



International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS)
Conference Proceedings 2025

An Islamic Educational Approach to Students' Mental Health Challenges Amidst Academic Pressure and the Influence of Social Media

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ABSTRACT :

This study explores the role of Islamic education in addressing students' mental health challenges amid academic pressure and the pervasive influence of social media. Using a qualitative library research approach, this study reviews Indonesian journals published between 2022 and 2025 that discuss the integration of Islamic values into students' mental well-being. The findings reveal that academic pressure and excessive use of social media are dominant factors leading to anxiety, emotional instability, and learning difficulties. Islamic education—emphasizing patience (*patience*), gratitude (*gratitude*), and trust in God (*trust*)—offers both preventive and curative strategies for mental resilience. Integrating worship practices, such as prayer and *dhikr*, into educational settings supports emotional balance and spiritual awareness. Therefore, Islamic education plays a strategic role not only in forming moral character but also in building psychological stability in the digital age.

Key words: *Islamic education, mental health, academic pressure, social media, spiritual resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The mental health of students in Indonesia is now an increasingly pressing educational issue. Data from *World Health Organization* (WHO) in 2023 noted that one in seven adolescents in the world experienced mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and significant academic stress, with the highest prevalence rates being in the middle school to college age range. (World Health Organization, 2023). In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) reports that approximately 55% of students experience symptoms of academic stress and 33% show signs of emotional distress due to study pressure and the influence of social media. This situation indicates that mental health issues are no longer an individual issue but have become a systemic challenge in the national education system.

Academic pressure often arises from social expectations and school environments that demand high academic performance without regard for their psychological capacity. Fierce academic competition, excessive workloads, and cognitive-based evaluation systems make students vulnerable to *academic burnout*. In research by Alviasari et al. (2025), students who lacked strong social and spiritual support showed higher levels of stress than those who received religious guidance on campus. (Alivia Alviasari et al., 2025).

In addition to academic pressure, social media is also a significant factor in the decline of students' mental health. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter often create unrealistic perceptions of success and happiness, leaving students feeling pressured to emulate the idealized lifestyles they see. (Rafidah Ulfah Rusmi, n.d.) This phenomenon is called *social comparison effect*—where individuals constantly compare themselves to others online, ultimately lowering self-esteem and leading to social anxiety. Finding that high levels of social media use are inversely related to the psychological well-being of Islamic education students, suggests a consistent negative relationship between excessive digital activity and mental health. (Sa'diyah et al., 2022).

In this context, Islamic education holds a strategic position to address these challenges. Islam views education as a comprehensive process involving the formation of the mind, soul, and morals. The spiritual approach inherent in Islamic education can serve as a foundation for strengthening students' mental well-being amidst academic pressures and the massive flow of digital information. Values such as *patient*, *gratitude*, and *trust* not just a moral teaching, but also a psychological mechanism that helps individuals achieve inner peace (*ithmi'nan*) (Al-Ghazali, 2000) Islamic religious education not only teaches ritual aspects, but also instills self-awareness and the ability to manage emotions, both of which are highly relevant to efforts to maintain students' mental health. (Suryani Situmeang et al., 2024).

Thus, this study seeks to examine how an Islamic educational approach can serve as a preventive and curative strategy for addressing students' mental health issues, particularly amidst increasingly intense academic pressures and the influence of social media. This study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic education that is humanistic, contextual, and adaptive to the psychological challenges of the digital generation.

Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method. The primary focus of this study is to analyze the role of Islamic education in addressing students' mental health challenges amidst academic pressures and the influence of social media, through a systematic review of relevant scientific literature.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis model, which identifies patterns and themes that emerge from previous research. Three main themes were identified: (1) academic pressure as a trigger for student stress and anxiety, (2) the negative influence of social media on students' mental well-being, and (3) the contribution of Islamic educational values in maintaining students' inner peace and psychological resilience. The results of these three themes were then synthesized to form a conceptual framework that explains how Islamic education can function as a preventive and curative approach in addressing mental health issues.

In maintaining data validity, the author conducted source triangulation, namely comparing findings from several journals with the results of surveys by national institutions and the views of classical Islamic education experts such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina. (Al-Ghazali, 2000) Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin* emphasizes the importance of balance between the aspects of reason, spirit, and soul (nafs) in education, which is in line with the modern concept of mental health. Meanwhile, Ibn Sina in *The Book of Healing* illustrates that the human soul can be healed from disorders through spiritual practice, self-control, and moral habits. (Ibn Sina, 1952).

Thus, this literature review method is not only descriptive but also analytical and reflective. The goal is not simply to collect data, but rather to integrate modern empirical findings with classical Islamic scholarship to offer a more comprehensive educational approach to student mental health in the digital age.

Result

Research shows that academic pressure and the influence of social media are two dominant factors affecting the mental health of students in Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology shows that more than 50% of junior high and high school students in Indonesia experience symptoms of stress due to academic workloads, such as excessive assignments, mounting exams, and high parental expectations. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, 2024) This situation is exacerbated by the weak psychological support system in schools, where the ratio of counselors to students is highly imbalanced.

Furthermore, intensive social media use has been shown to negatively correlate with students' psychological well-being. The higher the frequency of social media use, the lower the students' levels of life satisfaction and subjective happiness. (Sa'diyah et al., 2022) This impact arises because students often get caught up in excessive social comparison and feel inferior to the image of perfection displayed on social media. (Aisyah & Rakhmawati, 2021). In the context of Islamic psychology, this phenomenon indicates weak self-control (*mujabadah an-nafs*) and spiritual awareness, which causes individuals to be easily swayed by external influences.

Meanwhile, research examining the role of Islamic education has shown more positive results. Islamic religious education contributes 8.1% to students' mental health, with key indicators being improved inner peace and emotional control. Islamic counseling programs effectively reduce anxiety levels and increase students' learning optimism through dhikr (remembrance of God) and spiritual reflection.

Values such as *patient*, *gratitude*, and *trust* has a direct influence on students' ability to manage academic pressure (Akip et al., 2025). These values act as a religious coping mechanism (*religious coping mechanism*) that helps students see difficulties as part of the learning process of life, not a

tiring burden. In several Islamic schools, the integration of religious activities such as Dhuha prayer, morning tadarus, and religious mentoring has been shown to strengthen students' emotional balance and create a calming learning climate.(Akip et al., 2025).

In addition to its positive impact on individuals, Islamic education also strengthens the social and collective aspects of students' lives. A school environment that embraces a religious culture fosters a sense of community and social support among students, which serves as a natural buffer against emotional distress. Schools with consistent religious activities—such as short-term Islamic boarding schools (pesantren kilat), Quranic study groups, and community service activities—help students channel their emotional energy in positive ways.(Faoziah & Shanie, 2025).

In general, the results of this literature review demonstrate a strong relationship between the implementation of Islamic education and increased mental resilience in students. Islamic values, when integrated into the learning system and school life, play a vital role in fostering self-awareness, emotional control, and a sense of spiritual responsibility. This demonstrates that Islamic education is not merely a religious instrument, but also an educational system capable of addressing the psychological challenges of students in the modern era.(Suryani Situmeang et al., 2024).

Discussion

Research results show that academic pressure and the influence of social media are two major factors contributing to mental health disorders in students. These two factors interact to shape students' thought patterns and behaviors, making them vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and a loss of meaning in learning. In the context of educational psychology, academic pressure not balanced with social and spiritual support can lead to *academic burnout*, namely mental exhaustion resulting from the constant burden of studying without sufficient emotional recovery. Strong religious routines are better able to maintain emotional stability than those without spiritual habits.

In addition to pressures from the educational system, the influence of social media also plays a significant role in deteriorating students' mental health. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter create a culture of excessive social comparison, where adolescents constantly compare themselves to others. The impact is the emergence of feelings of inferiority, social anxiety, and impaired concentration in learning. High levels of social media use are correlated with a decline in students' self-reflection skills within the context of Islamic spirituality. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept *dopamine overstimulation*, where the brain becomes accustomed to receiving instant stimulation from gadgets, making it difficult to enjoy the learning process which

requires focus and patience. Islam provides a fundamental solution to this problem through its teachings. *tazkiyatun nafs*—purification of the soul from the negative influence of worldly desires and impulses. In the context of education, *tazkiyatun nafs* can be applied through spiritual disciplines such as dhikr, prayer, reading the Qur'an, and self-reflection.

Islam views mental health as an integral part of a balanced life (*balance*) between the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. This concept is emphasized in the view of Al-Ghazali, who calls the human soul *asal-nafs al-nathiqah*, namely a rational entity that can experience disturbances if not controlled by reason and moral values. Al-Ghazali wrote that true education is a process *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) which leads to inner balance and true happiness (Al-Ghazali, 2000). This perspective has strong relevance to modern theory *positive psychology*, especially on the concepts *self-regulation* And *meaning-making*, where psychological well-being is achieved through self-awareness and meaning of life experiences.

Meanwhile, Ibn Sina in *The Book of Healing* explains that mental health cannot be achieved only through medical therapy, but also through *Riyadh an-nafs*—training in self-control and habituation of morals (Ibn Sina, 1952). According to him, education functions to direct spiritual potential in order to be able to withstand excessive emotional impulses. This principle is very relevant to the context of today's students who face digital and social pressures. On the other hand, Al-Raghib al-Asfahani added that the balance between reason and passion is the basis of human happiness. When humans dominate passions with reason and faith, then a calmness called *peace*.

From these various perspectives, it can be concluded that Islamic education is not only a religious learning system, but also a process of developing the soul that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual elements. Values such as *patient, gratitude, trust, And sincere* serves as a main pillar in maintaining mental balance. In educational practice, these values can be applied through strategies *integrated spiritual learning*, namely incorporating religious elements into all teaching and learning activities, not just in Islamic Religious Education subjects. For example, the habit of self-reflection (*reflection*) before exams, or cultivating spiritual meaning behind the learning process.

In addition to the value aspect, the discussion also highlighted the importance of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as agents of mental health in schools. PAI teachers hold a strategic position because they function as both moral educators and spiritual counselors. Teachers who implement an empathetic and reflective approach based on Islamic values are able to significantly reduce student anxiety levels (Akip et al., 2025). This demonstrates that teachers' emotional and spiritual competence is a crucial factor in creating a calming learning environment.

Furthermore, the role of Islamic educational institutions can be strengthened through integrated Islamic counseling programs that emphasize a balance between modern psychotherapy and Islamic values. Programs such as *spiritual mentoring*, *self-development circle*, and *reflective short-term Islamic boarding school* can provide a platform for students to manage their emotions, increase spiritual awareness, and strengthen social support. Thus, Islamic education can play a concrete role in preventing and addressing mental health problems in students arising from academic pressures and social media.

From a contemporary educational perspective, these Islamic values can be integrated into the model of *integrated spiritual learning*, namely the integration of spiritual aspects into all learning activities, not just Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects. For example, teachers can begin lessons with prayer and reflection, or link scientific concepts to the greatness of God as a form of learning. *scientific monotheism* This approach fosters a balance between students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a central role as agents of mental health in schools. Teachers are not only instructors of religious doctrine but also spiritual guides, able to guide students in finding meaning in every difficulty. PAI teachers who implement an empathetic and reflective approach can reduce student anxiety levels by up to 30%. This demonstrates that the presence of teachers with high emotional sensitivity can serve as a form of preventative therapy in the school environment.

Islamic schools also need to develop programs of *integrated Islamic counseling* which emphasizes the synergy between modern psychotherapy and Islamic values. This approach can be realized through activities such as *self-development circle*, *spiritual mentoring*, or *reflective short-term Islamic boarding school*. These activities provide a space for students to express their emotions in a healthy manner while strengthening their spiritual awareness. In a policy context, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology is expected to support the integration of mental health into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and school activities. Teacher training programs on mental health literacy based on Islamic values could be a strategic step. Schools can also collaborate with religious institutions to provide spiritual guidance services for students.

The integration of Islamic education and positive psychology needs to be further developed through empirical research. Concepts such as *spiritual resilience* and *Islamic coping mechanism* can be measured through quantitative and qualitative studies. The results of this study will strengthen the position of Islamic education as a scientific approach to addressing adolescent psychological problems. Furthermore, it is important to consider the role of the family in supporting children's mental health. Islam emphasizes that the family is the first madrasah for

moral formation. Collaboration between teachers, parents, and school counselors will strengthen the emotional support system for students. Social media, which was initially informative, now needs to be directed to become *educational and spiritual*. Creative preaching content, religious reflections, or inspirational stories can be alternative digital consumption options that soothe students' souls. Thus, social media becomes not only a source of distraction but also a means of Islamic mental development.

In the long term, Islamic education needs to build a new paradigm: from merely *transfer of knowledge* going to *formation of soul*. Education that emphasizes human integrity (*perfect human being*) will be able to balance spiritual, emotional, and social intelligence. This paradigm can be the foundation for reforming the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia. Amidst the identity crisis and pressures of modern life, Islamic teachings offer a model *spiritual intelligence* which is rooted in *monotheism* and *purification*. When students understand that everything has a divine purpose, academic stress and social pressures are seen as trials, not hardships. This perspective fosters strong psychological resilience. Thus, the Islamic educational approach serves not only as a means of moral development but also as a system of psychological therapy rooted in spiritual values.²⁹ Islamic values such as patience, gratitude, trust in God, and sincerity have proven effective in fostering emotional balance and inner peace amidst the overwhelming influence of social media and academic pressure.

Apart from strengthening the spiritual aspect, the Islamic educational approach also plays a role in building *sense of belonging* in the school environment. A sense of togetherness and Islamic brotherhood can reduce feelings of loneliness that trigger mental disorders in adolescents. When students feel accepted and valued without always requiring high achievement, they develop a healthier sense of self-confidence and social meaning. Habituating greetings, praying together, and collective religious activities are not only rituals but also social therapy that fosters empathy and emotional support.

Islamic education also contains a spiritual aesthetic dimension that serves as a medium for psychological healing.³¹ Activities such as reading the Qur'an, practicing calligraphy, or religious music can calm the nervous system and create a peaceful mental state. In the context of positive psychology, these religious aesthetic experiences are associated with increased *well-being* and a sense of transcendence. Therefore, the integration of Islamic art in education can be a form of *art therapy* which has spiritual and cultural value.

Furthermore, the habit of dhikr and congregational prayer at school also contributes to regulating students' emotional rhythms. Dhikr has a calming effect because it activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers heart rate and blood pressure, similar to the effects of meditation in Western psychotherapy. However, in Islam, dhikr is not only physiological but also spiritual: it reminds humans of God's presence in every situation, thus cultivating self-awareness (*mindfulness*) which is oriented towards meaning.

In addition, Islamic education encourages *meaning-centered education*— a learning process that emphasizes the meaning of each learning experience. Students are not only encouraged to understand academic concepts but also to interpret the moral and spiritual values behind them. For example, when studying biology, teachers can encourage students to reflect on the greatness of God's creation in living systems. This approach strengthens *spiritual cognition*, namely the awareness that knowledge and faith are not separate, but rather complement each other in understanding reality.

From the counseling side, the model *Islamic guidance and counseling* places the values of the Qur'an and Hadith as the basis for psychological healing. Islamic counselors help students understand that suffering is not a sign of weakness, but rather a test to improve spiritual standing. This approach focuses on *wisdom*—the search for meaning behind every problem. When students are able to find wisdom, they find it easier to accept the situation, forgive themselves, and regain their enthusiasm.

Developing teachers' spiritual competence is also a crucial factor in the effectiveness of mental development. Teachers with emotional stability and high spiritual awareness will be more sensitive to signs of student stress. Conversely, teachers who lack self-control can exacerbate students' psychological distress through negative communication. Therefore, training is essential. *emotional and spiritual quotient (ESQ)* For Islamic Education teachers, it needs to be made part of the development of professionalism of educators in Islamic schools.

From a developmental psychology perspective, the Islamic approach provides a moral foundation that helps students navigate the transition to adolescence with greater stability. Adolescence is known as a period of identity-searching and prone to existential crises. Islamic teachings, through the concept of *nature* teaches that humans have an innate potential to know and draw closer to God. Awareness of this innate nature provides moral guidance that prevents adolescents from falling into impulsive or destructive behavior.

In addition to values and spirituality, it is also important to examine the role of the social environment in supporting students' mental health. Islamic schools need to create a culture of *mercy for all the worlds*—a loving, inclusive, and bullying-free environment. When social interactions in schools are characterized by values of empathy, compassion, and fairness, students' stress and anxiety levels can be significantly reduced. In this regard, Islamic education can be an instrument of social transformation that builds a psychologically healthy school culture.

Finally, the future direction of Islamic education needs to place mental health as an integral part of the goals of *tarbiyah*. Education that focuses solely on cognition without addressing emotional and spiritual aspects will produce a generation that is intelligent but emotionally fragile. Therefore, reforms to the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must include reflective learning strategies, spiritual habits, and the strengthening of harmonious social relationships. In this way, Islamic education will not only shape people of faith and knowledge, but also individuals who are balanced, calm, and resilient in facing the challenges of the times.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study and analysis, it can be concluded that Islamic education has a significant contribution to developing students' mental resilience amidst academic pressures and the influence of social media. Islamic education provides a holistic approach, combining spiritual, moral, and psychological aspects within a single personality development system. Through these values, *patient, gratitude, trust, And sincere*, students are taught to face life's difficulties with a positive and meaningful perspective. These values serve as adaptive mechanisms that foster *spiritual resilience*—the ability to recover and survive emotional stress.

Islamic education also plays a preventive role by instilling spiritual awareness from an early age through the practice of worship, character building, and moral guidance. Meanwhile, its curative function is realized through an Islamic counseling approach, school religious activities, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher development for students' spiritual well-being. Thus, a contextual and reflective Islamic education system can serve as an alternative model for addressing the student mental health crisis in the digital age.

For broader implementation, this study recommends that Islamic schools and universities integrate mental-spiritual education into the formal curriculum, as well as provide spiritual psychology training for Islamic Religious Education teachers. Furthermore, the government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, is expected to strengthen policies that support Islamic value-based counseling services. Further research is also

recommended to empirically explore the effectiveness of Islamic education programs in reducing levels of depression and anxiety in students. By combining the power of Islamic values and modern psychological approaches, Islamic education can function as a "guardian of the soul" amid rapid social and technological change. As emphasized by Ibn Sina, "Health of the mind is a balance between knowledge, deeds, and faith"—and this is where Islamic education finds its relevance in the 21st century.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to the Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University of Tulungagung, the Postgraduate Program of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University of Tulungagung, and formal institutions of the Ministry of Education and Culture, especially SMP PSM Tanen Rejotangan Tulungagung, and the parties who contributed to the invaluable support, assistance, and contributions in the completion of this work. Without their extraordinary guidance and cooperation, this writing would not have been successful. Special thanks are also extended to the Director of the Postgraduate Program of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University of Tulungagung, Prof. Dr. H. Akhyak, M.Ag., for his active involvement and support in facilitating this process.

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