

Tawajjuh and Islamic Therapy: Improving Subjective Well-being

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ABSTRACT

The present research is descriptive qualitative research that examines *tawajjuh* as one part of Sufism developed by *Tarikat Naqsyabandiah* from Aceh. The data in this research was obtained from interviews with people who have practised *tawajjuh* and students who live in Islamic educational institutions (*dayah*) that implement *tawajjuh* values and related studies in various journals, books and scientific studies. *Tawajjuh* is a series of spiritual activities to lead the counselee (*jama'ah*) to always be mindful of God through a direct relationship with a mentor face-to-face in one assembly by reciting several *dhikr* as a form of worship. This research aims to develop *Tawajjuh* as an Islamic therapeutic approach, promoting integrated and fostered subjective well-being. Based on the study, *tawajjuh* can increase subjective well-being in an exemplary manner. The study found a series of stages of *tawajjuh* as an Islamic therapy to foster positive subjective well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Tawajjuh is one of the religious rituals series in the life of Muslim communities, mostly found in the Indonesian archipelago. The concept of religious life can be defined as the acceptance and acknowledgement of the reality of remarkable supernatural forces. The belief significantly influences the lives of individuals and groups, leading to various behaviours such as prayer and worship in reality. In addition, belief can also affect the mental attitudes of individuals and communities, including fear, optimism, and resignation, among many others (Agus, 2006). In the lives of religious communities, people tend to be socially and culturally very much intermingled with religion in their daily lives. The influence of religion is then formalized in the form of certain traditions and rituals depending on the intent and purpose. The incorporation of religious values in daily activities is evident in the tradition of the community. For example, Islamic practices such as *qalud* with certain *tarikat* in understanding Sufism are used for tasks that include problem-solving, purifying the soul and heart, and relying on other people's kindness.

However, *suluk* has evolved into a practice undertaken regularly to achieve an understanding of the spiritual state. The level of the person undertaking *suluk* is referred to as *salik*. In addition to performing *suluk*, *jama'ah* often performs other acts of worship such as obligatory and voluntary fasting, obligatory and voluntary prayers, and practising *dzikir*, prayer, and *tawajjuh*. Of all the worship services, the most important for the *suluk* pilgrims is leaving all the treasures and pleasures of the world, strengthening the intention and determination to choose the path of the hereafter that will lead him to God, as expressed by Imam Al-Ghazali (Abubakar, 1993). Therefore, *suluk* can be defined as a series of worship by focusing on getting closer to God and forgetting worldly pleasures.

Tawajjuh, as part of the *suluk* worship series, is done in congregation and relates to the spiritual aspect of religion. The custom of *tawajjuh* as a series of spiritual activities is by inviting *jama'ah* to always face God by establishing contact or relationship with their Islam teacher or mentor, face to face to learn some *dzikir* (Johan, 2015). The *tawajjuh* congregation is guided by a *sheikh* (expert) who teaches various *dzikir* over generations to ensure the transmission of knowledge from the previous instructor to the new congregation. (Johan, 2015). Therefore, *tawajjuh* can be defined as a method of transmitting the practice of *dzikir* from one generation to another through the interaction between an expert (counsellor or mentor) and a beginner (counselee).

By performing *dzikir*, people will achieve peace of mind as they reflect on themselves and feel mindful of Allah. Through *dzikir*, a person will feel that Allah is all-knowing, pays attention to all matters, and listens to any prayers and requests (Misbakhuddin & Siti Arofah, 2018). A person who always makes a *dzikir* in all situations will avoid negative behaviour and feel calm, peaceful, and comfortable in his heart (Maturidi & Maemunah, 2020). Serenity, comfort, and peace are what every human desires, and they can be achieved

by fostering subjective well-being. Various studies have examined *tawajjuh* as part of religious doctrine with a Sufistic or *tassawuf* approach that tends to have certain limitations when adopted as part of psychological therapy for improving subjective well-being. The approach is the basis for developing *tawajjuh* as a model of integrated Islamic therapy to become an Islamic therapy whose practice is well patterned and organized.

METHOD

The research used a qualitative method to obtain descriptive data from the informants of *santri*, alums and the people of Aceh. The data was recorded through various written and oral sources. The data analyzed in this research were from field studies. The author analyzed various sources of literature relevant to the topic, such as books, journal articles, print and online media, and other sources (Mardalis, 2006). In conducting the analysis, the researcher prioritized an objective interpretation in the form of an in-depth review of the issue under study, namely related to *tawajjuh* that the counsellor can apply as an Islamic therapy in fostering subjective well-being. The available data was described using content analysis and poured narratively into the research results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Islam, there are many ways to get closer to Allah, including the teaching of *thariqat* or *tarekat*. *Thariqat* comes from the word "*thariqah*", which means the path or way the Sufis took. There are many tariqahs in Indonesia, including the *Naqsyabandiyah* tariqah, which was founded by Muhammad bin Baha' al-Din al-Uwaisi al-Bukhari al-Naqsabandi (Toriquddin, 2008). The *Naqsyabandiyah* Order is a simple order and accessible with a firm holding of the sunnah by the Prophet to avoid *bid'ah*, abstaining from ill-manner behaviour by improving using exemplary characteristics and perfect behaviour (Damanhuri, 2010). The *thariqat naqsyabandiyah* can also shape the nature of spiritual development by showing various stages and positions that must be passed by a Sufi based on his experience and spirituality (Mulyati, 2006). *Suluk* is a series of congregational activities related to religious spirituality that can be interpreted as a way or path to get closer to God (Abubakar, 1993). The *suluk* ritual is focused on improving one's behaviour towards a better direction, and the fact that the ritual is carried out in a congregation implies that the ritual also aims to attract the public's interest to participate.

In the Aceh Province, Tengku Sheikh Haji Muhammad Wali Al-Khalidy or also known by the name Abuya Muda Waly, was the pioneer in the spreading the *Naqsyabandiyah Tariqat* after he returned to South Aceh by establishing an Islamic religious education institution (*dayah*) called *Darussalam* in Labuhan Haji. Abuya Muda Waly tried to disseminate the *Thariqat Naqsyabandiyah* to be hand in hand with his political activities. The lessons of *thariqat* by Muda Waly taught the local community to do religious activities such

as *suluk* and *tawajjuh* (Brunessen, 1998). The pattern of *thariqat* development that blends with social activities is undoubtedly one of the contributing factors for *thariqat* to be welcomed by the community. Furthermore, Muda Waly's expertise in gaining attention in the public sphere is fascinating to many people.

After the passing of Abuya Muda Waly, Dayah Darussalam Labuhan Haji still exists until the present day. One of the distinguishing characteristics of this *dayah* is the practice of *thariqat* where all students (*santri*) are required to practice *thariqat* after being considered mature. The *thariqat* developed in the *dayah* is *Naqsyabandiyah*, one of the famous *thariqats* still widely practised by the people of Aceh. After the passing of Abuya Muda Waly, the spread of *thariqat* was passed by his students, including Abu Lueng Ie (Abu Usman al-Fauzi) in Aceh Besar, Abu Tumin in Bireun, Abu Aziz Samalanga, Abu Tanoh Mirah, and also some of his children. Muda Waly's children who contribute to the distribution of *thariqat* are Abuya Doktor (Abu Muhibbuddin Wali), Abu Amran Wali, Abu Nasir Wali, Abuya Jamaluddin Wali, and Abu Abdurrauf who is currently the leader of Dayah Darussalam (Shadiqin, 2021). The spreading of *thariqat* seems to be going well according to an interview with one of the students (from here-on will be mentioned by the initial Tgk R) of Dayah Babussalam Baktiya, North Aceh, Abu H. Karimuddin (Abu Alue Bili). Abu Alue Bili is a great scholar in the area who is one of the *murib* (students) of Abuya Muda Waly and currently is the *mursyid* of *Thariqat Naqsyabandiyah*, a very famous scholar among the people of North Aceh who has thousands of followers and *murib* who always crowd the Dayah to follow the *Thariqat*.

Tawajjuh

Tawajjuh, from the point of view of language, is directly translated to facing, while in Sufism terms, the word *tawajjuh* means the recitation of *dzikir* by the *mursyid* or sheikh to his student's face to face. *Tawajjuh* can be carried out even though the *mursyid* is not physically present by the *rabithah* (bonding) using a medium (intermediary) related to the attention and passion of the person doing the *rabithah*, refer as the *rabithahi* (Bruinessen, 1994). *Tawajjuh* is conducted at the beginning of *suluk* activities. In this case, *tawajjuh* is slightly different from *suluk*, where *tawajjuh* can be done whenever desired, while *suluk* is bound by various strict requirements and rankings. However, both practices implement several procedures and ethics of the same activity. From its practice, *tawajjuh* prayer can be classified into three types: *tawajjuh*, *tawajjuh ta'arruf* and grand *tawajjuh* (Satriani, 2018).

Tawajjuh in prayer can be interpreted as part of facing Allah SWT because, in prayer, it is required that the heart, soul and feelings only focus on worshipping Allah SWT. Daily *tawajjuh* is the practice of certain *wirid* carried out regularly by every adherent of *Thariqat Naqsyabandiyah*, privately or in congregation. The *tawajjuh ta'aruf* is intended to implement *wirid* to establish friendship among fellow *tawajjuh* members. At the same time, *tawajjuh*

akbar is a *tawajjuh* activity held periodically, at a specific time, with a community of people who share the same understanding (Said, 1996). The grand *tawajjuh* activity invites the community's attention to its implementation by involving many participants in public places.

Over time, the development of *tawajjuh* in *dayah* or among the people of Aceh is not solely filled with a series of *dzikir* practices but also other activities in the context of *tazkiyatun naff* (self-improvement). In an interview with Tgk R, he stated that when new *santri* boarded at *dayah tawajjuh*, besides *dzikir*, it will usually also be filled with advice or lectures in order to motivate the *santri* to survive, be patient and be diligent in learning the knowledge taught at *Dayah*. In addition, Tgk G, one of the people of Pidie Jaya, stated that *tawajjuh* is also very often improvised with advice and poetry with the aim of *muhasabah* (self-introspection) for all aspects of life to improve or increase the positive behaviour that must be improved in order to get closer to Allah SWT.

Islamic Therapy

Counsellors often use two terms in providing healing or treatment: therapy and psychotherapy. The term therapy is a curative process or recovery often used in health science in the medical field. Therapy is often used during counselling and psychotherapy (Mappiare, 2006). The term psychotherapy is derived from the combination of the two phrases: psycho and therapy. Psycho refers to the mind or mental processes, whereas therapy refers to the treatment or healing of psychological issues. Thus, psychotherapy is frequently believed to be the mending of the soul (Amin, 2010). Psychotherapy can also be defined as medication, treatment and care of psychological disorders through psychological methods (Rahayu, 2009). It can be concluded that therapy is a method of recovery for the counselee given by a counsellor in solving the counselee's psychological problems.

The word therapy in English means treatment and recovery, while in Arabic, the word therapy is equivalent to *al-istisyfa'*, which comes from *shafa-yasyfi-syifa'*, which directly translates to heal. Muhammad Abdul Aziz Al-Khalidiy has used the term in his book, *Al-Istisyfa' bil Qur'an* (Amin, 2010). From the Islamic perspective, the term recovery is not only viewed physically but also from the psychological aspect. In particular, the psychological recovery is considered significant and even more fundamental. The recovery is often referred to as *tahsinul qulub* or cleaning the heart from despicable traits towards God and fellow humans. Hence, therapy in Islam certainly involves horizontal and vertical relationships, namely, the relationship between himself and God and himself with fellow humans to achieve the benefits of the world and the hereafter.

Tawajjuh in Establishing Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being can be defined as the cognitive characteristic of a person and affective evaluation of their life, including the evaluations of emotional reactions to specific

events and the cognitive judgements about satisfaction and fulfilment. Thus, subjective well-being is a broad concept that includes the experience of pleasant emotions, low negative mood, and high life satisfaction (Snyder & Shane J. Lopez, 2002). Subjective well-being includes a broad scope that deals with a person's self-evaluation and emotional reactions to achieve lifetime satisfaction.

Subjective well-being is an individual's life evaluation, including the affective and cognitive evaluation. The cognitive evaluation in question is the overall and specific life satisfaction. At the same time, the affective evaluation is the reaction to all life events, including pleasant and unpleasant emotions. High subjective well-being refers to an individual experiencing a multitude of positive emotions and minimal negative emotions. High subjective well-being is typically associated with engaging in stimulating activities, having numerous enjoyable experiences, and feeling content with one's life (Diener, 2000). Every individual desires the satisfaction of life, and people are willing to make every effort that they believe will bring comfort and peace in life, including by carrying out the *tawajjuh* ritual.

Tawajjuh, as a ritual performed by *dzikir* guided by a teacher with specific procedures, can have a positive impact. By doing *dzikir*, individuals will avoid all negative behaviour, and their souls will become more comfortable, calm, and peaceful (Maturidi & Maemunah, 2020). The terms comfortable, calm, and peaceful are often associated with subjective well-being. From an Islamic perspective, the same feelings are also found in *tawajjuh*. Self-evaluation, referred to as *muhasabah* in Islam, involves assessing one's actions and potential positive impacts in both the present world and the afterlife.

Based on the interview with *santri* Tgk A, he stated that conducting a series of *tawajjuh* processes results in a sense of comfort from within themselves compared to the anxiety and fear experienced. For *santri*, pessimistic feelings often arise, and they need psychological help to strengthen and provide moral support for their anxiety. Another student who went by the initial Tgk B and participated in *tawajjuh* similarly stated that he found a more meaningful life after attending *tawajjuh*. The student felt that any regrettable and negatives in life would not result in pessimism but optimism to be back on track and improve himself to a better life. The impact is wrapped in beneficial impulses that grow from within a person, owing to social support, particularly the teachers. Thus, it can be concluded that *tawajjuh* becomes an essential medium to improve subjective well-being towards a positive direction.

The study suggested that *tawajjuh*, part of a religious ritual with a Sufism approach, impacts cognitive and affective assessments of one's life satisfaction. *Tawajjuh* can reduce all forms of anxiety and change the negative feelings to focus on the happiness and well-being of a person. It is considered that *tawajjuh* should continue to be applied by a counsellor as a form of effort to improve subjective well-being in resolving various psychological problems the counselee faces.

Tawajjuh is an Islamic Therapy for Improving Subjective Well-Being

Therapy and recovery through an Islamic approach (i.e., praying) are often referred to as *As-syifa*. Islamic psychotherapy or *al-istsyfa bi Alquran wa al-Du'a* is the recovery of psychological diseases and disorders based on the guidance of the values emitted by the Quran through *dzikir* and prayer (Arifin, 2009). The slightest problem that comes to the surface must be handled wisely to avoid more complex problems, which can destabilize a person's health and become more challenging to overcome or resolve. On the other hand, even troublesome problems can be overcome and resolved inappropriately through the right approach or psychotherapy (healing), namely by using the approach of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Apostle (Lubis, 2021).

According to psychology studies, meditation can be defined as an effort to limit awareness to a simulated object that does not change at a certain time. Transcendental meditation is widely used to get closer to the creator as awareness of the meditation is directed to God. One form of transcendental meditation is *dzikir* because the object of thought is directed at God, a transcendent element. The process of *dhikrullah* meditation will be successful if it is carried out with full appreciation and solely focused on Allah, and the meditation is no longer affected by the surrounding nature. When the awareness switches from physical to soul, the condition will bring about a state of silence. The *dzikir* relaxation is a passive attitude or letting go by using repeated words to cause a relaxation response such as calmness. The relaxation response combined with belief, where repeating the chosen word can evoke a relaxed state that can bring the subject to the transcendental realm (Fahmi, 2009).

Dzikir, as a part of *tawajjuh* has been proven to reduce individual anxiety in a research study in the community of Kaway XVI District. *Tawajjuh* has influenced the increasing number of attending worshipers. People who attend *majlis taklim* and *tawajjuh* have experienced many moral changes and positive relations with fellow communities and can avoid *ghibah*. The influence of *majelis taklim* and *tawajjuh* has also formed a society that is individually and socially pious (Nurjanah, 2018). Furthermore, a study also states that through empowerment by implementing *dzikir* therapy, former COVID-19 patients can gain inner peace, help reduce maladaptive behaviour (hysterical and aggressive) and help reduce symptoms of psychosomatic conditions (Andriani, 2021).

Other interviewed participants in this subject also felt the same thing, Tgk J and Tgk H, who stated that when they were new to the *dayah* for the first time, they performed *tawajjuh* and felt an inner calmness towards their anxiety about living in a new place and away from his parents. As children in general, when their parents first take them to the *pesantren* hut, they feel abandoned, and they are afraid that they will be abused. They were also afraid of being separated from their parents, which made them cry and lament their fate. The negative feelings can be eliminated when they choose to feel more optimistic in living their lives by carrying out *tawajjuh*, filled with *dzikir* and guidance from their teacher to make them calmer, more comfortable and more content. The implementation time of *tawajjuh* also influences the result

of calmness. For instance, when *tawajjuh* is done in the middle of the night in a quiet situation, away from the bustling day activities of many people, it will enhance the condition to be suitable for meditative and reflection activities.

Therefore, the *dzikir* is not only a religious ritual but can also be considered an Islamic therapy that can improve subjective well-being for individuals or groups. The impact of calmness, happiness and peace resulting from *dzikir* is an example of Islamic therapy that must be maintained and developed within Islamic communities.

Stages of Tawajjuh as Islamic Therapy

Similar to other therapies, tawajjuh as an Islamic therapy consists of several stages that must be followed:

1. Initial Interview Stage

At the initial interview stage, it is necessary to formulate what can happen during therapy, including the rules applied to the counselee. In addition, it is vital to build rapport or a great relationship that creates confidence, trust and comfort between the counsellor and counselee. The counselee must also be willing to express his thoughts and feelings about his problems to the counsellor with complete openness. The key is always to have openness and sincerity from both parties so therapy can be appropriately implemented (Lubis, 2021). Therefore, the counsellor must create an environment where the counselee may trust that any information shared during the counselling session will be kept confidential. With this guarantee, the individual seeking counselling will feel at ease and openly discuss all the challenges they are experiencing. The state of trust is essential for counsellors to provide psychological support and aid counsees in addressing the various challenges they confront from all facets of their lives.

2. Therapy Process

At this stage, the therapist or counsellor must examine and explore the counselee's experiences relevant to the current problems. It is vital to revive the atmosphere of intimacy and two-way communication. The counsellor must also investigate and analyze the personality of the counselee and conduct detailed assessments (Lubis, 2021). Both factors are critical to obtaining a successful therapy, and when the therapy is completed, what happened during the therapy can influence solving the problems faced by the counselee. The articulation of various opinions regarding the presence of guidance and *dzikir* in the tawajjuh process directly influences happiness, as it is perceived as a requirement for positive interaction and correlation. Therefore, during the Islamic treatment using the tawajjuh approach, there is a connection between deep thinking and the recitation of religious phrases tailored to the specific issues of the counselee.

3. Action or Evaluation

At this point, both the therapist and the counselee engage in a comprehensive assessment of the knowledge and skills acquired by the counselee during therapy, as well as their potential application in future life situations. It is crucial to undertake this action to attain the therapy's mutually agreed goals. Thus, both the counsellor and the counselee must share a mutual understanding regarding the necessity of taking action (Lubis, 2021). Both parties must carry out the action stage to ensure a successful evaluation of the therapeutic treatment to achieve the main objectives. Based on the expression of Tgk M and Tgk Z, the tawajjuh process carried out by the students in the dayah is not only once but many times with a large number. For example, tawajjuh was practised several times in one month (i.e., four to eight times). The frequency is increased for those who follow suluk during Ramadan. Hence, to attain optimal circumstances, a counselling procedure necessitates the commitment and dedication of all parties involved and an ongoing and repetitive effort, rather than a one-time occurrence, to accomplish the desired state of contentment and psychological wellness for the individual seeking counselling.

4. Therapy Completion

Therapy can end if the goals have been agreed upon but also if the counselee does not continue therapy. Therapy can also end if the therapist cannot help the counselee, but the therapist must refer the counselee to another expert according to the type of problem. The therapist must gradually eliminate the counselee's dependence on him, as the counselee will face their remaining problem without the help of the therapist or counsellor. In this regard, if the counsellor cannot overcome the problems faced by the counselee, then the counsellor is advised to transfer the case to a more appropriate related party so that the problems faced by the counselee can be resolved (Lubis, 2021).

CONCLUSION

In Islam, there are many ways to get closer to Allah, including the teaching of *thariqat*. *Thariqat* comes from the word "*thariqah*", which means the path or flow taken by Sufis. Many *tariqahs* are found in the Aceh part of the Indonesian archipelago, including the *Naqsyabandiyah Tariqah*. The term *suluk* in *tariqah* is a series of congregational activities related to religious spirituality. *Suluk* can also be interpreted as bringing someone closer to God. Meanwhile, *tawajjuh* is the beginning of *suluk* activities. In this case, *tawajjuh* is slightly different from *suluk*, where *tawajjuh* can be done whenever they want, while *suluk* is bound by various strict requirements and rankings. *Tawajjuh*, as a ritual, is commonly performed by doing *dzikir* and followed by guidance by a teacher with specific procedures that can have a positive impact. Individuals will avoid negative behaviour With *dzikir* and guidance, and their mental health will be more comfortable, calmer, and peaceful. The *dzikir* relaxation is a form of passive attitude or surrendering to God by using repeated words to induce a relaxation that can bring the subject to the transcendental realm. Therefore, performing *dzikir* can improve the subjective well-being.

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