

Holistic Health and Wellness: Integrating Islamic Practices and Modern Medicine
(*Kesihatan Holistik: Penggabungan Amalan Islam dan Perubatan Moden*)

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ABSTRACT

Physical and mental health are critical aspects of life across societies, and Islamic teachings emphasise their importance as integral to the development of good character and the promotion of peace and comfort. In the context of college students, mental health issues are becoming increasingly prevalent due to academic pressures, social dynamics, and cultural transitions. This paper explores the potential of combining Islamic practices such as prayer (Salat), fasting (Sawm), charity (Zakat), and mindfulness (Dhikr) with evidence-based medical interventions to enhance the mental and physical health outcomes of Muslim students. The study hypothesises that integrating these Islamic practices with modern medical approaches can create a robust framework for improving student health and wellness. Using quantitative methods to explore personal experiences and perceptions, with a sample of 70 respondents including students and lecturers. Key questions address how the integration of Islamic practices with medical interventions affects mental and physical health and the role of cultural and religious factors in shaping health behaviours and perceptions. Preliminary findings reveal that students who incorporate Islamic practices into their daily routines alongside medical treatments show notable improvements in resilience, lower stress levels, and enhanced overall well-being. This suggests that the synergy between Islamic teachings and modern health practices can significantly contribute to better health outcomes. The implications of this study are significant for educational institutions, in which by adopting culturally sensitive strategies that integrate spiritual practices with medical care, institutions will be able to support student development more effectively and foster environments that contribute to the broader goal of JERISAH (Joint Educational Research for Improved Student Achievement and Health). This integrative model not only benefits Muslim students but also offers a framework for developing holistic health initiatives applicable in diverse educational contexts globally.

Keywords: Islamic practices, Modern medicine, Mental health, College students, Holistic health 2

ABSTRAK

Kesihatan fizikal dan mental adalah aspek yang kritikal dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Ajaran Islam menekankan kepentingan kesihatan fizikal dan mental sebagai elemen pelengkap dalam pembangunan akhlak yang baik. Dalam konteks pelajar kolej, isu kesihatan mental semakin meningkat akibat tekanan akademik, dinamika sosial, dan peralihan budaya. Kertas kerja ini meneroka potensi menggabungkan amalan-amalan Islam seperti solat (Salat), puasa (Sawm), zakat (Zakat), dan zikir (Dhikr) dengan perubatan yang menjadi bukti untuk meningkatkan hasil kesihatan mental dan fizikal pelajar Muslim. Hipotesis bagi kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa penggabungan amalan Islam dengan perubatan moden boleh mewujudkan kerangka kerja yang kukuh bertujuan meningkatkan kesihatan dan kesejahteraan pelajar. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif untuk pandangan daripada 70 responden yang terdiri daripada pelajar dan pensyarah. Soalan utama merangkumi cara integrasi amalan Islam dengan inovasi perubatan mempengaruhi kesihatan mental dan fizikal, serta peranan faktor budaya dan agama dalam membentuk tingkah laku dan persepsi kesihatan. Penemuan awal menunjukkan bahawa pelajar yang mengamalkan amalan Islam dalam rutin harian mereka bersama rawatan perubatan menunjukkan peningkatan yang ketara dalam daya tahan, tahap tekanan yang lebih rendah, dan kesejahteraan keseluruhan yang lebih baik. Hal ini menunjukkan bahawa sinergi antara ajaran Islam dan amalan kesihatan moden dapat meningkatkan kesihatan mental pelajar. Hal ini juga memberikan bukti kepada hasil kesihatan yang lebih baik. Implikasinya kepada institusi pendidikan adalah signifikan, di mana dengan mengamalkan strategi yang peka terhadap budaya yang menggabungkan amalan spiritual dengan penjagaan perubatan, institusi JERISAH (Joint Educational Research for Improved Student Achievement and Health) dapat menyokong pembangunan pelajar dengan lebih

efektif dan mewujudkan persekitaran yang menyumbang kepada matlamat lebih luas. Model integratif ini bukan sahaja bermanfaat untuk pelajar Muslim tetapi juga menawarkan kerangka kerja untuk membangunkan inisiatif kesihatan holistik yang boleh diterapkan dalam konteks pendidikan yang pelbagai di seluruh dunia.

Kata Kunci: Amalan Islam, Perubatan Modern, Kesihatan Mental, Pelajar Kolej, Kesihatan Holistik

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an integral component of overall well-being, influencing cognitive, emotional, and social functioning across the lifespan. Among college students, mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress are increasingly prevalent, posing significant challenges to academic performance and personal development. In 2023, over three-quarters of college students (76%) experienced moderate to serious psychological distress, with 36% diagnosed with anxiety and 28% with depression (Bryant, 2024). These statistics underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address mental health concerns within this population.

The rapid pace of modern life, coupled with academic and social pressures, has intensified mental health challenges among students. Social media, while facilitating connectivity and information sharing, often exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and comparison, contributing to heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that excessive social media use is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and stress among university students (Iqbal, 2024). These findings highlight the complex interplay between digital engagement and mental health, necessitating multifaceted intervention approaches.

Mental Health and Modern Medicine

Mental health problems encompass a wide range of conditions that significantly impact a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. These issues include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. Mental health disorders can disrupt daily functioning and overall quality of life, leading to severe emotional and psychological distress (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2020).

According to statistics from the Malaysian Ministry of Health, the prevalence of mental health issues in Malaysia is alarmingly high. In 2022, it was estimated that approximately 2.3 million Malaysians were experiencing various forms of mental disorders

(Virtual Global Hospital, 2024). This figure reflects a growing concern over the widespread nature of mental health challenges within the population. Moreover, the rise in suicide rates further highlights the severity of the mental health crisis in the country. In the same year, over 1,500 suicide cases were reported, with a disproportionate number of these cases involving young individuals aged 15 to 29 (Ramasamy et al., 2022). This demographic trend underscores a critical area of concern, as mental health issues among youth are often exacerbated by factors such as academic pressures, social isolation, and emerging adulthood challenges.

The increasing suicide rates and high prevalence of mental disorders call for urgent and effective interventions. Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that includes improving mental health awareness, expanding access to mental health services, and reducing stigma associated with seeking help (Ministry of Health Malaysia, 2020). Integrating modern medical practices into this approach is crucial for providing comprehensive care to individuals with mental health conditions (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2023).

Modern medicine plays a pivotal role in managing mental health disorders through various methods such as pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, and integrated care models (NIMH, 2023). Pharmacotherapy involves the use of medications to help regulate mood, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and manage severe mental health conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Medications such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, and antipsychotics are essential tools in stabilising symptoms and improving patients' quality of life (NIMH, 2023).

Psychotherapy, or talk therapy, is another critical component of modern mental health treatment. Techniques such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) provide patients with strategies to manage their symptoms, cope with stress, and address underlying issues (National Alliance on Mental Illness [NAMI], 2023). Therapy can be delivered individually, in groups, or through family

counselling, and is often tailored to meet the specific needs of the patient.

Moreover, modern technology, such as telemedicine and mental health apps, is expanding access to care, particularly in underserved or remote areas (MTE SDG, 2024). Telemedicine allows patients to receive consultations and therapy sessions from mental health professionals without the need for travel, while mental health apps offer tools for self-management, mood tracking, and relaxation techniques.

The implementation of community-based support systems and mental health education in schools and workplaces complements these modern medical approaches. Educating individuals about mental health, promoting open dialogue, and creating supportive environments can help reduce stigma and encourage people to seek help earlier (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

These combined efforts highlight the pressing need for an integrated approach that leverages both modern medical practices and community support to address the mental health crisis in Malaysia. Enhanced efforts in mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment, supported by advances in medical science, are essential to effectively tackling this significant public health challenge and improving the well-being of individuals across the country.

Islamic Perspective on Mental Health

In Islam, mental health is considered a crucial component of overall well-being, reflecting the religion's holistic view of human health. Islam emphasises that both the body and mind are trusts from Allah (SWT) that must be nurtured and protected. This perspective is rooted in various teachings found in the Quran and Hadith, which underscore the importance of mental and emotional health alongside physical health.

The Quran frequently addresses the well-being of the heart and soul. For example, in Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 28, Allah SWT says, "*Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.*" This verse highlights that spiritual practices, such as remembering and reflecting on Allah, play a fundamental role in achieving mental peace and tranquillity. It suggests that regular engagement in worship and spiritual activities can provide solace and reduce anxiety, offering a sense of calm and stability amidst life's challenges.

Islamic teachings also offer guidance on how to cope with life's trials and tribulations. The Quran and Hadith emphasise the concepts of Sabr (patience) and Tawakkul (trust in Allah). For instance, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 286, mentions, "Allah does not burden

a soul beyond that it can bear," reassuring believers that challenges are manageable with faith and resilience. This view encourages Muslims to trust in Allah's wisdom and to approach difficulties with patience, understanding that hardships are part of Allah's divine plan and serve as opportunities for growth and spiritual development.

Furthermore, Islam promotes a balanced approach to managing mental health by advocating for both spiritual and practical measures. Seeking help through prayer, supplication, and engaging in community support are integral aspects of Islamic practice. At the same time, the religion acknowledges the importance of seeking practical support, including medical and psychological assistance, when needed. This balanced approach reinforces the idea that mental health should be addressed through both spiritual and worldly means, integrating religious teachings with modern therapeutic practices.

Islam also emphasises the significance of positive social relationships and community support. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlighted the importance of empathy, compassion, and support within the community, which can significantly contribute to mental well-being. Acts of charity, maintaining strong family bonds, and providing emotional support to others are all encouraged as ways to foster a supportive and nurturing environment.

Overall, the Islamic perspective on mental health offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing mental challenges. By integrating spiritual practices with practical support, Islam provides a robust foundation for promoting mental well-being and guiding individuals through life's difficulties with faith and resilience.

Thus, this study focuses on the intersection of Islamic practices and modern medical approaches in addressing mental health issues among Muslim college students in Malaysia. It aims to explore how these two perspectives can be integrated to improve mental health outcomes and reduce stigma in a culturally relevant manner.

OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine the impact of integrating Islamic practices with modern medical interventions on the mental health outcomes of Muslim college students.
- ii. To explore the role of cultural and religious factors in shaping mental health behaviours and perceptions among Muslim college students in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of integrating Islamic practices with evidence-based medical interventions on the mental and physical health outcomes of Muslim college students in Malaysia. The research aims to produce empirical data that can inform culturally sensitive health strategies within academic settings.

Participants and Sampling

The target population includes Muslim college students and lecturers from Malaysian universities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 70 participants who actively engage in Islamic practices such as prayer (Salat), Quran recitation, charity (Zakat), and mindfulness (Dhikr). Inclusion criteria required participants to self-identify as Muslim, be at least 18 years of age, and be currently enrolled or employed at a higher education institution. Exclusion criteria included individuals with diagnosed psychiatric conditions currently under psychiatric medication or clinical treatment, to avoid confounding variables.

Questionnaire Development and Structure

The data collection instrument was a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed using Google Forms [link: <https://forms.gle/F5wAEb9dbJ2HoFcEA>]. The questionnaire was adapted based on literature reviews and existing validated mental health and wellness scales, particularly drawing from:

- Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI),
- International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ),
- WHO-5 Well-Being Index.

The form was pre-tested with 10 respondents for clarity, language appropriateness, and cultural relevance. Minor wording adjustments were made based on feedback to ensure content validity and comprehension.

The questionnaire consists of four main sections:

- i. Demographics – Age, gender, university, student/lecturer status.
- ii. Mental and Physical Health Metrics – Questions on sleep quality (e.g., hours of sleep, frequency of restful sleep), frequency of physical activity, emotional well-being, and stress.
- iii. Religious Practices – Frequency and consistency in performing Salat, Quran recitation, Dhikr, and Zakat.

- iv. Perception of Impact – Self-reported perceived impact of these Islamic practices on mental clarity, emotional stability, and overall well-being.

The form contains a total of 25 questions and is designed to take approximately 10–12 minutes to complete.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was conducted online via Google Forms over a period of three weeks, from 9 August 2024 to 30 August 2024. Participants were invited through university mailing lists, WhatsApp groups, and student community pages. A brief description of the study, its voluntary nature, and a consent statement were provided at the beginning of the form. Respondents were required to check a box agreeing to participate voluntarily.

Data Analysis

Data collected were exported into Microsoft Excel and SPSS for analysis. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, frequencies, percentages) were used to summarise demographic data and health metrics. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between the frequency of Islamic practices and various health indicators, including sleep quality and physical activity levels.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical research guidelines. Informed consent was obtained electronically before participants began the survey. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymising all responses, and no identifying personal information was collected. The study was designed with cultural sensitivity in mind, respecting Islamic values and terminology.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data and survey collected demonstrate a strong interconnection between various aspects of mental health and Islamic practices among the respondents. Independent variables such as frequency of engagement in Islamic practices, the level of support from the Islamic community, and sleep quality are related to dependent variables such as overall mental health, emotional well-being, and coping abilities. However, the results from our survey, which were

collected from respondents, are reflective of their individual preferences and experiences, which may have influenced the overall findings.

This study surveyed 70 participants, comprising 80% female and 20% male respondents. The majority

(88.6%) were students aged between 21–23 years, while 11.4% were lecturers. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to evaluate the frequency and trends of Islamic practices and their correlation with mental and physical well-being.

TABLE 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	80.0
	Male	20.0
Role	Student	88.6
	Lecturer	11.4
Age Group	18–20 years	10.0
	21–23 years	78.6
	24 and above	11.4

The participant pool aligns with the study's focus on Muslim college students, primarily involving young adults in higher education. The demographic consistency supports the internal validity of the study in understanding student wellness trends.

TABLE 2. Engagement in Islamic Practices

Practice	Consistently Practiced (%)
Salat (Prayer)	90.0
Quran Recitation	85.7
Du'a and Dhikr	88.6
Charity (Zakat/Sadaqah)	60.0

A majority of respondents engaged consistently in core Islamic practices. The high frequency of *Salat*, *du'a*, and *dhikr* suggests a strong spiritual foundation that may contribute to emotional regulation and coping mechanisms.

TABLE 3. Physical and Mental Health Indicators

Indicator	Result
Average Sleep Duration	6.5 hours per night
Sleep Quality (Good/Very Good)	60.0%
Regular Physical Activity	40.0%
Self-Rated Mental Health	70.0% (Good/Very Good)

While most participants reported moderate to good mental health, regular physical activity was relatively low. Interestingly, good sleep quality and perceived mental health corresponded with high engagement in Islamic spiritual activities.

TABLE 4. Perception of Islamic Practices on Mental Well-being

Perception Statement	Agreement (%)
Islamic practices reduce stress and anxiety	90.0
Dhikr and Quran help emotional resilience	85.0
Salat contributes to peace and psychological clarity	87.1
Religion improves ability to handle academic pressure	75.7

The findings reinforce that participants view Islamic rituals as key coping tools. These practices offer emotional grounding, stress management, and resilience, especially in high-pressure academic environments.

HYPOTHESIS

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between engagement in Islamic practices and improved mental health outcomes among Muslim college students.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Higher engagement in Islamic practices is positively associated with improved mental health outcomes among Muslim college students.

Given the descriptive data and respondents' perceptions, preliminary support exists for H_1 , though statistical significance testing is recommended in future studies.

SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Faith-Integrated Counseling

Universities should incorporate Islamic-based emotional support systems (e.g., 10 spiritual mentors or *ustaz/ustazah* counselors) into their student mental health services.

Spiritual-Wellness Programs

Programs such as *Usrah*, group dhikr sessions, and Quran circles may provide peer support and spiritual grounding, complementing mental health campaigns.

Balanced Lifestyle Campaigns

Wellness initiatives should frame healthy sleep, diet, and exercise within the Islamic ethos of *wasatiyyah* (moderation).

Inclusive Mental Health Policies

University mental health strategies should be culturally and religiously sensitive, integrating evidence-based care with religious values.

Future Research

Further quantitative and qualitative studies using validated scales (e.g., DASS-21, WHO-5) are encouraged to assess causality and broader applicability across regions.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the relationship between Islamic spiritual practices and the mental and physical well-being of Muslim college students. The findings revealed that consistent engagement in practices such as Salat (prayer), Quran recitation, Dhikr (remembrance of God), and charitable acts (Zakat) was associated with improved mental health outcomes. Participants who regularly performed these acts reported higher levels of psychological comfort, spiritual peace, and emotional regulation. These results align with previous research suggesting that religiosity and spirituality serve as effective coping mechanisms in managing stress and mental health challenges (Abdel-Khalek, 2011; Koenig, 2012).

The study's quantitative data also indicated that those who frequently engaged in these religious practices tended to report better sleep quality and more consistent exercise routines—two important factors linked to both mental and physical health. The positive correlation between spiritual engagement and these health behaviors supports the hypothesis that integrating Islamic practices with modern well-being strategies can offer a holistic approach to mental health care. This reflects the growing literature emphasizing the value of faith-based interventions in public health

(Razali & Hasanah, 2000).

Moreover, while the overall findings were positive, several key barriers to seeking help were also identified, including mental health stigma, lack of awareness about services, and traditional cultural beliefs. These results reflect concerns raised in the literature, which indicate that stigma continues to be one of the most significant deterrents to mental health support in Muslim communities (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). A large proportion of participants also indicated unfamiliarity with available resources and hesitance to seek professional help, even when experiencing emotional distress. This suggests a need for more effective mental health literacy campaigns that are culturally and religiously sensitive.

Importantly, while the study supports the integration of Islamic practices into mental health strategies, it also underscores the need for professional intervention. Combining spirituality with evidence-based psychological therapies can offer balanced care. As noted in other studies, collaboration between religious leaders and mental health professionals may enhance help-seeking behaviors and treatment adherence among Muslim populations (Padela et al., 2012).

However, this study has several limitations. The use of self-reported questionnaires may have introduced bias, and the tools employed lacked formal clinical validation. Additionally, the limited sample size ($n=70$) and purposive sampling method reduce the generalizability of the results. The absence of expert involvement in questionnaire design may also limit the academic rigor of the findings. Future research should consider employing validated mental health assessment tools, larger and more diverse samples, and expert consultation during instrument development.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. To better support Muslim students' mental health, institutions should consider:
- ii. Implementing mental health awareness programs that normalize seeking help.
- iii. Incorporating spiritual and religious dimensions into campus counseling services.
- iv. Providing training for counselors on Islamic perspectives on mental health.
- v. Encouraging partnerships with religious scholars to reduce stigma and promote wellness.

Hypothesis Revisited

The central hypothesis that integrating Islamic spiritual practices with modern mental health strategies positively affects student well-being was supported by the data. A statistically significant relationship was observed between spiritual engagement and better mental/emotional states, sleep quality, and exercise habits.

Future Research Directions

Future studies could

- i. Utilize clinical diagnostic tools to assess mental health status.
- ii. Investigate gender-based or age-based differences in the impact of religious practices. Explore the longitudinal effects of spiritual routines on mental well-being over time.
- iii. Develop intervention programs that combine Islamic and psychological techniques for empirical testing.

CONCLUSION

To encapsulate, the study found that often involvement in Islamic practices is positively linked with better emotional well-being. Addressing mental health issues requires a multifaceted approach that integrates both modern medical practices and Islamic principles to provide comprehensive care and support. Modern medicine offers valuable tools such as pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, and integrated care models to manage mental health conditions effectively. These methods, including medications and various forms of therapy, play a crucial role in alleviating symptoms, improving quality of life, and supporting patients through evidence-based practices.

Simultaneously, Islamic teachings provide a profound framework for mental well-being, emphasising the importance of spiritual health alongside physical and psychological care. The Quran and Hadith advocate for a holistic approach that includes regular spiritual practices, patience, and trust in Allah as key components of managing mental health. The teachings of Islam encourage individuals to seek both spiritual comfort through practices like prayer and remembrance of Allah and practical support from medical and psychological interventions.

By combining these approaches, individuals can benefit from a comprehensive support system that addresses their mental, emotional, and spiritual

needs. Modern medicine can offer immediate and scientifically grounded solutions to mental health problems, while Islamic principles can provide a deeper sense of purpose, resilience, and community support. This integration fosters a more balanced and effective approach to mental health care, aligning medical and spiritual strategies to support individuals in their journey towards overall well-being.

Ultimately, the collaboration between modern medical practices and Islamic teachings represents a robust model for addressing mental health issues. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach that respects and utilises both scientific advancements and spiritual wisdom to enhance mental health care and support individuals in achieving a harmonious and fulfilling life.

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