

## Sholat as Mental Health Rehabilitation for Islamic Guidance Students

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### Abstract

Mental health issues among students are a significant concern, especially when facing academic, social, and personal pressures during their studies. This research aims to explore how the practice of prayer can serve as a form of spiritual support in maintaining the mental stability of students. The research was conducted at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) Medan using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation from seven students from various study programs aged 20-24 years. Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that prayer is able to provide inner peace, reduce anxiety, and significantly improve mood. This effectiveness depends on the quality of its execution, especially if done with awareness of spiritual needs and reverence. Conversely, prayer performed solely as a formal routine without inner presence does not have a significant psychological impact. This finding implies the importance of strengthening the quality of worship as part of a holistic approach to addressing students' mental health issues.

**Keywords:** Islamic Coping Mechanisms, Spiritual Intervention, Mental Health Rehabilitation, Students of Islamic Higher Education

### Introduction

Mental health is an important aspect that must be owned by every individual, especially for students who are in the transition phase of development towards adulthood. According to WHO (World Health Organization), Adolescents are individuals aged 15-24 years, which also includes student groups. At this age, individuals are entering adulthood, which begins to form their own identity, build values, seek their own values that change until they form an identity. However, the reality in the field shows that academic demands, such as assignments given by lecturers. This disrupts the mental health of students, causing them to lose their enthusiasm for learning due to anxiety and stress (Sari & Susmiatin, 2023).

Data WHO (2025) shows that every year around 727,000 people die by suicide, which is the third leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds globally, with 73% of cases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Although this data comes from all over the world, the trend of mental health disorders in Indonesia, especially among university students, is also visible. In Indonesia, the issue of mental health problems in students is also real. One of them, based on a report from the Medical Center of one of the universities, recorded 115 cases of mental disorders in clients aged 21-23 years during 2016-2019, with depression and anxiety as the most common disorders (Setyanto et al., 2023). In addition, various suicide cases involving students such as at UI (March 2023), UNDIP (August 2023), and UMY (October 2023), are important signals for the world of education to respond to mental health issues seriously and integratively (Karisma et al., 2024).

Academic and social pressures that are not properly addressed can weaken an individual's ability to cope with stress, or coping mechanisms. Lazarus, Folkman and

Maryam (2017) states that unaddressed stress can have a negative impact both physically and psychologically. This happens when individuals do not have sufficient strategies to handle stress, they become more vulnerable to mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems. Therefore, an appropriate approach is needed, which is not only therapeutic, but also has a spiritual and integrative dimension.

One relevant approach is religious coping, which is a strategy to deal with stress through religious aspects. According to Pargament dan Angganantyo (2014) said when someone faces something difficult and feels unable to rely on others, they use religious coping strategies. For example, prayer, worship, and faith can give hope and a sense of comfort to someone who is facing pressure (Rammohan et al., 2002).

One of the main forms of religious practice in Islam is prayer. Prayer as an obligation has a structure and spiritual content that can maintain psychological balance, such as increasing self-awareness, focusing the mind, and providing peace of mind (Qomariyah & Wulandari, 2022). Allah's promise states that people who pray with khushu will gain peace of mind (Sit, 2011). In prayer there is also education and lessons that can be taken to serve as guidelines and muhasabah tools in life. Therefore, prayer can be an effective strategic tool to improve mental health, especially for those who face complex life burdens.

Prayer has a special position in the teachings of Islam. The prayer command comes down differently from other compulsory worship services which are revealed and delivered through the intermediary of the angel Gabriel, but the obligation to pray comes down directly to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, in a glorious event in the most majestic place and accepted by noble humans as well (Shalehah et al., 2023). Prayer is called the pillar of religion and is the first practice that will be judged. In addition to the value of worship, the movements in prayer also have physical benefits because they resemble light exercise activities, as well as mental benefits because they familiarize individuals to be focused, reflective, and leave for a moment the hustle and bustle of the world (Hakim, 2020).

According to Wasfiyah et al. (2025) Regular prayer is not only a religious obligation, but it also provides an opportunity to relax and maintain mental health and stability. In practice, the movements and readings performed during prayer also serve as a form of active meditation that can reduce mental stress. Previous research explains that the implementation of prayer is able to bring gratitude so that with gratitude it can increase positive thoughts that have an impact on psychological well-being (Permatasari & Rahmadani, 2023). Other research explains that prayer can be a remedy for student mental health. Prayer also has an impact on the exercise aspect, meditation aspect, togetherness aspect and auto-suggestion aspect (Anugrah et al., 2024). While other studies explain that prayer can be a solution for modern people who experience anxiety because prayer is able to bring calm to the soul (Elvina, 2022).

Of the many studies that have been conducted, most are still descriptive and do not specifically examine students who regularly use prayer as a way to recover mentally. In addition, there are not many studies that examine students' personal experiences in understanding and practicing prayer as a means of psychological rehabilitation. This research tries to fill the void by focusing on students who are aware and consistently use it as part of mental recovery.

Thus, this study aims to explore in depth how prayer is understood, felt, and lived as a form of mental rehabilitation for college students. This study is expected to reinforce the idea that spiritual approaches can work together with psychological approaches to build the mental resilience of university students. In addition, this study is also expected to enrich the scientific understanding of the relationship between Islamic ritual worship and mental health, while offering an alternative perspective that is relevant and applicable to addressing current health issues.

## **Methods**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which is an approach to explore and understand the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach was chosen because it can describe and understand how the practice of prayer plays a role as a form of mental health rehabilitation for Islamic Guidance students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan. (Abdussamad, 2021). The researcher acts as the main instrument in the process of data collection and analysis.

The participants in this study were seven active students of UIN North Sumatra from the Islamic Guidance and Counseling study program who consistently made prayer as part of the mental recovery process. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, with the criteria that students aged 20-24 years, have experiences of psychological disorders such as stress or anxiety, and consciously and routinely make prayer as a coping mechanism.

Data collection techniques used in this study include: In-depth interviews conducted to explore the experiences and perceptions of students. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner that allowed researchers to explore participants' personal experiences in depth, but still referred to an open-ended question guide. The interview process was conducted informally in a campus environment with a duration of 30-40 minutes and recorded with a sound record after obtaining approval. In addition, participatory observation was carried out to see directly in the campus environment to observe the situation of students. Documentation is done to support interview and observation data such as evidence of social media posting records. Literature study used to understand concepts and theories relevant to this research such as books, journals and previous research (Abubakar, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted with reference to the model Miles & Huberman (1994) which was used in three stages: Data reduction by filtering and simplifying information on important things only. Then presenting the data by arranging the findings systematically so that it is easy to understand. And drawing conclusions based on data that has been collected subjectively from researchers. Thematic coding was done manually by entering codes into parts of the text that had relevant meanings. Then, the parts of the text were grouped into the resulting themes. To ensure the validity of the data, a triangulation technique was used. This triangulation technique is a data check to avoid bias, reduce ambiguity and strengthen research results. Thus, the analysis and validity of the data is reliable and in-depth in the findings (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). The researcher also reflected on their position as students in the same campus environment, which has positive possibilities and negative possibilities. Therefore, the researcher tried not to get too emotionally involved with the subjects when interpreting the data, using an analytical approach. The researcher's

cultural and religious attachment is one of the limitations of this study, which may have affected the way they understood the meaning of the subjects' experiences.

## Results and Discussion

This study aims to understand how students experience prayer as a way of rehabilitating their mental health. Prayer, which is a spiritual act of worship and a daily routine, is not only seen as an obligation, but also as a medium for inner healing. Using a qualitative approach, this study explores the inner processes that students experience when they routinely perform meaningful prayers in managing their mental state. To obtain in-depth and diverse data, researchers interviewed seven students from various backgrounds. The following is a list of informants who are the main source of data in this study:

**Table 1: Research Informants**

Code Informan	Gender	Description
DPA	Female	Final Student
MS	Male	Final Student
NA	Female	Final Student
EY	Female	Final Student
PR	Female	Final Student
FHS	Male	Final Student
AA	Male	Final Student

From the interviews, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The researcher identified recurring patterns, categories and meanings in the informants' narratives, then grouped the findings into three main themes. Each theme represents an important aspect of the informant's experience, ranging from the mental condition before praying regularly, the process of psychological change during the practice, to the characteristics of prayer that are considered the most effective in helping mental recovery. The following is a thematic mapping of the research results:

**Table 2. Thematic Findings**

Tema	Subtema
Student Mental's Health Condition Before Prayer Rehabilitation	Anxiety, stress, overthinking, loss of motivation, academic and social pressures
Prayer to Rehabilitate Students' Mental Health	Calming effects, increased emotional resilience, spiritual and symbolic meaning of prayer
Prayer Criteria as a Means of Rehabilitation for Student Mental Health	Prayers as a necessity and prayers that are khushu'

To understand this in more depth, the following discussion of the research results is organized based on the three main themes that have been described.

### Mental Health Conditions of Students Before Prayer Rehabilitation

Based on the results of in-depth interviews, the majority of students experienced health problems before making prayer a means of rehabilitation. Forms of disorders



This is in line with the opinion of Ardiansyah et al. (2023) who stated that mental health disorders have a direct impact on students' productivity, academic performance, and social relationships. The emergence of psychological burdens such as overthinking, mental fatigue, social pressure, and loss of calmness indicates that students lack effective stress management strategies. However, a calm state of mind is crucial for students to think clearly and control negative emotions that may lead to harmful behaviours (Septia et al., 2023).

According to Lazarus and Folkman's stress coping theory in Maryam (2017), individuals tend to use emotion-based coping when they feel unable to change stressful situations. For example, some individuals choose to avoid tasks, withdraw from social environments, or continue to experience unproductive worries. This indicates that their emotional regulation is not yet optimal, so the psychological resilience that should help them cope with academic pressure does not function properly.

Researchers observe that academic pressure, social demands, and family expectations create narrow standards of success, which are one of the causes of mental health issues among students. Additionally, students who do not engage in spiritual practices such as prayer find it more difficult to achieve transcendental inner peace.

This finding is reinforced by Galderisi et al. (2015), which states that mental health is an internal balance that enables individuals to live in harmony with universal values, such as respect, compassion, and interpersonal relationships. When this balance is disrupted, individuals are more prone to mental disorganisation, such as anxiety, pessimism, and loss of meaning in life. Students who lack an internal foundation, such as spirituality or self-awareness, are more likely to experience psychological disorientation when faced with pressure.

Overall, nearly all informants experienced various mental pressures, ranging from anxiety, career uncertainty, academic fatigue, to overthinking. Before performing prayer, their psychological condition was generally characterised by feelings of restlessness, suffocation, unease, and loss of motivation. This condition made them psychologically vulnerable, thereby disrupting their emotional stability. Therefore, this underscores the importance of spiritual approaches like prayer to support their mental balance.

### **Prayer as Mental Health Rehabilitation for Students**

Findings in the field indicate that students who pray regularly are better able to cope with various pressures that disturb their mental health. This is because the peace of mind gained after praying enables them to think more clearly and rationally when facing problems. This is in contrast to students who do not pray, who tend to be more vulnerable when faced with pressures and problems that disturb their mental health. The peace of mind brought by prayer instils the belief that everything will pass, along with the confidence that Allah's help will come.

Based on interviews with informants, it was found that the practice of regular and devout prayer brings significant changes to their psychological condition. Prayer helps reduce anxiety levels, improve mood, and strengthen emotional resilience. Most informants stated that their initial motivation for praying was due to obligation, but over time, prayer became an inner need that provided a sense of calm and relief. As stated by DPA:





optimal brain cell function. Studies conducted Hasiholan, Togi Prima, Pratami, Rezki, & Wahid (2020) This shows that prostration and other worship practices have spiritual benefits in addition to helping a person's mental balance.

The ritual and psychotherapeutic effects of prayer are also felt by the informant, EY, who initially felt that prayer was a form of coercion, but over time it became a source of comfort and necessity. As stated in the following interview:

“At first it was forced, but over time it became a necessity because we feel a sense of peace during prayer.” (Interview, 2025)

However, the effectiveness of prayer as a form of mental rehabilitation depends heavily on how deeply an individual can perform it with devotion, reflection, and consistency. PR acknowledged that initially, prayer was performed out of parental pressure, but over time, inner awareness and emotional changes emerged. Researchers assess that with a deep understanding, prayer can function as an effective form of spiritual self-healing, especially for students facing academic and social pressures.

The peace provided by prayer has proven to be crucial in the process of mental healing. Allah states in the Quran, Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 28:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Meaning: "Those who believe will find peace in their hearts when they remember Allah. Remember that only by remembering Allah will the heart find peace."

This verse explains that peace and tranquillity are attained by remembering Allah through worship, including prayer. Within prayer, there are recitations of remembrance and supplications directed towards Allah SWT. Cultivating the habit of prayer not only brings one closer spiritually but also helps overcome all mental challenges (Lutfiah & Nahuda, 2024).

Prayer performed with devotion and sincerity will be a source of strength for the soul, a comfort for the depressed, a cleanser of doubts, and an illuminator of the heart. On the other hand, those who perform prayer carelessly, without understanding and without devotion, tend not to achieve that peace, so prayer has not been able to overcome mental disturbances (Ayyub, 2003; Fahrur Rasyid, 2023).

### **Criteria for Prayer as a Means of Mental Health Rehabilitation for Students**

The results of this study indicate that prayer has the potential to serve as a means of mental health rehabilitation for students. However, not all forms of prayer can effectively provide healing effects. The effectiveness of prayer as a form of mental healing depends heavily on the spiritual quality and personal awareness of the individual performing it. Based on field findings, there are two main criteria for prayer that significantly contribute to healing effects on students' psychological conditions: prayer performed out of necessity and prayer performed with devotion (khusyu').

#### **1. Prayer out of necessity**

This study shows that prayer has the potential as a means of mental health rehabilitation for students. However, not all prayer practices can effectively provide healing effects. The effectiveness of prayer as a form of mental healing depends heavily on the spiritual quality and personal awareness of the individual performing it. Based on field findings, there are two main criteria for prayer that significantly contribute to healing effects on students' psychological conditions: prayer performed out of necessity and prayer performed with devotion (khusyu')(Nisa & Pradana, 2023).

Allah says in surah al-baqarah verse 153:



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“O you who believe, make patience and prayer your helpers. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.

This verse explains that with all the problems you are facing that disturb your feelings and mental state, be patient and pray so that all problems can be resolved (Kirana & Sulidar, 2024).

A person's emotional and spiritual involvement in worship will increase if they pray out of inner need, not simply out of routine or obligation. This is in line with the intrinsic religiosity oleh Allport & Ross dan Tahmasbipour & Taheri (2011), which states that religion can only play a role in improving mental health if it arises in personal awareness or intrinsically, not from external influences. In addition, according to Nakhma'ussolikah & Winarso (2025), Islam plays a role as mental health therapy through moral, spiritual, and social approaches that help a person achieve emotional, mental, and spiritual balance when facing life's challenges.

## 2. Prayer with khusyu'

Khusyu' means a state in which the heart is completely submissive, focused, and present when performing worship, followed by all members of the body, both physically and spiritually. Ibn al-Qayyim explains that khusyu' is divided into two categories. The first is khusyu' iman, which refers to a state of the heart filled with hope, reverence, and fear of Allah, leading to deep love for Him and affecting the physical body. The second is khusyu' nifaq, which is khusyu' of the physical body alone while the heart remains unaffected (Zakiya, 2021).

Devotion in prayer is necessary because it enables prayer to bring about a sense of calm and comfort in one's feelings, thoughts, and mind. Through devotion, prayer can also overcome all the problems one faces, as prayer becomes a source of assistance for those who perform it with sincerity (Damra et al., 2021). Essentially, prayer is not merely a duty of a servant to the Creator, but it is a form of love and compassion that Allah bestows upon His servants who are in need and full of hope in performing prayer. Within prayer, movements and recitations can be a source of physical and mental health, as there is relaxation and calmness within them (Fajrussalam et al., 2022).

According to research, prayer performed with devotion has a significant impact on the soul and mind, as we are trained to focus and recite each prayer while the heart feels and understands what is being recited and each movement within it. Based on interviews in this study, devotion is the key to experiencing the therapeutic effects of prayer. Informants described that when they were truly focused and spiritually present in prayer, the mental burden they felt became lighter.

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Ahmad (2015) It is mentioned that performing prayer with devotion, with the intention of turning towards and surrendering completely to Allah, can make a person feel calm, safe, and at peace. Researchers found that prayer performed with special attention can be an excellent way to nurture oneself spiritually, especially for students experiencing academic and emotional stress.

Prayer performed with devotion, understanding each action, and feeling a need for prayer, fosters a sense of sincerity and happiness when performing it. Prayer is a highly suitable form of rehabilitation for mental issues and disorders being faced, but its performance must be proper and correct. If prayer does not have an impact on the person performing it, there may be something amiss in their prayer (Permatasari & Rahmadani, 2023).

## Conclusion

This study reveals that many students experience mental health challenges such as anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation, and social-academic pressure before turning to prayer as a form of spiritual rehabilitation. The findings highlight that prayer, when performed regularly and with full awareness, offers meaningful psychological benefits by calming the mind, regulating emotions, and fostering inner peace and resilience. However, these benefits are strongly influenced by the quality and sincerity of the practice; prayer rooted in personal need and performed with devotion has a significantly greater impact compared to prayer done merely out of routine. These insights underscore the potential of prayer as a therapeutic tool within religious psychology and Islamic counselling, particularly in addressing student mental health through spiritual means. Nonetheless, given the limited scope and sample size of this study, further research particularly with quantitative or mixed-method approaches is needed to deepen understanding and explore how prayer compares with other psychological interventions such as mindfulness, relaxation, or conventional counselling in promoting mental well-being.

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