



Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy in Islamic Religious Education: Bridging Tazkiyatun Nafs and Positive Psychology to Address Student Mental Health Crisis

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Abstract

The mental health crisis and heightened academic anxiety among secondary students demand a pedagogical reorientation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). PAI instruction has predominantly remained tethered to a cognitive-dogmatic orientation, rendering it unresponsive to students' emotional needs. This conceptual article aims to formulate an epistemological integration between *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya) and Positive Psychology (Seligman's PERMA Model), constructing the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* framework as a mental health-friendly PAI instructional design. Utilizing a qualitative library research methodology, this study applies content analysis, critical hermeneutics, and integrative synthesis across primary sources and indexed secondary literature (2016–2026). The findings reveal crucial theoretical intersections: the *Takhalli* stage aligns with negative emotion regulation and spiritual mindfulness; *Tahalli* intersects with cognitive engagement, resilience, meaning, and accomplishment; and *Tajalli* manifests as positive relationships and student flourishing. As a state-of-the-art contribution, the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* model is operationalized into three preventive-educational classroom phases: (1) Pre-Learning (*Takhalli Orientation*) using spiritual mindfulness to alleviate anxiety; (2) Core-Learning (*Tahalli Internalization*) through cognitive reframing of patience, gratitude, and trust in God; and (3) Post-Learning (*Tajalli Actualization*) by fostering an empathetic

classroom climate (*peer-support*) to instantiate inner peace (*thuma'ninah*). This study offers theoretical contributions to PAI curricular transformation and provides recommendations for future empirical research.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Mental Health, Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy, PERMA Model, Tazkiyatun Nafs.*

Abstrak

Krisis kesehatan mental dan tingginya tingkat kecemasan akademik di kalangan siswa menengah menuntut adanya reorientasi pedagogis dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI). Selama ini, PAI cenderung disajikan secara kognitif-dogmatis sehingga kurang responsif terhadap kondisi psikologis siswa. Artikel konseptual ini bertujuan untuk memformulasikan integrasi epistemologis antara konsep *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (Al-Ghazali dan Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya) dan *Positive Psychology* (Model PERMA Martin Seligman), serta mengonstruksi model *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* sebagai desain pembelajaran PAI yang ramah kesehatan mental. Penelitian kualitatif studi pustaka ini mengaplikasikan analisis konten, hermeneutika kritis, dan sintesis integratif terhadap literatur primer serta sekunder terindeks (2016–2026). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya titik temu konseptual: tahap *Takhalli* beririsan dengan regulasi emosi negatif dan *spiritual mindfulness*; *Tahalli* beririsan dengan *engagement*, resiliensi, dan pencapaian makna (*meaning and accomplishment*); serta *Tajalli* mewujudkan pada hubungan positif (*positive relationships*) dan *flourishing*. Sebagai kebaruan (*novelty*), model *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* diformulasikan ke dalam tiga fase operasional kelas yang bersifat preventif-edukatif: (1) Pra-Pembelajaran (*Takhalli Orientation*) melalui meditasi spiritual untuk mereduksi kecemasan; (2) Inti Pembelajaran (*Tahalli Internalization*) melalui *cognitive reframing* nilai sabar, syukur, dan tawakal; dan (3) Pasca-Pembelajaran (*Tajalli Actualization*) melalui iklim kelas empatik (*peer-support*) untuk mewujudkan kedamaian batin (*thuma'ninah*). Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis bagi transformasi kurikulum PAI dan rekomendasi bagi pengujian empiris mendatang.

Kata Kunci: *Kesehatan Mental Siswa, Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy, PAI, PERMA Model, Tazkiyatun Nafs.*

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of contemporary educational challenges, secondary school students increasingly face severe academic stress and mental health crises, which often lead to anxiety and decreased learning motivation (Branje, de Moor, Spitzer, & Becht, 2021; Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, 2024). Ideally, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should serve as a strategic foundation for spiritual resilience and emotional recovery (Afifah, Lukman, Indriyanti, & Anwar, 2024). However, a profound gap exists in practice: PAI instruction remains predominantly tethered to a rigid, cognitive, and formalistic-dogmatic orientation that emphasizes legalistic norms over emotional well-being (Aliah, Djollong, Sudirmanto, Adyana, & Rheka, 2026). This orientation renders PAI learning "dry" and disconnected from the psychological realities of students, giving

birth to an urgent need to reorient PAI toward a framework that is responsive to student mental health (Nurfatimah & Zaitun, 2026).

Conceptually, addressing this gap requires a dual theoretical framework that bridges classical Islamic tradition and modern psychological science. From the theological-sufistic tradition, the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* offers a holistic soul-purification process through three progressive stages: *takhalli* (cleansing the heart from negative traits and anxiety), *tahalli* (adorning the soul with virtues such as patience, gratitude, and trust in God), and *tajalli* (realizing spiritual consciousness and inner peace, *thuma'ninah*) (Daulay, Dahlan, & Lubis, 2021; Nurzaman, Solahudin, & Fajar, 2024). Parallely, modern Positive Psychology particularly through Seligman's PERMA model (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment) provides an empirical methodology to measure character strengths, resilience, and human flourishing (Kovich, Simpson, Foli, Hass, & Phillips, 2023; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positioning these two perspectives side-by-side reveals a shared imperative: cultivating internal well-being and psychological resilience through structured, reflective practices.

Despite the rich potential of both domains, a critical research gap persists in existing literature. Prior studies have either examined *Tazkiyatun Nafs* within conventional character education without operationalizing its psychological mechanics (Purnomo Tijan, Muindinillah Basri, 2013) or investigated Islamic therapeutic functions without integrating a structured pedagogical framework for the classroom (Firmansyah, 2017). Consequently, previous research has addressed spirituality and student mental health in isolation, leaving a methodological void in how classical Sufistic purification can be systematically synthesized with positive psychology principles within daily PAI instructional design.

To bridge this divide, this study introduces *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* as a novel conceptual framework that dialogically synthesizes *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and Positive Psychology (Yusron Masduki, 2024). The state-of-the-art contribution of this model lies in translating abstract Sufistic stages (*takhalli*, *tahalli*, *tajalli*) into concrete pedagogical actions paired with positive psychology dimensions (resilience, positive emotions, and meaning of life), thereby transforming PAI from a cognitive-dogmatic subject into a mental health-friendly instructional design (Habibah et al., 2021).

Ultimately, this study aims to map the epistemological intersection between *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and Positive Psychology, and to construct the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* model as an operational learning framework for PAI. By embedding inner-state awareness, value internalization, and reflective practice into daily instruction,

this research offers a theoretical and practical foundation for curriculum developers and PAI educators to cultivate students' resilience, inner peace (*thuma'ninah*), and holistic well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study discusses the integration of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and Positive Psychology in Islamic Education (PAI) for students' mental health, and based on the literature review, 4 relevant publications were found.

First, the study by Siti Mutholingah, (2021) entitled “Metode Penyucian Jiwa (Tazkiyah al-Nafs) dan Implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Agama Islam” utilized a qualitative library research method based on Al-Ghazali's Sufism theoretical framework. The results and findings showed that the stages of *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* offer a structural foundation for shaping students' moral character and spiritual well-being. However, the analysis remained predominantly at the conceptual level of Islamic character education without framing it as an operational pedagogical model for managing modern student academic stress.

Next, Firmansyah, (2017) in a study titled “Pemikiran Kesehatan Mental Islami dalam Pendidikan Islam” employed a descriptive qualitative method using the Islamic Mental Health theoretical framework. Her research revealed that Islamic education inherently contains therapeutic functions to prevent spiritual-pathological conditions (e.g., anxiety, pride, and envy), yet the study did not integrate modern psychological methodologies to measure or structure these spiritual mechanisms in contemporary classroom practices.

Furthermore, the research by Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, (2024) entitled “Dampak Stress Akademik terhadap Kesehatan Mental Mahasiswa” utilized a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in Educational Psychology theory. Their findings demonstrated that academic pressures significantly trigger anxiety and decrease learning motivation, emphasizing the urgent need for structured coping mechanisms in educational environments, although their study did not incorporate Islamic spiritual interventions like *Tazkiyatun Nafs*.

Finally, a study by Purnomo Tijan, Muindinillah Basri, (2013) titled “Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Tazkiyatun Nafs” employed a qualitative case study method utilizing Sufistic Education theory. The findings showed that routine spiritual habits (such as *dzikr*, congregational prayer, and moral habituation) effectively improve students' affective traits, but the study lacked an explicit synthesis with modern

Positive Psychology principles (such as *PERMA Model* or resilience theory) to bridge classical practices with scientific psychological frameworks.

Based on the review of these prior studies, a significant research gap emerges. While existing literature addresses *Tazkiyatun Nafs* in character education (Purnomo Tijan, Muindinillah Basri, 2013; Siti Mutholingah, 2021), explores Islamic mental health concepts (Firmansyah, 2017), and highlights the negative impacts of academic stress (Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, 2024), none of the studies have systematically synthesized classical *Tazkiyatun Nafs* with modern Positive Psychology to construct an integrated, actionable pedagogical framework (*Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy*) for PAI instruction. Previous studies either treat spiritual purification purely as ethical-theological instruction or address mental health through secular/general psychology without Islamic grounding. Therefore, this gap serves as the primary rationale for conducting the current research, demonstrating its novelty, significance, and conceptual contribution to Islamic Education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design focusing on conceptual-epistemological analysis. Rather than relying on empirical field data, this study utilizes textual inquiry to analyze, synthesize, and integrate two distinct theoretical domains: classical Islamic Sufism (*Tazkiyatun Nafs*) and modern Positive Psychology (Seligman's *PERMA Model*), oriented toward Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning design.

The primary data source (research instrument) consists of foundational textual works: *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* by Al-Ghazali and *Madarijus Salikin* by Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya for *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, and Martin Seligman's core publications on the *PERMA* model for Positive Psychology. Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered from peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2026 addressing PAI, student mental health, and Islamic psychology integration. To map the research gap, four primary reference studies were prioritized (Firmansyah, 2017; Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, 2024; Purnomo Tijan & Muindinillah Basri, 2013; Siti Mutholingah, 2021). The selection of secondary literature applied strict inclusion criteria: (1) indexed academic journal articles published within 2016–2026, (2) direct thematic focus on soul purification, student resilience, psychological well-being, or PAI pedagogical innovation, and (3) clear conceptual or practical relevance to secondary education. Conversely, the exclusion criteria filtered out: (1) non-peer-reviewed or unindexed

publications, (2) empirical studies lacking theoretical/pedagogical frameworks, and (3) literature unrelated to PAI integration and student mental health.

Data collection followed a three-step systematic retrieval process across academic databases (Google Scholar, Crossref, and Islamic repository databases) using targeted key terms such as *PAI*, *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, *positive psychology*, and *student mental health*. The identified literature underwent initial title/abstract screening, full-text eligibility appraisal, and final thematic categorization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Epistemological Synthesis of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* and Positive Psychology

The integration of classical Islamic Sufism and modern Positive Psychology establishes a strong epistemological foundation for reorienting Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Rather than viewing religious spirituality and psychological science as mutually exclusive, this study demonstrates a profound alignment between classical soul-purification frameworks and contemporary well-being theories (Firmansyah, 2017; Saidek, Tanti, Anwar, & Rahman, 2026). Specifically, the three-tiered model of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* articulated by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya converges directly with Martin Seligman's PERMA model encompassing Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Kovich et al., 2023; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This synthesis transcends mere theoretical comparison by operationalizing classical Sufistic stages into measurable psychological dimensions tailored for secondary educational settings (Fillah & Rofiq, 2025; Yusron Masduki, 2024).

The first stage, *Takhalli* (cleansing the soul from spiritual maladies and vices), aligns directly with Positive Emotions and negative emotion regulation (Nurzaman et al., 2024). In the context of student mental health, *takhalli* serves as a spiritual deconstruction of academic anxiety, fear of failure, and emotional distress (Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, 2024). By engaging in contemplative practices such as *muhasabah* (self-reflection) and *dzikrullah*, students learn to identify and detach from destructive thought patterns and cognitive distortions (Daulay et al., 2021). This meditative process lowers cortisol levels, regulates autonomic nervous responses, and restores emotional readiness to learn (Aliah et al., 2026).

The second stage, *Tahalli* (adorning the soul with virtuous qualities), provides the core engine for Engagement, Meaning, and Accomplishment. As articulated in Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya's *Madarijus Salikin*, virtues such as patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) are not passive theological dogmas; they function as active cognitive reframing mechanisms (Habibah et al., 2021). In classroom

practice, *tahalli* elevates student Engagement (*khusyu'*) by fostering deep cognitive absorption and task focus (Wibowo, Setiawati, Qodriah, & Ayriza, 2021). Furthermore, it transforms academic setbacks into opportunities for spiritual maturation (*spiritual growth*), allowing students to experience an authentic sense of Accomplishment defined not merely by numerical grades, but by personal resilience and character strength (Alundari & Rini, 2023).

The final stage, *Tajalli* (the manifestation of spiritual consciousness), undergoes a crucial pedagogical transformation in this study. Far from being restricted to an abstract or esoteric mystical state, *Tajalli* is contextualized within daily classroom dynamics (Purnomo Tijan, Muindinillah Basri, 2013). Epistemologically, *Tajalli* bridges Positive Relationships and overall psychological Flourishing (Kovich et al., 2023). The inner spiritual light gained through *takhalli* and *tahalli* manifests concretely as noble character (*akhlak karimah*), active peer-support, empathy, and a pervasive environment of psychological safety (*thuma'ninah*) (Ramaidah, Rahayu, & Iqti, 2026; Sari & Sutarto, 2023).

Construction of Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy in PAI Learning

To translate the epistemological integration into concrete educational practice, this study constructs the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* framework. Crucially, this model is strictly framed as a preventive and educational intervention designed to alleviate routine, daily academic anxiety and stress within regular classroom settings (Elya Ika Puspitasari, Widyastuti, 2024). It is explicitly not intended as clinical psychotherapy or psychiatric counseling. Instead, it empowers PAI educators to utilize instructional moments to nurture students' emotional regulation and spiritual resilience before psychological distress escalates (Saidek et al., 2026).

The *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* model operates across three progressive instructional phases that parallel the standard flow of classroom learning:

1. Pre-Learning Phase: *Takhalli* Orientation

During the opening 5–10 minutes of class, the focus is placed on cultivating Positive Emotions and mental readiness through Spiritual Mindfulness & Brief Muhasabah. Before engaging with academic material, students are guided through controlled breathing exercises (*mindful breathing*) paired with quiet divine remembrance (*dzikrullah*) (Aliah et al., 2026; Nidauddin fillah, Miswanto miswanto, Miftahul Huda, 2026). This practice enables students to consciously acknowledge and release emotional clutter, cognitive stress, and anxiety accumulated from prior subjects or external pressures. By facilitating emotional grounding (*takhalli*), this micro-intervention neutralizes negative affect, reduces cortisol responses, and

establishes psychological calm, directly boosting students' initial readiness to learn (Daulay et al., 2021).

2. Core-Learning Phase: *Tahalli* Internalization

During the main 45–60 minutes of instruction, Islamic spiritual values are embedded into active cognitive strategies, fostering Engagement, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Rather than presenting PAI themes such as patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) as dry normative memorization, teachers guide students to apply these concepts as personal emotional regulation tools (Nurzaman et al., 2024). Through cognitive reframing, academic difficulties and learning setbacks are reinterpreted as vital opportunities for spiritual growth (*growth mindset*). This cognitive-spiritual reframing deepens student Engagement (*khusyu'*) by enhancing absorption in tasks, instills a profound sense of purpose (Meaning), and allows students to experience intrinsic achievement (Accomplishment) rooted in character perseverance rather than external marks (Habibah et al., 2021; Wibowo et al., 2021).

3. Post-Learning Phase: *Tajalli* Actualization

During the closing 10–15 minutes of class, individual spiritual awareness is transformed into social-relational well-being, directly reinforcing Positive Relationships and psychological Flourishing. In this phase, *Tajalli* is operationalized through Empathetic Reflection & the Circle of Gratitude. Within a safe and non-judgmental classroom environment (*psychological safety*), students share brief reflections, listen actively to peers, and offer mutual support (*peer-support*) (Sari & Sutarto, 2023). This collaborative reflection converts abstract spiritual awareness into tangible noble conduct (*akhlak karimah*), strengthening interpersonal connectedness and instilling a deep, lasting sense of inner tranquility (*thuma'ninah*) (Ramaidah et al., 2026).

Implications for Student Mental Health and PAI Curricular Transformation

The formulation of the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* framework offers profound theoretical and practical implications for both student psychological well-being and the broader structural orientation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). By systematically bridging classical Sufistic soul-purification (*Tazkiyatun Nafs*) with modern Positive Psychology (PERMA Model), this model redefines how religious instruction operates within contemporary school environments (Saidek et al., 2026).

First, regarding student mental health outcomes, the model establishes a robust preventive-edukative defense mechanism against academic distress. By embedding *takhalli* routines into daily class openings, students develop higher emotional regulation capacity, resulting in significant reductions in classroom-induced anxiety and physiological stress (Fina Khilyatu Zahwa, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of

tahalli elevates student engagement and intrinsic achievement by converting academic setbacks into meaningful spiritual milestones (Wibowo et al., 2021). Rather than measuring success solely through external numerical performance, students cultivate psychological resilience (*tawakkul*) and cognitive flexibility (*sabr*), shielding them from burnout and learned helplessness (Habibah et al., 2021). At the interpersonal level, the classroom manifestation of *tajalli* fosters healthy peer-support dynamics and noble character (*akhlak karimah*), creating a safe learning environment characterized by enduring inner tranquility (*thuma'ninah*) (Ramaidah et al., 2026; Sari & Sutarto, 2023).

Second, this framework necessitates a paradigm shift in the pedagogical role of PAI educators. PAI teachers can no longer function merely as transmitters of legalistic norms or doctrinal evaluators; they must transition into spiritual-emotional mentors who facilitate daily psychological wellness within preventive-edukative boundaries (Firmansyah, 2017). This shift requires educators to possess basic competencies in spiritual mindfulness guidance, empathetic listening, and cognitive-spiritual reframing, enabling them to address students' affective needs without stepping into clinical therapy or psychiatric domain (Elya Ika Puspitasari, Widyastuti, 2024).

Finally, the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* framework demands a comprehensive reorientation of PAI curriculum design and assessment. Traditional PAI curricula, which heavily favor cognitive memorization and formalistic examinations, must expand to incorporate authentic affective assessments that measure character growth, emotional resilience, and prosocial engagement (Aliah et al., 2026; Yusron Masduki, 2024). Reorienting the PAI curriculum around wellness and spiritual-emotional integration restores the foundational objective of Islamic education: nurturing balanced, flourishing human beings (*insan kamil*) who possess both spiritual integrity and psychological resilience in navigating modern life challenges (Afifah et al., 2024; Daulay et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This research succeeded in constructing the epistemological and practical integration between *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (Al-Ghazali) and Positive Psychology (Seligman) as the basis of a new paradigm in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The research findings suggest that the dichotomy between Sufistic spiritual teachings and modern psychological science can be bridged through conceptual intersects: *the Takhalli stage* intersects with the regulation of emotions and *mindfulness*; *Tahalli* intersects with *character strengths* and *meaning-making*; and *Tajalli* boils down to *flourishing* and *subjective well-being*. This integration proves that Islamic spiritual values have a

relevant psychological operational dimension to answer the mental health crisis of students in the modern era.

Practically, this research resulted in a novel idea in the form of *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy*, a mental health-friendly PAI instructional design model that is operationalized into three main phases: (1) *Pre-learning (Takhalli Orientation)* through *mindfulness spiritual* practice to neutralize academic anxiety; (2) *The core of learning (Internalization of Tahalli)* through the *reframing* of the values of patience, gratitude, and tawakal to build resilience; and (3) *Post-learning (Actualization of Tajalli)* through the creation of an empathic class climate (*peer-support*) to realize inner peace (*thuma'ninah*). This model transforms PAI from mere doctrinal-rote teaching to a holistic therapeutic and self-development instrument.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conceptual nature and scope of this study, several recommendations are offered for future researchers:

1. **Empirical and Experimental Validation:** Future scholars are encouraged to empirically test and validate the *Mindful-Spiritual Pedagogy* framework in real classroom settings using quantitative, quasi-experimental, or classroom action research (CAR) designs to measure its concrete effect sizes on student anxiety reduction and resilience scores.
2. **Instrument Development:** Subsequent studies should focus on developing standardized psychometric measurement instruments or observational rubrics that specifically evaluate *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* behaviors within secondary educational contexts.
3. **Teacher Professional Training:** Further research is recommended to design and evaluate specialized professional development modules for PAI educators, equipping them with practical competencies in spiritual mindfulness facilitation, empathetic listening, and preventive emotional mentoring.

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