps people watch their thoughts and emotions without taking them too personally.

Strengths for Muslim Individuals

- Being mindful enhances spiritual acts in Islam, just as religious rituals such as prayer, remembering Allah and reflection do[26].

- This area of learning helps people regulate their emotions, show empathy and feel more compassion which are important qualities in Islam.

- Being attentive and present helps you focus better which benefits your mind and soul all through the day.

Limitations

- It is possible that some Muslims think secular mindfulness disagrees with their beliefs because it has not been discussed in Islamic terms.

- Some may feel uncomfortable if they wrongly think that mindfulness is all about

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[24] alHarbi, H., Farrand, P., & Laidlaw, K. (2023). Understanding the beliefs and attitudes towards mental health problems held by Muslim communities and acceptability of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as a treatment: systematic review and thematic synthesis. *Discover mental health*, *3*(1), 26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44192-023-00053-2

[25] Ibid

[26] Ibid

secular practice or clearing the mind.

- Must address topics using language that avoids separating students from their culture.

10.1.3 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Both CBT practices and mindfulness techniques are included in ACT and the main idea is to be flexible and accept your thoughts and feelings, instead of trying to change them. It helps people stick to actions that support their own beliefs.

Strengths

- Following the acceptance and carrying out of ACT is similar to patiently following divine will as advised by Islam.
- Striving to live with values aligns with the Islamic belief that directing life by faith gives it value.
- Being psychologically flexible helps people manage the uncertain moments that are a major part of Islam.[27]

Limitations

- The ideas in ACT can take careful explanation so that they fit the Islamic viewpoint.
- A few clients might feel that CBT's directive way of working suits them well.
- Studies applying ACT directly to Muslims are sparse.

10.1.3 Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)

DBT's original goals in borderline personality disorder centered on dealing with uncomfortable emotions by teaching individuals mindfulness, how to regulate their feelings, ways to cope with your distress and skills for interacting with others. It allows for acceptance at the same time as making changes.

Strengths

- Keeps a focus on being aware and in control of feelings which supports Islamic approaches to mindfulness.
- Learning distress tolerance skills enables Muslims to deal with tough situations safely.
- Effectiveness in dealing with others supports respectful behavior, a main Islamic value.

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[27] https://thriveworks.com/therapy/acceptance-and-commitment-therapy/

o Limitations

• Because DBT was originally created for severe mental illness, it may not seem like a good fit for stress management in everyone.

• Therapy may require too much involvement for all Muslim clients to participate.

• To make it usable and understood, culture must be incorporated.

Summary Table: Western Approaches and Their Fit for Muslim Individuals			
Approach	**Core Focus**	**Strengths for Muslims**	**Limitations for Muslims**
CBT	Cognitive restructuring, behaviour change	Structured, evidence-based; compatible with Islamic mindfulness; adaptable	Potential cultural/religious conflicts; stigma; need for integration
Mindfulness	Present-moment awareness, non-judgment	Aligns with Islamic prayer and Dhikr; enhances emotional regulation	May be seen as secular; requires cultural framing
ACT	Acceptance, psychological flexibility, values	Resonates with Islamic patience and purposeful living	Abstract concepts; limited Muslim-specific research
DBT	Emotion regulation, distress tolerance, interpersonal skills	Supports self-control, crisis management, relationships	Intensive; originally for severe disorders; cultural adaptation needed

CBT, Mindfulness, ACT and DBT are Western therapy models that, when made culturally friendly to Muslims, have proven handy techniques to manage stress. CBT helps individuals by focusing on their thoughts, allowing them to spot and change negativity which is related to the major focus on contemplation taught in Islamic traditions.

Acceptance, controlling your emotions and social skills that ACT and DBT teach are in harmony with Islamic tenets such as patience and self-control. On the other hand, some impediments stop Muslim communities from using these methods. Because of the way culture explains mental health, many individuals are shy to seek counseling. Besides, carefully adjusting these therapies to suit Muslim culture improves engagement and helps persons achieve better results.

If we use Islamic teachings with scientifically supported therapies, as in the approach called Islamic Integrated CBT, we make the therapies both more approved by people and more effective. Integrating these services helps Muslim clients handle stress using tools inspired by their religion. For example, using mindfulness exercises along with Islamic prayer and remembrance (together called salah and dhikr) strengthens the therapy experience. More studies and clinical efforts should concentrate on coming up with models that link Islamic spirituality and Western mental health science, improving mental health care for Muslims.

11.0 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY VS. ISLAMIC COUNSELING

Two approaches for helping people with mental health and stress are Western psychology and Islamic counselling which are often related even though one might not expect it. Both traditional and new approaches share some similarities and also have differences and an analysis explains how integrating both would benefit Muslim students who experience academic and social problems.

11.1 Similarities and Differences in Principles, Approaches, and Objectives

Principles	
i. Holistic vs. Secular Foundations	Islamic counselling emphasizes the need to unite all parts of a person's life: body, mind, emotions and spirit. Salvation does not separate mental health from spiritual health, as a person seeks to always do God's will and experience inner peace and what pleases God. Although western psychology now endorses holistic health, it has always been concerned with mental and emotional health using a fact-based, spiritual-free approach. Evidence from research and psychologically-focused theories (for example, CBT, psychodynamic therapy) are the main tools to guide understanding of both behavior and psychological processes.
ii. Source of Knowledge.	Islamic counsellors use the Qur'an, Hadith and teachings of Islamic experts to focus on increasing moral and spiritual values for healing and

	acting better. When building their ideas, Western psychologists use science, observation and theory, omitting religious and spiritual factors.
iii. **Individual vs. Collective Orientation.**	Western counselling tends to emphasize individual autonomy, personal growth, and self-actualization, reflecting broader Western cultural values of individualism and self-fulfilment. In contrast, Islamic counselling balances individual freedom with mutual responsibility toward society, promoting altruism, social harmony, and ethical conduct rooted in faith.
Approaches	
i. **Therapeutic Focus**	Commonly, mental health experts in the West use CBT, mindfulness and psychodynamic methods to ease symptoms and help reshape how a person behaves and thinks. The intention is to equip clients to make good personal choices and feel better mentally. It brings spiritual actions (such as dua, dhikr, tawakkul, solat) together with psychological approaches to support distress relief and inner purification, encourage submission to God and grow one's morals and faith.

ii.	**Methodology**	Standardized therapies, supported by clinical trial evidence, form a key part of Western therapy. Islamic counselling applies Islamic teachings and traditions as it combines existing knowledge with spiritual rituals.
iii.	**Counsellor Role**	Western counsellors emphasize neutrality, empathy, and client-centred approaches, encouraging self-exploration and autonomy. Islamic counsellors often embody the role of a spiritual guide and role model, demonstrating congruency with Islamic values and encouraging clients to align their lives with divine principles.
	Objectives	
i.	**Mental Health and Well-being**	Both approaches seek to improve mental health, reduce distress, and enhance functioning. However, Islamic counselling's ultimate objective extends beyond psychological well-being to spiritual fulfilment and worship of Allah, viewing mental health to achieve closeness to God. Western psychology mainly aims at symptom reduction, personal satisfaction, and social functioning, with less emphasis on spiritual or religious goals.

ii. **Prevention vs. Treatment**	Islamic counselling places strong emphasis on prevention through spiritual practices and lifestyle aligned with Islamic teachings, aiming to maintain holistic balance and prevent future problems. Western psychology often focuses on treatment of diagnosed disorders but is increasingly incorporating preventive mental health strategies.

11.2 Integration of Both Approaches: The Psychospiritual Model

Recognizing the limitations of exclusively secular or exclusively spiritual models, there is growing advocacy for an integrative psychospiritual approach that combines Western psychological science with Islamic spirituality. This model:

i. **Bridges Science and Spirituality**	It acknowledges the empirical rigor of Western therapeutic techniques (e.g., CBT, mindfulness) while embedding them within the spiritual framework of Islamic beliefs and practices, such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), dhikr (remembrance), and solat (prayer).
ii. **Addresses the Whole Person**	The psychospiritual model attends to cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and spiritual dimensions, recognizing that mental health in Muslim clients is deeply intertwined with faith, identity, and existential meaning.

iii.	Enhances Cultural Relevance and Acceptability	Rituals and values based on Islam help this model to make mental health care more appealing and less stigmatizing for Muslim people who had avoided conventional therapies because they were not acceptable in their faith.
iv.	Promotes Resilience and Coping	Spiritual practices incorporated in therapy provide clients with additional coping resources, such as reliance on divine support, gratitude (shukr), and patience (sabr), which have been shown to improve psychological resilience.
v.	Counsellor Competency	Counsellors trained in both Western psychological methods and Islamic theology can offer more nuanced, empathetic, and effective interventions tailored to Muslim clients' needs.

11.3 Potential of The Integrative Model for Muslim Students

Muslim students attending university are often troubled by things such as their studyload, how they identify, being belittled by others because of their faith and juggling their faith obligations with modern demands. The integrative psychospiritual model gives us numerous benefits.

i.	Culturally Congruent Support	It respects and incorporates students' religious beliefs and practices, making mental health support more acceptable and accessible.
ii.	Holistic Stress Management	Combines cognitive-behavioural strategies with spiritual coping techniques (e.g., dua,

		dhikr), addressing both psychological symptoms and spiritual well-being.
iii.	**Enhanced Coping Resources**	Spiritual practices foster hope, meaning, and trust in divine wisdom, which buffer against stress and promote emotional regulation.
iv.	**Reduction of Stigma**	Integrating Islamic concepts normalizes mental health struggles within a religious framework, encouraging help-seeking behaviour among students who might otherwise avoid counselling due to stigma.
v.	**Development of Balanced Identity**	Helps students reconcile religious and secular aspects of their lives, reducing internal conflicts and enhancing self-esteem.
vi.	**Prevention and Early Intervention**	Islamic preventive practices (e.g., regular prayer, gratitude) combined with psychological education promote resilience before stress escalates into clinical disorders.

11.4 Proposed Specific Intervention Strategies for Muslim Students

The framework developed for Muslim students thoughtfully uses both Western techniques and Islamic beliefs to respond well to their specific kinds of stressors. This way of working combines culture and religion with scientific methods in mental health care to nurture people's health, not just their minds.

12.0 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Empirical Validation of Integrative Models	There is an urgent need for rigorous quantitative and qualitative studies to assess the effectiveness of combined Western and Islamic counselling approaches, particularly tailored for Muslim students in diverse cultural contexts.
Longitudinal Studies on Mental Health Outcomes	Research that tracks the long-term impacts of Islamic counselling interventions is vital. Such studies can uncover sustained benefits and highlight areas that require targeted improvement.
Development of Standardized Curriculum	It is crucial to investigate best practices for training counsellors in Islamic psychology and spirituality. Establishing standardized curricula will enhance the professionalism and credibility of the field.
Technology-Enabled Counselling Efficacy	Comprehensive studies evaluating the effectiveness of online and telehealth Islamic counselling services are essential. Understanding their impact on engagement, stigma reduction, and mental health outcomes will guide future innovations in mental health care.
Exploration of Intersectional Stressors	Robust research should delve into how intersectional factors such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religious sect shape stress experiences and counselling needs among Muslim students.

	This understanding is key to providing tailored support.
Community and Family Involvement	Future studies must explore the critical role of family and community support in enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic counselling. Engaging these social networks can amplify positive outcomes for students.

13.0 CONCLUSION

Different assumptions about knowledge, therapy and mental health form the main differences between Western psychology and Islamic counselling. Western psychology values personal freedom, testing results in studies and targeting symptoms as treatments, all within an irreligious system. By contrast, Islamic counselling relies on religious, moral and community aspects inspired by religious messages. Both specialties are united by their goal to reduce human distress.

Applying both these ideas in close combination creates an approach that fits cultural customs, unifies all aspects and is effective for Muslim university students meeting various needs. By using what is known from psychology and Islamic practices, this approach helps people engage more, adapt better and feel better, looking after their mind, body and inner self. Scientific and spiritually meaningful mental health services can best help Muslim populations by making better use of integrated approaches in health and spirituality in the future.

Islamic counselling and psychology prefer a thorough way that supports spiritual and emotional health together. Because of their background in ancient Muslim studies and Sufi teaching, these methods focus on the close connection between spiritual and mental health. Confidentiality, autonomy, beneficence, multicultural sensitivity and spiritual motivation are important principles in Islamic counselling and help the therapist to understand and serve Muslim clients. Using prayer (dua), remembrance (dhikr), believing in Allah (tawakkul), gratitude (shukr), reading the Quran (tilawah) and salat helps manage stress by increasing reliance on Allah, controlling emotions, practicing mindfulness and making you stronger.(Kiran, 2024)

We have evidence that these Islamic techniques help people reduce stress and improve their mental health, providing cultural options or additions to Western psychotherapy. Thinking about the soul in addition to the symptoms, Islamic spiritualty used in counselling helps people heal more wholly. Muslim communities in the future should benefit from services built on both classics of Islamic thought and recent psychological science, ensuring both accessibility and sensitivity to their cultural background.

The passage comes from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (may God's peace be upon him). For example: *"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (Quran 13:28)*

"How amazing is the affair of the believer, for all his affairs are good... If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, and that is good for him." (Sahih Muslim)

While "stress" does not appear in Islamic books, the Quran, Hadith and earlier writings highlight mental and emotional problems like those found in psychological stress using the terms ham, huzn and khauf. In these sacred texts, patience, trust and faith help believers use pressure as an opportunity to become stronger spiritually.

Classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim suggested ways to tackle psychological distress by improving spiritual balance and suggested ways to treat mind, heart and soul together. Many current researchers confirm these claims, pointing out how Islamic ways of coping help people with stress.

Dealing with stress in Islam requires putting faith, patience, gratitude, prayer, remembering God and ethical conduct all together. This approach both lightens psychological trouble and continuously strengthens one's faith, creating a specific Islamic method for dealing with life's challenges. Islamic counsellors using methods from both frameworks help Muslim students get better and more suitable mental health care. As a result, students experience less stress, do better in classes and develop spiritually, socially and emotionally, so this method is effective for serving diverse student groups.

More research is needed to improve and back up integrative models, so that care given to Muslim populations is supported by solid research and close to their cultural roots. They will greatly improve the situation and achievements of Muslim students around the world.

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