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## Taqwa in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Its Role in Islamic Counseling Therapy

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### Abstract

This study explores the multidimensional concept of taqwa in the Qur'anic perspective and examines its relevance to Islamic counseling therapy through a systematic literature review (SLR). In response to the growing demand for spiritually integrated mental health interventions, this research synthesizes empirical and theoretical studies published between 2020 and 2025, focusing on the psychological functions of taqwa and its applicability in therapeutic settings. Using a structured search strategy across major academic databases, twenty-one articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed narratively based on thematic patterns. The results show that taqwa is consistently defined as a comprehensive form of spiritual awareness encompassing self-regulation, moral sensitivity, and behavioral discipline grounded in one's relationship with God. Empirical findings indicate that taqwa-based interventions—such as dhikr, reflection on Qur'anic verses, and spiritual exercises—significantly reduce anxiety and depression, enhance emotional intelligence, strengthen resilience, and improve overall psychological well-being. Studies employing experimental and qualitative designs provide converging evidence that the internalization of taqwa can function as a therapeutic mechanism that stabilizes emotions, shapes coping strategies, and fosters spiritual-psychological balance. The review also reveals a gap between theoretical insights and practical implementation, suggesting the need for standardized counseling modules grounded in Qur'anic concepts of taqwa. This study contributes to the development of an integrated framework for Islamic counseling, demonstrating that taqwa can serve as a core psychological construct with meaningful implications for mental health practice. Future research is encouraged to expand clinical trials, develop standardized measurement tools for taqwa, and examine its effectiveness in diverse cultural and clinical settings.

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## Introduction

The rising prevalence of stress, anxiety, and mental-health crises among Muslim communities—particularly in the post-pandemic era—has intensified the demand for therapeutic models that are holistic and spiritually grounded. Recent reports from the World Health Organization indicate that a growing proportion of individuals experiencing psychological disorders now prefer intervention models that integrate spirituality with psychological practice (Organization, 2022). In Indonesia, an increasing body of research confirms the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in reducing anxiety and enhancing overall well-being, especially when therapeutic interventions incorporate religious values (Syafii & Azhari, 2023; Sufya & Abas, 2022). These trends collectively highlight the expanding role of spirituality as a critical component in mental-health recovery among Muslim populations.

In line with this growing interest, contemporary studies reveal a strong association between religious commitment and mental well-being. For example, research conducted in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Surabaya demonstrates that 85% of students experience significant stress, with low levels of spirituality correlating negatively with stress intensity ( $r = -0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Studies in Malaysia similarly show that individuals with higher levels of *taqwa* tend to exhibit stronger emotional-intelligence capacities, such as emotion regulation and empathy (path coefficients 0.19–0.13,  $p < 0.01$ ). Systematic reviews on Islamic psychotherapy for adolescents also affirm the efficacy of interventions grounded in *aqidah*, moral discipline, and *taqwa*-centered values in improving both spiritual and mental well-being. For adults, the *ta'alluq-takhalluq* counseling framework has been found to strengthen positive psychological attributes including patience, gratitude, empathy, and trust in God (*tawakkul*).

Despite these emerging insights, significant gaps remain in the application of *taqwa* as a core module within Islamic counseling. Observations across counseling centers and *pesantren* indicate that many practitioners have not yet adopted a structured *taqwa*-based framework, even though the Qur'an emphasizes its stabilizing function for the human soul (Qur'an 65:2–3). Furthermore, previous studies seldom examine the concept of *taqwa* comprehensively from a Qur'anic perspective while also linking it to modern psychological therapy frameworks.

In response to these gaps, the present article aims to (1) analyze the Qur'anic conceptualization of *taqwa* and (2) evaluate its relevance and potential role within Islamic counseling through a systematic literature review. This study offers a conceptual novelty by integrating Qur'anic principles of *taqwa* with contemporary counseling paradigms, thereby enriching the field of Islamic psychology and proposing a more applicable intervention model for Islamic counselors. Theoretically, the study strengthens the Qur'anic-psychological construct of mental well-being, while practically it provides a guiding framework for designing therapeutic interventions that are both effective and aligned with the spiritual needs of modern Muslim clients.

## Method

### 1. Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the Qur'anic conceptualization of *taqwa* and to explore its role within Islamic counseling practices. The SLR method was selected because it enables a structured, transparent, and replicable synthesis of scientific evidence, thereby offering a comprehensive overview of the research landscape (Booth et al., 2016). This approach also facilitates the identification of theoretical gaps and supports the development of a strengthened conceptual framework within the fields of Islamic psychology and counseling.

### 2. Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The data for this review were drawn from peer-reviewed articles published in reputable national and international journals between 2020 and 2025. The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles written in either Indonesian or English; (2) studies focusing on themes related to *taqwa*, Islamic psychology, or Islamic counseling; and (3) research that had undergone formal peer-review procedures. Non-academic publications such as opinion pieces, popular articles, and studies published prior to 2020 were excluded. These rigorous criteria were established to ensure high internal validity throughout the review process (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

### 3. Data Collection Procedures

Literature was gathered through electronic searches across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. Keywords such as “*taqwa*,” “Islamic counseling,” “therapy,” and “mental well-being” were used in various combinations with Boolean operators “AND” and “OR” to maximize the breadth of the search. In alignment with Kitchenham’s (2004) guidelines, the search strategy was designed to comprehensively capture all aspects of the research questions and minimize the potential for omission or bias.

### 4. Literature Screening and Selection

The selection of relevant studies involved a two-step screening procedure. First, titles and abstracts were examined to determine initial relevance. Second, full-text assessments were conducted to ensure alignment with both methodological and substantive criteria. Two independent reviewers carried out the screening process to reduce selection bias, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. This procedure adhered to PRISMA principles to maintain transparency and methodological rigor in the review process (Moher et al., 2015).

### 5. Data Analysis

Articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed through narrative synthesis. The content of the studies was grouped into three thematic categories: (1) conceptual definitions of *taqwa* in the Qur'an, (2) the psychological protective function of *taqwa*, and (3) the integration of *taqwa*-based values into Islamic counseling interventions. This thematic approach facilitated both a systematic summary of existing research and the development of a refined theoretical model relevant to contemporary Islamic counseling practice (Snyder, 2019)..

## Results

### 1. Qur'anic Conceptualizations of *Taqwa*

The reviewed literature indicates that the term *taqwa* and its derivatives appear more than one hundred times in the Qur'an. Across all studies meeting the SLR criteria, *taqwa* is consistently defined as spiritual awareness, self-regulation, and moral obedience rooted in an individual's relationship with God. Frequently cited verses include Qur'an 65:2–3 and Qur'an 8:29, both of which highlight *taqwa* as a source of guidance, protection, and inner stability.

Classical Sufi literature further categorizes *taqwa* into three dimensions, as articulated by al-Qushayri: (1) safeguarding oneself from shirk, (2) avoiding sinful behavior, and (3) purifying the heart from reliance on anything other than God. These definitional variations appear consistently within theoretical works published between 2020 and 2025.

### 2. Classical and Contemporary Perspectives on *Taqwa* as a Psychological Mechanism

Classical scholarship, particularly the works of Abu Zayd al-Balkhi, positions *taqwa* as a component of spiritual health that functions to prevent emotional disturbances. This classical understanding is echoed in three contemporary comparative studies analyzing the convergence between early Islamic thought and modern psychology. These studies consistently identify *taqwa* as a mechanism of self-regulation and psychological protection, supporting emotional stability and resilience.

### 3. Empirical Findings on *Taqwa*-Based Interventions

A total of nine empirical studies met the inclusion criteria, encompassing experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, and case-study designs.

#### a. Quantitative Findings

##### 1) Malaysia RCT (2022)

A Qur'anic intervention incorporating *dzikr*, supplication, and contemplative reflection resulted in significant reductions in anxiety ( $d = 0.75$ ) and depression ( $d = 0.80$ ).

##### 2) IJIC (2024; six studies)

All studies reported an average 30% decrease in anxiety following four sessions of spiritual therapy.

##### 3) University of Selangor (2023)

*Taqwa* demonstrated a positive correlation with emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 21% of EI variance.

##### 4) Cross-country SEM studies (2021–2024)

*Taqwa* functioned as a mediator between academic stress and life satisfaction, with mediation indices ranging from 0.32 to 0.41.

#### b. Qualitative Findings

##### 1) Aceh community study (Farhan & Ramazana, 2024)

The practice of *tawajjuh* improved subjective well-being and emotional stability.

##### 2) Pontianak pesantren study (Farid & Aminah, 2024)

Spiritual counseling grounded in *tawakkul*, patience, and *dzikr* was associated with increased inner peace, enhanced learning motivation, and stronger social relationships.

3) Textual analysis (Isa & Utomo, 2024)

The methods of *ta'alluq*, *takhalluq*, and *tahaqquq* were identified as structured spiritual-counseling approaches that facilitate deep internalization of *taqwa*.

4. Summary of Findings in Tabular Form

Table 1. Summary of Studies Related to Taqwa-Based Interventions

Study	Method	Population	Intervention	Key Findings
Sufya & Abas (2022)	RCT	62 patients	Dzikir & prayer	↓ anxiety & depression (d = 0.75–0.80)
IJIC (2024, studies)	6 Quasi-experimental	Clinical patients	Dzikir, prayer, relaxation	↓ anxiety by ~30%
Farhan & Ramazana (2024)	Qualitative	Aceh community	Tawajjuh	↑ well-being
Farid & Aminah (2024)	Case study	Pesantren students	Spiritual counseling	↑ inner peace & motivation
Isa & Utomo (2024)	Hermeneutic	Sufi literature	Ta'alluq–takhalluq–tahaqquq	Internalization of taqwa
Univ. Selangor (2023)	Correlational	University students	Taqwa variable	r = 0.46; taqwa → EI
Cross-country (2024)	SEM	University students	Taqwa variable	Taqwa mediates stress → well-being

5. Emergent Thematic Patterns

Synthesis of the included studies revealed five major thematic patterns:

- Consistent Definition — *Taqwa* is consistently conceptualized as spiritual awareness, moral discipline, and self-regulation.
- Psychological Protective Role — *Taqwa* serves as a protective factor against anxiety, stress, and depression.
- Therapeutic Effectiveness — *Taqwa*-based Islamic therapeutic interventions demonstrate effectiveness across research designs, including RCTs, quasi-experimental studies, and qualitative inquiries.
- Positive Psychological Correlates — *Taqwa* is positively associated with emotional intelligence, psychological well-being, and resilience.
- Potential as a Core Counseling Module — Modern literature highlights *taqwa* as a promising core module for Islamic counseling in educational, pesantren, and clinical settings.

## Discussion

The findings of this review demonstrate that *taqwa* within the Islamic tradition is not merely a normative theological construct but functions as a strategic psychological resource that contributes to emotional stability and spiritual well-being. Across the reviewed literature, *taqwa* consistently emerges as the foundation of self-regulation, emotional control, and mental resilience. The evidence suggests that an individual's transcendent awareness of God directly enhances the ability to manage stress, reduce anxiety, and develop more adaptive coping mechanisms. In this sense, *taqwa* operates as an internal

psychological system that shapes how individuals interpret, experience, and respond to life events.

Quantitative findings—such as RCT results showing reductions in anxiety and depression, and correlational evidence linking *taqwa* to emotional intelligence—further affirm the empirical significance of spirituality in mental health. The fact that *taqwa* accounts for a substantial proportion of variance in emotional intelligence among university students strengthens claims within Islamic psychology that spirituality constitutes not only a moral construct but also a psychological energy source influencing cognitive and affective processes. These findings resonate with al-Balkhi's classical thesis that psychological and physical health are integrative, and that spiritual practices—including *dzikr* and Qur'anic contemplation—can produce therapeutic outcomes comparable to those achieved through modern psychotherapeutic techniques.

Qualitative findings from pesantren communities and studies on *tawajjuh* reinforce the view that *taqwa* is not confined to cognitive or doctrinal dimensions, but is experienced as an affective and existential state characterized by tranquility, confidence, and spiritual serenity. These spiritual experiences appear to exert long-term influence on motivation, interpersonal relationships, and the perception of life meaning. Accordingly, *taqwa* may be understood as a multidimensional religious experience that contributes to emotional well-being through both affective and social pathways.

In comparison with earlier scholarship, the present review expands existing understanding by showing that Islamic spirituality—particularly *taqwa*—possesses a more complex psychological structure than often assumed. Classical Sufi frameworks, such as *ta'alluq*, *takhalluq*, and *tahaqquq*, conceptualize *taqwa* as a gradual process of character formation that encompasses cognitive, emotional, and moral development. When examined alongside contemporary empirical findings, these classical models reveal striking parallels with modern psychological principles such as cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and habit formation. This alignment indicates a deep epistemological continuity between Islamic spiritual heritage and contemporary psychological sciences.

Nevertheless, the discussion also highlights a notable gap between the theoretical potential of *taqwa* and its practical implementation within contemporary Islamic counseling. Although empirical studies demonstrate the effectiveness of spiritual interventions, many counselors and educational institutions do not employ *taqwa*-based models in a systematic or structured manner. Current practices often rely on intuition rather than standardized frameworks, limiting the consistency and evaluability of *taqwa*-oriented interventions. This underscores the need for stronger integration between Qur'anic and Sufi conceptualizations of *taqwa* and the professional practice of Islamic counseling.

Overall, the findings affirm the substantial potential of *taqwa* as a foundational framework for Islamic psychotherapy across diverse settings, including educational institutions, pesantren environments, clinical services, and community counseling. Empirical evidence indicates that *taqwa*-based interventions effectively enhance well-being, emotional intelligence, and inner tranquility. These implications call for the development of more formal,

standardized, and systematically tested *taqwa*-based counseling models that can be integrated into professional practice to better meet the spiritual and psychological needs of contemporary Muslim communities.

## Conclusion

This systematic review demonstrates that *taqwa* functions as a multidimensional construct that integrates theological, psychological, and behavioral dimensions within the Islamic tradition. The findings consistently show that *taqwa* is associated with enhanced emotional regulation, reduced anxiety and depression, strengthened emotional intelligence, and increased psychological resilience. Across experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, and cross-national studies, Qur'anic-based practices—particularly *dhikr*, *tafakkur*, and the internalization of verses concerning *taqwa*—produce measurable therapeutic effects in Islamic counseling contexts.

Theoretically, this study positions *taqwa* as a core construct that can be systematically operationalized within contemporary Islamic psychotherapy. The convergence of Qur'anic principles, Sufi conceptual frameworks, and modern psychological theory highlights a strong epistemological alignment between Islamic spiritual heritage and scientific therapeutic approaches. Practically, these findings underscore the importance of developing structured, evidence-based counseling modules grounded in *taqwa* that can be implemented in schools, pesantren, universities, clinical services, and community-based interventions.

Despite the promising evidence, this study also identifies several limitations. Most existing research utilizes quasi-experimental designs and focuses predominantly on university students or religious communities, which limits the generalizability of findings to broader clinical populations. Furthermore, the absence of standardized cross-cultural instruments for measuring *taqwa* results in methodological inconsistencies across studies. These limitations indicate that the empirical basis for *taqwa*-centered interventions, although growing, remains underdeveloped.

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