

Healing the Heart and Mind: Modern Relevance of Sufi to Psychological and Mental Health

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Abstract: The global rates of mental conditions such as anxiety, stress, and depression are on the rise. Contemporary treatment is effective, though it usually does not acknowledge spiritual needs. This paper examines the way Sufi doctrine can help in a psychological healing process. It is to create a practical model of Sufi-inspired psychotherapy of mental well-being. The research question is as follows: How can traditional Sufi knowledge be utilized in the current psychological care? The gap in research is that there are no formal models that relate Sufi ideas to therapy. The majority of the studies address Sufism in a historic or broad manner, without developing a practical model of clinical use. This paper will fill that gap. This study employs qualitative research reviewing Sufi literature and modern mental-health studies. The results indicate Sufi exercises such as dhikr (remembrance), muraqabah (meditation), suhbah (companionship), and tawakkul (trust in God) lessen the stress and enhance resiliency. Sufi psychology holds that the self is classified into stages: nafs ammarah (commanding self), lawwamah (self-blaming self), and mutmainnah (peaceful self). These phases conform to the contemporary treatment processes: awareness, responsibility, and stability of emotions. Classical Sufi wisdom is related to cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness with the spiritual dimension. The discussion is based on a model therapy consisting of six steps: self-awareness, self-accountability, inner purification, spiritual companionship, trust in God, and the achievement of tranquility. This model combines ethical reform and spiritual exercises with psychological methods. The conclusion is that Sufism presents a whole body and soul healing. Integrating it with contemporary psychology could give culturally sensitive and spiritually rich therapy. This practice fosters peace, sense, and strength in the modern stressful society.

Keywords: Sufism, mental health, psychotherapy, spiritual healing, Islamic psychology.

A. Introduction

One of the largest issues of the contemporary world is mental health. Societies have now become common features of stress, anxiety, and depression. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly one out of every eight individuals is affected by a mental health condition, and most of them are not adequately attended to or supported. Modern treatments, including counseling and

medication, are helpful to a considerable number of patients.¹ However, they are not always sensitive to the spiritual and inner level of human healing. This puts a distance between the contemporary methods and the deeper interests of human beings. According to a number of psychologists, human beings are not bodies and minds but souls. By dismissing the soul, one is not completely healed. According to Rothschild, the body retains trauma and stress, which have significant impacts on the well-being of a person.² However, the process of healing emotions and spirit may involve more than therapy based on the body or speech. This is where spirituality can bring on a different dimension.

Theorists such as Koenig demonstrate that religion and spirituality take a central stage in enhancing mental health.³ Those who pray, meditate, or even associate with a higher entity are more resilient and capable of coping. Suffering is provided with meaning through religion and spirituality, and hope is promoted. The Sufism tradition has centuries of experience as a source of psychological and spiritual healing for Muslims. The mystical aspect of Islam, Sufism, is all about purifying the heart and controlling the ego and drawing closer to God. Not only are these teachings of religious value, but there is also a psychological depth to them. The works of the classical Sufi personalities reveal that the writers have a profound knowledge of human feelings, suffering, and recovery. Their contributions can be taken as a good reference in solving the current mental crisis.

As an example, in her book *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Annemarie Schimmel demonstrates the way Sufism invented the techniques of changing human character and emotions.⁴ She elaborates on how other ideas, such as love, trust, surrender, and remembering Allah, have been the focus of healing the soul. The concepts can be used by people experiencing inner emptiness or anxiety even nowadays. Imam al-Ghazali is one of the most significant personalities. He offers elaborate instructions on how to purify the heart, defeat pride, anger, and envy, and construct inner harmony by praying and remembering in his *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences).⁵ His works indicate a close relation between inner illnesses and behavior outside. To al-Ghazali, the body, mind, and soul bring about healing. His method may be regarded as a precursor of spiritual psychotherapy. Jalal al-Din Rumi is another great Sufi, and his poems have reached millions of people worldwide. We also

¹ “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240049338>.

² Babette Rothschild, *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*, with Internet Archive (New York: Norton, 2000), <http://archive.org/details/bodyrememberspsy0000roth>.

³ Harold G. Koenig, “Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The Research and Clinical Implications,” *International Scholarly Research Notices* 2012, no. 1 (2012): 278730, <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>.

⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (n.d.), accessed August 21, 2025, http://archive.org/details/mysticaldimensionsofislam_201912.

⁵ *Al-Ghazālī. The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn). Translated by W. McKane. 1997., n.d.*

see in books like *The Essential Rumi* numerous allusions to the idea of love as a healing power.⁶ Light enters the place of the wound, in the case of Rumi. His vision indicates that suffering in a human being can be changed into development when it is linked to divine love. This is capable of inspiring new forms of therapy involving the use of poetry, storytelling, and spirituality as a therapeutic resource. Also, Abu al-Qushayri in his *Risalah al-Qushayriyah* described the stages and stops of the spiritual path.⁷ He explained real-life measures like being repentant, patient, thankful, and trusting in God. Not only are these religious obligations, but psychological exercises as well. As an illustration, patience may assist people to withstand stress, whereas gratitude raises positive emotions. These phases may serve as early precursors of a mental well-being to be informed.

Another input is by Ibn Arabi, who was among the most outstanding Sufi philosophers. Ibn Arabi, in the Sufi path of knowledge translated by William Chittick, elaborates on how self-knowledge facilitates knowing God.⁸ By the knowledge of the self, he believes that an individual will unravel fear, desire, and strengths that one had not noticed before. To him, the healing process occurs when the person understands that he/she is connected to the Divine. His concept of imagination, inner consciousness, and heart change is very useful in psychological development. According to them, the therapy must assist people to rise above their egos and find a higher spiritual self. Combined, these classical Sufi teachings indicate that psychological healing is a process of the heart and soul. They stress that health cannot exist without being considered and linked with spirituality. This has great implications for the modern-day world. One of the possible models of Sufi psychotherapy developed in modern times would employ indicators such as repentance, patience, gratitude, love, remembrance of God, and self-knowledge. Such indicators may be used to supplement modern therapy and provide a more holistic approach. Despite contemporary psychology acknowledging the role of spirituality, little research exists that links classical Sufi psychology with psychotherapy. To a large extent, the current literature either is general on religion and health or introduces Sufism in a purely historical context. The lacking element is a practical methodology that would convert the wisdom of the ancient Sufis into some practical steps to be applied in mental health care in the modern world. The paper will determine the ways classical Sufi teachings and personalities can help in psychological healing.

⁶ “Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn. *The Essential Rumi*. Translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne. 1995.” accessed August 21, 2025, https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/304079.The_Essential_Rumi.

⁷ Abd al-Karim ibn Hawazin Qushayri and Zakariya ibn Muhammad Ansari, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyah fi ilm al-tasawwuf*, with Robarts - University of Toronto ([al-Qahirah]: Dar al-Tibaah al-Amirah, 1287), <http://archive.org/details/alrisalahalqusha00qushuoft>.

⁸ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge : Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, with Internet Archive (Albany, N.Y. : State University of New York Press, 1989), <http://archive.org/details/sufipathofknowle0000chit>.

It also aims at determining certain subtle signs that could act as a guide to modern Sufi psychotherapy. By doing so, the research hopes to fill the gap between classical spirituality and modern science.

B. Literature Review

Contemporary treatment approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) have been effective in the treatment of anxiety and depression. Angie Cucchi (2022) states that CBT ignores the spiritual aspects in many cases, as it is centered on secular Western traditions, which distinguish mind and soul, and Islamic thinking regards them as inseparable.⁹ They also observe that the conceptualization of the psyche provided by Al-Ghazali (aql (intellect), qalb (heart), nafs (self), and ruh (spirit)) is more detailed and more integrated in that it is much closer to cognitive restructuring. As an example, the heart (qalb) controls emotions and moral balance, similar to a soul-governor which controls rational thought (ibid.). Based on it, Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle (2018) introduced an Islamic model of the soul that traces the progression of nafs al-ammarah (commanding self) to nafs al-lawwamah (self-reproaching self) and nafs al-Mutmainnah (tranquil self).¹⁰ This three-stage course is a mirror of the process of therapy: the discovery of destructive impulses, the internal guilt, and the final set of inner peace. They have a model that focuses on the heart as the centre of change in their therapeutic intervention rather than the intellect. Kamila and Tasaufi (2023) researched the concept of muraqaba as a Sufi meditative technique and offered its possible application as an Islamic analogue to mindfulness. Based on their literature review, it is apparent that muraqaba develops strong self-awareness and emotional regulation that allow users to overcome addictive behavior by determining the mental triggers and developing self-reflection.¹¹ The given practice corresponds to the processes of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) with the introduction of spirituality based on the awareness of God. Additional real-life examples are a case study of Pesantren Tetirah Dhikr (PTD) in Indonesia, where the main therapeutic activity of Sufi-based rehabilitation is dhikr. Researchers discovered that the structured sessions of Sufi purification-takhalli (cleansing), tahalli (illumination), and tajalli (manifestation), which follow the steps of transpersonal therapy, were psychologically

⁹ Angie Cucchi, "Integrating Cognitive Behavioural and Islamic Principles in Psychology and Psychotherapy: A Narrative Review," *Journal of Religion and Health* 61, no. 6 (2022): 4849–70, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01576-8>.

¹⁰ Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, "Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1731–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-x>.

¹¹ Adinda Tasya Kamila and Muhammad Novvaliant Filsuf Tasaufi, "MURAQABA AS A MINDFULNESS – BASED THERAPY IN ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY TO OVERCOME PORN ADDICTION," *Psikoislamedia: Jurnal Psikologi* 8, no. 2 (2023): 195–209, <https://doi.org/10.22373/psikoislamedia.v8i2.20208>.

relieving to the participants.¹² This is empirically supported by the fact that Sufi practices can also be used to facilitate a healing process similar to the psychotherapy models.

There is another study that examined prevalent Sufi activities (Qurani recitation, prayer, pious association, fasting, and dhikr) and discovered that the mentioned ones can alleviate anxiety and depression and increase resilience and happiness.¹³ D'Souze and Rodrigo (2004) proposed a hybrid model of introducing Sufi virtues such as sabr (patience), tawakkul (trust in God), and rida (contentment), dhikr, and shukr (gratitude) into therapy as the so-called spiritually augmented CBT.¹⁴ Their initial clinical outcomes depict less relapse and rehospitalization in spiritually informed CBT programs. However, they find that this CBT enhanced by Sufi is not that common in practice. All these works indicate that the spiritual aspects, in particular, those expressed in Sufi psychology, augment the contemporary methods of treatment. Islamic and Sufi models deal with the subject of the human mind, which secular CBT tends to overlook. They acknowledge that the process of healing goes beyond the way we think, but rather the process of cleaning the heart and resonating with spiritual values. Even though encouraging, there are still gaps: a one-dimensional approach to treatment with classical Sufi ideas, such as the stages of the nafs, or the formulation of Sufi practices in treatment guides, is still lacking. To achieve efficacy and structure, controlled trials have yet to be conducted. The article by Mulyati and Nihayah (2020) on the topic of Sufi healing in Indonesia and Malaysia describes how Qadiriyya-Naqshbandiyya orders apply spiritual healing to rehabilitate. Practices such as dhikr, Quranic recital, and ritual forms are found to foster emotional calmness and ease in the community and have psychotherapeutic usefulness in culturally congruent contexts.¹⁵ The article by Moulaei et al. (2023) used a scoping review to examine the impact of recitation and listening to the Quran on anxiety, stress, and depression. Their results show significant decreases in those symptoms with repeated exposure to spiritual auditory, which makes it possible to view Quranic engagement as a sound therapy.¹⁶

¹² M. A. Subandi et al., "Psychotherapeutic Dimensions of an Islamic-Sufi-Based Rehabilitation Center: A Case Study," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 46, no. 2 (2022): 582–601, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-021-09738-1>.

¹³ Vivia Zahira Afiani and Muhammad Ruhiyat Haririe, "Sufism and Mental Health: Application of Sufism Principles in Mental Well-Being," *JOUSIP: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 4, no. 1 (2024): 103–18, <https://doi.org/10.28918/jousip.v4i1.8716>.

¹⁴ Russell F. D'Souza and Angelo Rodrigo, "Spiritually Augmented Cognitive Behavioural Therapy," *Australasian Psychiatry: Bulletin of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists* 12, no. 2 (2004): 148–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/j.1039-8562.2004.02095.x>.

¹⁵ Sri Mulyati and Zahrotun Nihayah, "Sufi Healing in Indonesia and Malaysia: An Updated Study of Rehabilitation Methods Practiced by Qadiriyya Naqshbandiyya Sufi Order," *ESOTERIK: JURNAL AKHLAK DAN TASAWUF* 6, no. 1 (2020): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.21043/esoterik.v6i1.7085>.

¹⁶ "The Effect of the Holy Quran Recitation and Listening on Anxiety, Stress, and Depression: A Scoping Review on Outcomes - Moulaei - 2023 - Health Science Reports - Wiley Online Library," accessed August 21, 2025, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hsr2.1751>.

Trimulyaningsih (2017) conducted a qualitative metasynthesis of the research on Islamic psychotherapy in Indonesia. She determined that there were three major variants of psychotherapy practices, namely Sufism, worship-based therapy, and religious guidance, which are all based on the enhancement of mental health through multi-faceted therapeutic possibilities that exist between the Sufi and devotional modalities.¹⁷ Afiani and Haririe (2024) explored how the Sufi principles, such as reciting the Quran, praying, fasting, dhikr, and being associated with the pious, can be utilized in mental health promotion. The research established that the practices are effective in reducing stress and anxiety and enhancing resilience and positive affect, and their incorporation in mental health counseling modalities is encouraged. Sulaiman (2019) created a model of Islamically Integrated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy based on the 5-step process of purification by al-Ghazali. They also describe systematic sessions in line with phases like self-awareness, heart purification, spiritual development, self-assessment, and transcendental happiness, and they illustrate an actual treatment model based on the Sufi doctrine.¹⁸

The literature proposes a way ahead, creating a therapeutic model using Sufi indicators (e.g., muraqaba, stages of purification, such virtues as sabr, tawakkul, and shukr) on top of the current psychological approaches. Clinician training of such practices and empirical validation might yield an effective, culturally significant, and spiritually enhanced model of mental care. It is in this gap that your research proposes to play a role in providing an evidence-based, structured Sufi psychotherapy model, grounded on the cleansing of the soul journey.

C. Methodology

The approach of the research is a qualitative descriptive-analytic research based on a systematic review of the classical literature of Sufism and the contemporary scholarly studies of mental health and psychotherapy. The objective is to learn how Sufi can help in promoting psychological well-being in contemporary society and its relationship with contemporary therapeutic practices. Two categories of sources were involved in the data collection process, including primary classical sources, such as al-Ghazali's *Ihya*, al-Qushayri al-Risalah, Rumi's poetry, and Ibn, and secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed articles, empirical studies, and case studies of Sufi-based

¹⁷ Nita Trimulyaningsih, "Qualitative Research on Islamic Psychotherapy: A Metasynthesis Study in Indonesia," *COUNS-EDU: The International Journal of Counseling and Education* 2, no. 3 (2017): 119–30, <https://doi.org/10.23916/002017025630>.

¹⁸ Ahmad Hatim Sulaiman, "Islamic Integrated Cognitive Behavior Therapy: A Shari'ah-Compliant Intervention for Muslims with Depression," *The Malaysian Journal of Psychiatry*, January 1, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/94590882/Islamic_Integrated_Cognitive_Behavior_Therapy_A_Shari_ah_Compliant_Intervention_for_Muslims_with_Depression.

rehabilitation centers, and studies on religion-adapted psychotherapy. Using keywords such as Sufism and mental health, materials were searched on such platforms as Google Scholar, PubMed/PMC, Research Gate, and university repositories. Only scholarly and relevant sources were used, and no non-scholarly and unverified material was used. The literature gathered was examined with the help of thematic reading to find the key themes and correlate them with psychological processes like emotional regulation, behavioral improvement, resilience and inner peace. The study lacks the creation of new clinical data, but the theoretical basis of the developments in applying the Sufi principles to the mental-health support is strong.

D. Sufi Idea of the Human Self (Nafs)

According to Sufism, the human self is defined as a stratified reality. It isn't just one thing. The self or nafs is subject to three spiritual levels.¹⁹ The soul passes through each stage, exhibiting a different state. They are nafs al-ammarah, nafs al-lawwamah, and nafs al-Mutmainnah.²⁰ The first level is nafs al-ammarah, which is the commanding self. It drives an individual into desires. An individual in this state is guided by impulses, and he or she does not observe moral guidance. The stage is associated with such psychological problems as addiction, anger, and impulsiveness.²¹

The second is nafs al-lawwamah, or the self of blame. In this case, the individual gets to know himself. They are remorseful of bad actions. This regret is painful. Nevertheless, it initiates the healing mechanism. The practice of Sufism urges one to use this pain to further moral transformation.²² The last level is nafs al-mutmainnah or tranquil self. It is at peace even in distress. The individual embraces what comes with God. Their reaction is peaceful and confident. This emotional strength is termed modern psychology.²³ The Sufi psychology also has three inner faculties: the heart (qalb), the spirit (ruh), and the intellect (aql). Spiritual awareness is located in the center of the qalb. With it uncontaminated, an individual has a clear view of the truth. When crippled is it, it deadens the heart.²⁴

¹⁹ Al-Ghazālī. *The Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)*. Translated by W. McKane. 1997.

²⁰ G. Hussein Rassool and Zuleyha Keskin, "Positioning the Self (Nafs) in Islāmic Psycho-Spirituality," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 27, no. 1 (2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2023.2264848>.

²¹ Abdul Rahman, "Human Self Structure in Islamic Psychology: Human Self Structure in Islamic Psychology," *IJIP: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Psychology* 7, no. 1 (2025): 61–78.

²² Muhammad Jusuf Nur Ikhsan and Mohammad Fuyudun Niam Imam, "Between the Sword and the Soul: Sufism's Living Tradition of Jihād," *An-Nur International Journal of Islamic Thought* 3, no. 1 (2025): 54–67.

²³ Mehmet Ata Az, "The Self-Consciousness of the Soul in the Context of Avicenna's Flying Man Theory," *Eskiyeeni*, no. 55 (2025): 1665–96.

²⁴ Siti Adila Layalia, "Al-Ghazālī's Perspective on Human Spiritual Components: Heart, Spirit, Soul, and Intellect," *Al-Falasifah: Journal of Philosophy and Islamic Studies* 1 (n.d.): 40–51.

The ruh links man to the presence of God. Even when the heart is covered, it cannot be broken. It is the aql that makes us make good decisions. Nevertheless, a pure mind will never make peace without the cleansing of the heart.²⁵

When these four nafs, qalb, ruh, and aql, combine, it makes the human spiritually healthy. However, when the heart is ailing, so is the self. Some of these features are referred to as diseases of the heart by the teachings of Sufis. These are envy, arrogance, and carelessness.²⁶ Envy breaks contentment. Vanity cuts the individual off. Indifference renders life meaningless. Such are a reflection of contemporary psychological issues of depression, anxiety, and existential emptiness. Sufi instructors recommend the tazkiyat al-nafs (healing) to be healed. This is in the form of dhikr (remembrance of God), contemplation, fasting, and altruism.²⁷ Such activities put the ego to sleep and the heart to rest. They bring in spiritual balance. Such practices are useful in the modern digitalized world where individuals need to unwind and distress after experiencing social media stress and validation hunting.²⁸

As an illustration, a person who always wants to be liked will experience uneasiness and superficiality. Sufi care would lead them to remembrance and concentration on inner virtues. With time, the heart is no longer interested in seeking approval but is satisfied with spiritual illumination. This is a psychological and spiritual change. Essentially, Sufi psychology provides an entire roadmap of inner health. It begins with impulse (nafs al-ammarah), goes on to self-consciousness (nafs al-lawwamah), and to tranquility (nafs al-Mutmainnah). It is the heart (qalb) that rules this movement. The spirit (ruh) drives it. Reason ('aql) supports it. The way is cleansing and union with god. This model complements the contemporary treatment methods. It brings spirituality to emotional healing. It gives mental health practitioners a welcome addition to add heart-based care, reflection, and spiritual tools. These are actions that assist individuals in shifting their reaction to peaceful ones.

E. Sufi Figures' contributions to Psychological healing

The Sufi school can have profound information regarding human psychology and spiritual well-being. Classical Sufi thinkers and poets came up with emotional healing systems that are still useful in the present day. Their concepts are an amalgamation of ethics, spirituality, and feasible ways of addressing inner conflicts, stress, and depression. This part will cover works by Al-Ghazali, Rumi,

²⁵ Rahman, "Human Self Structure in Islamic Psychology."

²⁶ Ikhsan and Imam, "Between the Sword and the Soul."

²⁷ Rista Emilya Hidayah et al., "Tazkiyatun Nafs in the Age of Social Validation: Detoxifying the Psyche from Digital Stress Contagion," *JROH: Jurnal Obat Hati* 1, no. 1 (2025): 14–24.

²⁸ Heni Julaika Putri et al., "Character Education Based on Al-Gazālī's Spirituality: A Solution to Moral Crisis in the Digital Era," *Bulletin of Indonesian Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 (2025): 162–79.

and Al-Qushayri, as well as discuss contemporary Sufi theorists such as Said Nursi and modern therapists who use these concepts in our times.

I. Al-Ghazali: Cleaning the Soul and Curing of the Heart

Among the greatest representatives of Islamic intellectual history is Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 1111). One of the most detailed models of the soul and its cleansing is represented in his work, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* (Revival of Religious Sciences). To Al-Ghazali, psychological treatment starts by *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul).²⁹ This can be done by purging the heart of spiritual illnesses like arrogance, envy, pride, greed, and hypocrisy. He considered these as the source of corruption of mind and morals. Al-Ghazali says that not only is the soul subject to diseases of the heart, but the mental stability and social relations are as well.³⁰

Al-Ghazali stressed the fact that the heart (*qalb*) plays the core role in human psychology. Being healthy means that the entire being is pure of heart. When the heart is corrupted, then the whole personality is affected. His treatment method incorporated knowledge (*ilm*), self-discipline (*riyadah*), and unceasing remembrance of God (*dhikr*). Such techniques assist in managing the impulses, changing mindsets, and stabilizing mood. In contemporary language, his method is similar to the cognitive-behavioral approaches since it is aimed at modifying the way of thinking and habits.³¹ Each spiritual disease had its cure that al-Ghazali also offered. An example of arrogance is dealt with by remembering the source of origin and inability. Jealousy is healed by praying to the object of the jealousy. He also combined the moral and psychological by demonstrating how the virtues such as humility, patience, and gratitude bring back balance in the self.³² His works formed the basis of Islamic psychology as a field that integrates religion and psychiatry.

II. Rumi: Cure through Love and Poetry

Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273) had a different approach to psychological healing, looking at it through the lens of love (*ishq*) and connection with God. Love is the greatest power that can change the soul,

²⁹ Abroo Aman Andrabi, *Human Psychology and Spiritual Development: An Islamic Perspective*, n.d., accessed August 25, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dr-Andrabi/publication/394810487_Human_Psychology_and_Spiritual_Development_An_Islamic_Perspective/links/68a71b00d9261f6f51add09/Human-Psychology-and-Spiritual-Development-An-Islamic-Perspective.pdf.

³⁰ AbdulGafar O. Fahm, *Ethical Foundations and Guidelines in Islāmic Psychology* (Taylor & Francis, 2025), [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WzxeEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1978&dq=Fahm,+A.+O.+\(2025\).+Ethical+Foundations+and+Guidelines+in+Isl%C4%81mic+Psychology.+Taylor+%26+Francis.&ots=9aLx6uAOxl&sig=HOEiYSw3ibr0EqFxVx_OzFxL4Ro](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WzxeEQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1978&dq=Fahm,+A.+O.+(2025).+Ethical+Foundations+and+Guidelines+in+Isl%C4%81mic+Psychology.+Taylor+%26+Francis.&ots=9aLx6uAOxl&sig=HOEiYSw3ibr0EqFxVx_OzFxL4Ro).

³¹ Sálua Omais, "The Concepts of Happiness in Islamic Philosophy," in *Happiness and Well-Being in Islam*, by Sálua Omais (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-95353-8_3.

³² Zuleyha Keskin, *Quranic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality: Application in the Modern World* (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

between wants and ideals, which leads to inner peace.³⁷ Al-Qushayri also focused on companionship (suhbah) and spiritual guidance (murshid) as a part of the healing process. In his opinion, isolation predisposes one to negative thoughts and emotional instability. Having a good spiritual group, one would be motivated and accountable, which is one of the most effective ways of mental health recovery, according to modern therapists.³⁸

IV. New Sufi Voices: Said Nursi and Modern Applications

Contemporary Sufi philosophers have adjusted the classical knowledge to new psychological issues of depression, trauma, and online pressure. Among them is Said Nursi (1877-1960), the author of the works in *Risale-i Nur* that are filled with hope, gratitude, and trust in God as a solution to sorrow and despair. He thought that being sad (huzn) is an ingredient of human existence, though it should not result in despair. Rather, it ought to encourage an individual to reinforce faith and to pray to God.³⁹ His doctrines offer coping skills to individuals in anxiety and existential crisis. Modern Islamic psychologists and therapists also refer to Sufi postulates. In the treatment of stress and trauma, they apply such concepts as dhikr, muraqabah (self-observation), and tawakkul (trust in God). Indicatively, spiritual cognitive therapy integrates dhikr, a mindfulness practice, which lessens the negative rumination and enhances emotional resilience.⁴⁰ This amalgamation indicates that classical Sufi wisdom still has remedies in the contemporary clinical context.

Stress in the digital age has provided its own brand of psychological problems, including social media anxiety and the state of constant comparisons. To cleanse the mind of negative elements, some contemporary researchers support the idea of the revival of tazkiyah habits such as digital detox, self-reflection, and conscious silence.⁴¹ These tactics will be close to the teachings of Al-Ghazali and Al-Qushayri about taming their desires and dealing with distractions. The works by Al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Al-Qushayri indicate that Sufi psychology not only deals with the spiritual needs but also with mental health. Their ideas on how the soul can be purified, how love can heal, and how the self can develop through the stages are eternal guidance on how to deal with the struggles of emotions. Contemporary therapists and modern voices such as Said Nursi have managed to transform these insights into curing trauma, depression, and stress in modern society. So, Sufi traditions can be

³⁷ MAHSHID TURNER, "Sorrow (Huzn) in the Muslim Tradition: With Special Reference to Said Nursi" (PhD Thesis, Durham University, 2016), <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/11904/>.

³⁸ Haruka Cheifetz, "Al-Sha'rānī's Defence of Ibn 'Arabi in Context: Interpreting 'the Oneness of Existence' (Waḥdat al-Wujūd) as Experiential Oneness," *Journal of Sufi Studies* 12, no. 2 (2023): 182–215.

³⁹ TURNER, "Sorrow (Huzn) in the Muslim Tradition."

⁴⁰ Tanis, *The Sufi Influence in Said Nursi's Life and Thought*.

⁴¹ Keskin, *Quranic Concepts in Islamic Psychology and Spirituality*.

discussed as a comprehensive approach to healing as it merges faith, reason, and emotional intelligence.

F. Sufi Practices as Healing Tools

Sufism has numerous spiritual and mental healing practices. The practices are aimed at being united to God through the heart. They assist in alleviation stress and emotional issues as well. Five practices are mentioned here: dhikr, muraqabah, suhbah, tawakkul, and khalwah.

I. Dhikr (Remembrance of God)

Dhikr is the meditation of God through repeated chants of his names or verses of the Quran. It is a core Sufi practice. Dhikr is a source of calmness to the heart and mind. The mind is at peace when an individual repeats the name of God. Dhikr is similar to contemporary mindfulness. Individuals tend to be stressed and anxious due to a scattered mind. Dhikr serves to help piece the mind on a single point- God. This emphasis generates a feeling of security and confidence. Dhikr is accomplished in various forms. It can be silent or loud. One may do it individually or in a team. Performed regularly, dhikr controls emotions and minimizes negative emotions.⁴²

II. Muraqabah (Spiritual Alertness)

Muraqabah is ensuring that one is conscious of God at all times. It is meditation with a spiritual purpose. Muraqabah is done by a person sitting down and meditating about the presence of God. This will assist in self-awareness and inner peace. Muraqabah is also the one that regulates impulsive behavior. It causes an individual to reason before he/she act. Muraqabah in therapy is similar to mindfulness practices. It can minimize stress and depression as it causes the mind to be calm.⁴³ Individuals who engage in muraqabah know how to manage negative thoughts. They substitute them with good religious thoughts. This enhances emotional strength.

III. Suhbah (Companionship)

Suhbah is to be together with righteous and wise people. In Sufism, it is easier to grow spiritually when an individual is well accompanied. Isolation tends to cause depression and psychological pressure. Social and emotional assistance is offered in Suhbah. With a group of caring people, one gets to feel safe and esteemed. This resembles that of group therapy in contemporary psychology. In

⁴² Marc Applebaum, "Dhikr as Mindfulness: Meditative Remembrance in Sufism," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 65, no. 2 (2025): 409–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678231206901>.

⁴³ Nazila Isgandarova, *Mindfulness Techniques and Practices in Islamic Psychotherapy: The Power of Muraqabah* (Taylor & Francis, 2024).

Muslim societies, suhbah is frequently promoted by the counselors since it helps to avoid loneliness.⁴⁴ It also makes one feel like belonging. When individuals open up and share their plight with others, they get hope from the experience of others. Sufi orders contain suhbah, which involves the guidance of a master or instructor. This instruction can correct inappropriate thoughts and behavior.

IV. Tawakkul (Trust in God)

Tawakkul is the meaning of total confidence in God. It is not about being passive. It is putting your best foot forward and leaving the outcomes to God. Tawakkul helps one to be less stressed and anxious, as there is no fear of the unknown. Studies indicate that tawakkul can be used to deal with depression and anxiety.⁴⁵ Once individuals have faith in God, they will not overthink about the future. They embrace life as being God-planned. This mindset creates peace. Hope is also enabled by Tawakkul. Individuals with faith are not under as much pressure to ensure that everything is taken care of. They are tolerant and grateful.

Khalwah refers to a spiritual retreat. This practice is done by an individual spending time in quiet solitude. The reason is to concentrate on God and introspection. In the Khalwah, there is no distraction. The mind becomes clear. Individuals are engaged in prayer, dhikr, and reading the Quran during this period, and this aids in healing emotional wounds. It allows one to work through the pain and find purpose in existence. Khalwah is one of the ways that many Sufis use to cleanse the soul of pride, envy, and anger. Retreat-like experiences also have gains in modern studies. Stress is minimized, and psychological well-being is enhanced by these retreats.⁴⁶

G. Curative Welfares of These Practices

The purpose of all these practices, dhikr, muraqabah, suhbah, tawakkul, and khalwah, is similar. They bring the individual into contact with God. This relationship gives the feeling of direction and optimism. Individuals who employ faith-based coping tend to heal quickly after stress and trauma. These methods are also consistent with numerous concepts of contemporary psychology. Dhikr is comparable to meditation. Muraqabah is comparable to a profound consciousness practice. Suhbah is comparable to group therapy. Tawakkul promotes good thinking and resiliency. Khalwah provides such benefits as wellness retreats. The art of Sufi is a strong aid to mental and spiritual well-being.

⁴⁴ I. Zainab et al., "Counseling Services in Muslim Communal Life in Malaysia," *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* Volume 20, Issue 11, 2014, Pages 1445-1448, IDOSI Publications, 2014, <https://www.academia.edu/download/102797827/20.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Zainab et al., "Counseling Services in Muslim Communal Life in Malaysia."

⁴⁶ Öncel Demirdağ, "Spiritual Retreat (Khalwah) in the History of Sufism and the Role of Khalwah in Spiritual Training," *Bozok Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 27, no. 27 (2025): 633–50.

They lower the stress, anxiety, and negative thoughts. They gain tolerance, faith, and restraint. In the contemporary world, where individuals are victimized by depression and loneliness, such practices provide an opportunity for hope and recovery. Integrating them with contemporary therapy can make a lot of individuals feel peaceful.

H. An Approach to a Model of Modern Sufi Psychotherapy

Life in the modern world brings stress, anxiety, and meaninglessness. Human beings seek restoration and tranquility. Sufi psychology provides the way of the soul. It concerns itself with changing the self (nafs), as well as linking to God. A working model can assist therapists in applying these concepts in the current world. There are six stages of this model. All the stages serve to help an individual navigate themselves out of distress to inner peace.

I. Self-Awareness (Acknowledgment of Nafs Ammarah)

The first step is awareness. A human being should understand their inner being. The self that is commanding is the nafs ammarah. It drives towards lust and wickedness. This is a state that is discouraged by the Quran (Quran 12:53). It initiates anger, greed, jealousy, and despair. It is effective to identify these characteristics to heal. Understanding is the acceptance of wrongs. It is the point of departure of change. Clients can be directed by a therapist to monitor their thoughts and feelings. This is assisted by journaling as well as reflection. This action is a lesson in humility and honesty. According to Rassool and Keskin (2025), Islamic psycho-spirituality is based on self-awareness. In the absence of this, there can be no higher stages.⁴⁷

II. Self-Accountability (Nafs Lawwamah)

Awareness is followed by accountability. This is the phase of nafs lawwamah, which is the self-accusing soul. It battles with its sins and is repentant. This stage is positive. Moral awareness is demonstrated through regret. The individual starts struggling against internal incompetencies. Therapists are able to promote a review of the day to the clients. They are expected to record positive and negative behaviors. According to Alwani (2022), self-accountability brings about ethical living. It transforms both the individual and the family and society. This translates in therapy as: "What was wrong with me? How can I improve?" This step motivates growth. It builds responsibility.

⁴⁷ Rassool and Keskin, "Positioning the Self (Nafs) in Islāmic Psycho-Spirituality."

III. Inner Purification (Dhikr, Repentance, Ethical Reform)

The core of Sufi therapy is purification. According to Imam al-Ghazali, the soul requires tazkiyah (purification). These are dhikr (remembrance of God), tawbah (repentance), and good deeds. Dhikr is a relaxer of the mind and heart. It eliminates stress and enhances hope. Clients can have simple dhikr taught by their therapists. As an illustration, one can repeat Allah or such phrases as Subhanallah. Peace is achieved by meditating on the names of God. Repentance heals guilt. It creates an impression of a new beginning. Character is enhanced by ethical reform. According to Sari and Marhaban (2023), dhikr gets the heart clean. It removes spiritual rust. It turns sadness into hope.⁴⁸ Reading the Quran and making du'a (supplication) is also included in this stage. The practices make sense and bring solace.

IV. Spiritual Companionship (Guidance and Support)

No one walks this path alone. Sufis emphasize suhbah (companionship). It can be assisted with the help of a spiritual guide (murshid) or therapist. The company is good and makes the heart. It does not allow solitude and relapses. According to Edwards (2001), companionship plays a major role in soul care. A mentor is a listener, advisor, and inspirer.⁴⁹ Group sessions can provide a safe environment in therapy. Clients exchange their problems and support one another. Proper relationships lessen depression and anxiety. The Quran asks the faithful to avoid belonging to those who falsify the truth (Qur'an 9:119). This step establishes social support and trust. It educates sympathy and compassion.

V. Trust and Surrender (Tawakkul)

Life is full of uncertainty. Individuals are concerned with the future. Tawakkul refers to the trust in the plan of God. It reduces fear and stress. It teaches acceptance. The Quran associates tawakkul with success (Quran 3: 159). Trust comes after will and effort.⁵⁰ An individual gives what he or she can do and leaves the outcome to God. This gives inner peace. Exercises on letting go can be utilized by therapists. They may request the clients to list down fears and recite prayers of trust. As Qureshi and Mushtaq (2025) observe, trust will provide peace and stability.⁵¹ It prevents overthinking and hopelessness.

⁴⁸ Zainab Alwani, "Transforming the Self, Family and Society through a Qur'anic Ethos," *Journal of Islamic Faith and Practice*, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/download/98423012/Alwani-transforming-the.pdf_filename_UTF-8Alwani-transforming-the.pdf.

⁴⁹ Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion: Guide to Tending the Soul* (Paulist Press, 2001), [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DjLARuboDJgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Spiritual+companionship+\(guidance+from+mentors+and+healthy+groups\).&ots=uEDrmo1z_v&sig=To4iYQ59FOY0_2Bqb2I4_6dGZzk](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DjLARuboDJgC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=Spiritual+companionship+(guidance+from+mentors+and+healthy+groups).&ots=uEDrmo1z_v&sig=To4iYQ59FOY0_2Bqb2I4_6dGZzk).

⁵⁰ Edwards, *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion*.

⁵¹ Hafsa Ayaz Qureshi and Sadia Mushtaq, "Between Temptation and Tranquility: The Quranic Framework of Nafs," *Journal of Quranic and Social Studies* 5, nos. 2, May–August (2025): 18–36.

VI. Achievement of Calm (Nafs Muṭma'innah)

The final stage is peace. Quran refers to it as nafs mutma innah (the peaceful soul) (Qur'an 89: 27-30). In this case, the individual gets balanced. They lead a meaningful and religious life. They receive trials meekly. Happiness and delight imbue the heart. There are no issues that are free of this stage. But the individual treats them coolly. They are dependent on God and maintain moral values. This is a factor of emotional stability and resilience in therapy. It is aimed at a powerful soul and well-being. It is the harvest of all the antecedents.

VII. Practical Adaptation in Therapy

This model is flexible. It can be adapted by therapists to meet the requirements of the present time. The spiritual practices can be combined with talk therapy during sessions. As an example: Start with exercises of self-knowledge. Add dhikr for stress control. Add meditation on verses of the Quran to hope. Encourage team spirit to fight loneliness. Educate a giving up through directed prayer. This practice honors religion and psychology. It is effective among the Muslims and can inspire others. It adds a sense of purpose to life, reduces stress, and creates toughness.

I. Findings and Discussion

The classical Sufi philosophers penetrated the human mind and soul. This was done way back before the advent of modern psychology. They were concerned with both mental and spiritual health. The Sufi customs focused on the healing of the heart and mind using spiritual exercises and moral discipline.⁵²

I. Sufism and Psychological Healing

Sufis believed that the form of mental distress is attributed to spiritual imbalance. They regarded inner diseases like envy, arrogance, and pride as causes of psychological misery. The Sufi practices were meant to eliminate these inner illnesses and bring peace. This can be compared to what we use in the field of modern psychology as emotional regulation and cognitive restructuring.⁵³ Sufism offers effective strategies for anxiety and depression reduction. These approaches involve dhikr (remembrance of God), muraqabah (meditation), and khalwah (retreat). These exercises bring about serenity and introspection.⁵⁴ They are also good to enhance inner harmony and self-control.

⁵² Karim Mitha, "Sufism and Healing," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 21, no. 3 (2019): 194–205.

⁵³ Athar Ahmed Yawar, "From Madness to Eternity: Psychiatry and Sufi Healing in the Postmodern World" (PhD Thesis, UCL (University College London), 2020), <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10094782/>.

⁵⁴ S. Haque Nizamie et al., "Sufism and Mental Health," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 55, no. Suppl 2 (2013): S215–23.

II. Similarities with Contemporary Psychological Methods

Newer interventions, such as mindfulness, CBT, and stress-reduction methods, are similar to Sufi methods. Dhikr is similar to mindfulness since the two are concerned with attention and current awareness. Muraqabah resembles guided meditation during psychotherapy. Khalwah resembles solitude therapy that is used to reflect and relax.⁵⁵ This demonstrates that Sufi practices were primitive modes of cognition and behavior therapies. They assisted individuals in dealing with bad thoughts and destructive emotions by emphasizing the divine and moral principles.⁵⁶

III. Role of Sufistic Stages in Therapy

According to Sufi models, the self (nafs) has several stages: Nafs Ammarah (commanding self): This one is associated with the destructive urges. Nafs Lawwamah (self-accusing self): The phase of the contest of morality. Nafs Mutmainnah (peaceful self): The condition of inner peace. The stages serve as a guide towards spiritual and psychological healing. Transit nafs ammarah to nafs mutmainnah is the change from distress to wellness. It is self-awareness, responsibility, and faith in God. This is similar to the phases of contemporary treatment, such as recognition, intervention, and recovery.⁵⁷

IV. In the Sufi Framework Human-Centered Design

The human-centered design is applied in modern psychology to develop efficient therapies. This methodology takes into account the requirements, feelings, and background of the patient.⁵⁸ Sufi practices are also humanistic in nature. They mentor people based on their religious condition and mental preparedness. As an example, when one is suffering, he or she is instructed to begin with dhikr and companionship, then proceed to more advanced meditation.⁵⁹ This demonstrates that Sufism is appreciative of individuality and step-by-step development, which is a guideline of contemporary therapy.

⁵⁵ Aaron R. Lyon et al., "Leveraging Human-Centered Design to Implement Modern Psychological Science: Return on an Early Investment.," *American Psychologist* 75, no. 8 (2020): 1067.

⁵⁶ Margaret M. Luciano et al., "A Fitting Approach to Construct and Measurement Alignment: The Role of Big Data in Advancing Dynamic Theories," *Organizational Research Methods* 21, no. 3 (2018): 592–632, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428117728372>.

⁵⁷ Qureshi and Mushtaq, "Between Temptation and Tranquillity."

⁵⁸ Adibudin Al Halim and Nik Kamal Wan Mohammed, "Sufism As Therapy Psychological Problems of Modern Society," *Advances in Humanities and Contemporary Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 64–69.

⁵⁹ William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Simon and Schuster, 2007), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Uhq9DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT7&dq=Sufistic+stages+provide+not+only+theory+but+also+practical+therapy+guidelines.&ots=iiaQZZF8R3&sig=0EgFViMc6JX3iYA7FSogzXyO2eY>.

V. Clinical Mental Health Implications

Sufi healing provides remedies to the usual issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Dhikr calms down the nervous system and makes one less emotionally reactive.⁶⁰ Muraqabah enhances attentiveness and awareness. The practice of suhbah (companionship) is similar to group therapy, so it renders emotional support as well as social support. The tawakkul (faith in God) minimizes fear and uncertainty, which minimizes anxiety. These are the advantages of modern research. Similar exercises like dhikr and meditation lower cortisol and enhance the psychological condition. This does not imply that the Sufi methods cannot be applied in the therapy of Muslim clients, and even further.

VI. Sufism as Preventive and Curative Approach

As opposed to certain contemporary approaches that emphasized symptoms only, Sufism aims at the real origins of the mental distress. It aims at reforming character and spiritual development. This brings about strength and sustainability.⁶¹ Balance in material and spiritual life is also stressed by Sufis. This will stop greed and jealousy-induced mental illnesses as well as excessive attachment to worldly ambitions. These holistic perspectives are becoming popular in positive psychology and wellness research nowadays.

VII. Challenges in Application

Although the potential of Sufi practices is high, they must be used carefully in a clinic setting. Culturally sensitive therapists who are aware of psychology and spirituality are required. These terms of Sufi used in a misunderstood manner may create confusion. One can explain it by using such concepts as tawakkul, which should not be regarded as a passive fatalism but active trust with effort. In addition, not every client can be receptive to spiritual practices. Thus, the practices must be modified by the therapists depending on personal beliefs and permission.

VIII. Integration with Modern Therapy

Scholars propose the combination of Sufi practices and evidence-based psychology. Possible example: Installing the dhikr as a stress relief program, a mindfulness practice. Introduce muraqabah among trauma patients who need to have emotional control. Provide social support through offering group sessions, which are inspired by suhbah. This integration acknowledges cultural and religious identity and employs effective therapeutic values. It is seen that Sufi psychology has not become obsolete. It does not contradict the current therapeutic practices but even has its special strengths.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Usama Gondal et al., “Tawakkul Mediates Between Personality Traits, Depression, and Anxiety in Pakistani Muslim Adults,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 63, no. 1 (2024): 582–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-023-01771-1>.

⁶¹ Isgandarova, *Mindfulness Techniques and Practices in Islamic Psychotherapy*.

Sufism is an effective application of spiritual knowledge in practical activities, which makes it a strong instrument of mental health. Its phases of self-growth, orientation of cleansing, and orientation of serving the community create a full profile of mental attention. This rich tradition can be used by modern therapists when dealing with Muslim and spiritually oriented clients.

J. Conclusion

Such mental health issues as stress, anxiety, and depression are prevalent nowadays. Modern treatment is helpful, but it does not always take into account spiritual needs. Sufism provides a healing method for both the mind and soul. It offers viable tools that combine faith and psychology. Classical Sufis such as al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Al-Qushayri outlined the stages of the self: *nafs ammarah*, *lawwamah*, and *mutma'innah*. Passing through these phases brings peace and balance. They also preached against heart diseases such as envy and pride. Their remedy is their *tazkiyah* or purification, which is *dhikr*, repentance, and righteous living. Mental health nowadays can be assisted by Sufi practices. *Dhikr* relaxes the heart similarly to mindfulness. *Muraqabah* enhances attention and awareness, like meditation. Social support, such as group therapy, is provided by *Suhbah*. *Tawakkul* helps to trust God and also lessen anxiety. *Khalwah* provides room to contemplate and be clear. These rituals develop fortitude and inner strength. Contemporary studies endorse a spiritual lifestyle for health. A complete care model can be achieved through combining Sufi techniques with modern psychology. Such a method does not disrespect faith and identity. It gives hope, meaning, and comfort. Sufism is a medicine, yet it also prevents a disorder. It teaches patience, thankfulness, and humility. The values safeguard mental health when one is going through hardships in life. To put it briefly, Sufism is still up-to-date. Its knowledge and practices can instruct therapists and people. Along with contemporary psychology, it provides a comprehensive way to heal the mind and heart.

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