

How to Curb Mental Health Issues among Higher Education Students in Malaysia: An Islamic Approach

M. Nasrul Hakim Roslan, Siti Norma Aisyah Malkan, Mohd Nasir Ayub, Ramlan Mustapha, Surita Hartini Mat Hassan, Nurul Hidayah Che Hassan

Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang, Raub Campus, Malaysia

Email: nasrulhakim@uitm.edu.my

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Abstract

The article explores suggestions and solutions to mental health problems using an Islamic approach by using Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as an alternative strategy. Researchers have used this technique to provide solutions to mental health issues among society. The overview of expert recommendations have recognized a total of 10 alternatives and solutions for dealing with mental health problems. The NGT approach also helped researchers in obtaining element validation fast, quickly and easily. It's because the elements were created by reading literature, then discussed and voted on by experts. Suggestions for additional and further study are strongly suggested to conduct a better study with specific modules in order to solve these problems.

Keyword: Nominal Group Technique, Mental Health, Islamic Approach

Introduction

Mental wellness is a broad concept that encompasses both mental health and the spectrums of mental states that exist within and beyond this range. Mental health is frequently associated with optimal functioning within individuals and their external environments, implying the absence of illness and the importance of social, psychological, and environmental forces in maintaining the balance (Bhurga et al., 2013; Pilgrim, 2019). At its most fundamental level, mental health comprises the development of an individual's capacity to exercise choice in engaging with society (Manwell et al., 2013). In order to define a person's well-being in relation to achieving personal life goals, this postulates a contemporary bioethical notion of agency and autonomy in creating or disengaging from society or the outside world.

Depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems have been around for a long time. When a person is in a state of mental health, they are aware and able to sense their strengths and weaknesses, have the resources to deal with everyday challenges, are able to focus on their job without feeling overwhelmed, and are making positive contributions to their personal and professional communities. In addition, emotional, psychological, and social well-being of a person are all main criteria and components of mental health.

The significance of a person's mental and emotional well-being is recognized and acknowledged in Islam. As we know, Holy Qur'an is a book that attempts to bring Muslim to a meaningful quality of life and utilised as a guidance by individuals who are going through difficult emotional times. Mental health concerns are becoming a worldwide epidemic. As is the case in the vast majority of countries with high incomes, suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 25 in France. 4 In a survey conducted in 2016 throughout the country with 18,875 university students in France, 37 percent of respondents reported having had an episode of depression, and 8 percent claimed having had suicidal thoughts in the recent year (Wathelet et al., 2020).

Mental Wellbeing among Higher Education Students

Recently, discussions and writings related to mental health, especially among students, are getting more and more public attention to be studied and debated. This mental health problem is caused by many factors, both external and internal, which can affect the individual's overall functionality if they do not seek early treatment. Based on statistics from the Public Health Institute 2020, 2.3 percent of Malaysians aged 16 and above experience mental health problems. Based on the discussion in the study of Farhan et al (2021) this mental health is caused by changes in growth and individual development in terms of biology, cognitive and psychology. Environmental factors and life experiences also affect students' mental health. This issue needs to be given serious attention and needs to be dealt with immediately in order to reduce the percentage of people suffering from mental health problems. According to Alias et al (2021), this becomes more and more challenging especially during the COVID-19 pandemic which forces students to study online thus causing problems of stress and anxiety. It is clear here that this pandemic has created a health crisis and has a negative impact on the mental health of individuals where students in higher education institutions are no exception.

There is no official term or one fixed definition of mental health. Cultural differences, subjective assessments and professional theories have influenced how mental health is defined. Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual is aware of his own abilities, can handle stress well, can work productively and is able to contribute to society. This means that mental health is the basis of individual well-being and the ability of society to function effectively. Mental health is an expression of emotions and symbolizes the ability to adapt in various pressures and demands of life (Aziz et al., 2020).

According to the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO): "Health is a state that includes physical, mental and social health and not just the absence of disease". To understand mental health problems, one needs to understand the concept of mental health first. There is a big difference between mental health and mental illness. A normal individual may not have good mental health all the time, but still be able to carry out normal daily

activities. In contrast to those with mental illness, where daily functioning will be affected. In general, mental health describes the level of well-being of an individual's thoughts and emotions (Aziz et al., 2020).

Mohammad and Ibrahim's (2018) study discusses the psychological stress and mental health of undergraduate students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), focusing on the comparison between male and female students. Their study takes a quantitative approach by using the research instruments used in the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) and the Mental Health Inventory (MHI). A total of 200 male and female students from various faculties and residential colleges participated in the study. The results of the study show that the majority of respondents have low psychological stress. However, male students were found to be more depressed than female students. Likewise, the findings of the MHI show that almost all respondents have a high and moderate level of mental health. However, the mental health of female respondents was found to be better than that of males.

Mohamad and Mohamed's (2020) study identified personality types and levels of mental health in university students. A total of 200 students were recruited using a random sampling technique from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UKM. The results of their study showed that one third of the respondents had a high level of psychological stress based on the GHQ-12 score. The level of psychological stress between male and female students shows a significant relationship. Fifty-eight percent of the total number of respondents in this study had a high MHI score indicating a good level of mental health. There is a significant relationship between the level of mental health of students and gender. Based on STIFIN, it was found that most respondents have an extroverted personality type, either feeling, thinking, intuiting and sensing. The results of the STAI show that the level of anxiety of the respondents of this study is moderate. Based on the BDI Test, it was found that almost 14 percent of respondents had a high depression level score and this score had a significant relationship between male and female respondents. In general, the students in this study show a good level of mental health but have the potential to face higher psychological pressure throughout their life on campus. Therefore, more counseling and student welfare programs need to be developed for the prevention of mental health problems among students in higher education institutions.

The study by Safari et al (2011) discusses issues related to the level of knowledge about mental health among students at the Public Institute of Higher Education (IPTA) based on a study that has been conducted on a sample at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The results of the study found that the level of knowledge about mental health among students was low when 83.3% of all respondents got a mean score of less than 80%. The relationship between sociodemographic factors and the level of knowledge about mental health is not significant because all three socio demographic items studied have a value of $p > 0.05$. Therefore, there is no relationship between sociodemographic factors (gender, race, religion) and the level of knowledge about mental health. The findings of this study imply that mental health issues need to be communicated more widely to empower students with knowledge as a step to reduce these health problems.

Based on research on previous studies, mental health among students, especially in educational institutions, needs to be taken seriously through exposure and campaigns on the dangers of mental health if not treated from the beginning. Based on this research, studies related to how to curb mental health issues among higher education students in Malaysia: an Islamic approach have not yet been found. Therefore, the study tries to examine the question through an Islamic perspective.

Islamic Spirituality and Wellbeing

Religion has been impacted by globalization. It has played a significant role in the occurrence of health, sickness, and life. Islam is the second most prevalent and fastest-growing religion in the world. Islam, like all other religions, has a variety of components and points of view. In some ways, Islam is similar to other religions and different in others. The majority of its followers think that authentic Islam unifies and organises every element of human existence. Judaism and Christianity are the first two monotheistic religions that were given to humanity, while Islam is the third and last one (Mustapha et al., 2022).

Mental health in Islam is based on the assumption that deviation from Islamic knowledge and teachings results in anguish and unhappiness. Suffering and misery in this life are the result of a struggle for man's spiritual mind to intervene and restore human nature's equilibrium, while the physical body desires physical pleasure. Human awareness is controlled by the dynamic interaction of material and non-material forces, which results in the psyche or nafs. As a result, when attempting to understand man, it is necessary to investigate both variables. Finally, consistent mental and behavioral cleansing brings a person closer to God and promotes mental health (Haque, 2005; Mustapha et al., 2022)

Islamic coping mechanisms, approaches, and practices are linked with numerous religious practices and morality and have a strong spiritual foundation. Because they transform Muslims' cognitive views into behavioural modes and life courses while being grounded in their religious feelings, the techniques Islam promotes for Muslims provide remedial potential for coping with life's shifting issues. Islamic practices including prayer, supplication, patience, faith in God, and Qur'anic recitation have the capability to reduce life stress, depression, and anxiety. The following verses from the Qur'an provide explanations of certain mechanisms for addressing and resolving difficulties in life.

Muslims used the idea of trusting in God as a survival strategy in their attempt to deal with stressful life circumstances and find happiness (Ghazali, 2001). Religiosity was shown to be a predictor of purpose and life happiness in students' lives by (Tiliouine and Belgoumidi, 2009). Abdel-Khalek (2010) discovered that religion was associated with greater health, wellbeing, and lower levels of anxiety in the Kuwaiti teenage population. People who practice religion claim to be happier and more content with their life (Diener et al., 1999; Myers, 1992; Veenhoven, 1984). According to Moberg (1979), persons who frequently attend religious services are happier and have less psychological stress.

Therefore, religious coping mechanisms incorporate aspects of both emotion- and problem-coping. The usage of social support is another coping mechanism for strain. This frequently takes the form of giving suggestions, help, financial aid, and emotional support. This supports the person's ideas of her own behaviors as a result. This also holds true for religious coping

mechanisms, which entail saying prayers and engaging in other rituals that emphasize letting go of emotions. Some academics categorize various pressure-handling techniques as follows: a) using reasoning to identify the sources and reasons of worry; b) envisioning one's typical method of thinking about the future; c) using denial defensive mechanisms in which one's awareness of an unpleasant internal or external reality is denied; c) denial defensive mechanisms that keep the existence of an unpleasant internal or external reality out of conscious awareness; d) problem-solving as a knowledge strategy that utilizes new ideas and creativity to address difficulties alongside the resolution tool that may be used to handle current problems, a skill and process; e) humor and positive emotions that may be used to deal with pressure during coping; and f) turning to religion and religious rituals.

In addition to the psychological component, Islam views mental health as a physical condition of health that affects how people behave. But in Islam, the spiritual is frequently at the centre of the conversation about mental health. In Islam, having a good heart is related to having excellent mental health. It includes friendship, cooperation, and trust in God (Muhamamad, 2012). According to earlier studies, human psychology, emotions, and other factors have an impact on mental health in Islam. physiologically to their experiences with life. Another study found that one's emotional condition and sociocultural barriers and ideals that may be in opposition to mainstream society may cause circumstance to react, Islam, culture, and values (Hashim & Hassan, 2019).

Previous research has found that a person's attributes, which include the two interdependent parts of their body and soul, impact their level of mental health. The latter will react by trying to assert control over every physical movement. He therefore asserted that if one's soul is good, their physical behavior will be as well. A person may disregard Islamic rules and regulations if their soul is not in good condition. It is thought that one's capacity to motivate people toward the wellbeing of life is determined by their understanding of and dedication to the soul-cleansing procedure, also known as tazkiyah al nafs (Abdul Qadir, 2003; Hashim et al., 2019).

The Objective of The Research

The research overall objectives were

- The goal of this study is to find out what Islamic experts about how to dealing with mental wellbeing.
- Draw findings and provide suggestions on how to reduce, recover mental wellbeing problems based on methods that are used in Islam and on advice from Islamic experts.

Methodology

This study primarily makes use of the NGT methodology as its major method of approach. In the course of the study, five specialists with a background in Islamic studies provided their thoughts on the Islamic psychological point of view. Researchers conduct NGT sessions online with Google Meet since it is now unable to bring together professionals in a room together face to face. There was a discussion that lasted for two hours. The NGT method was utilised to create ideas and solutions based on the opinions of the collected experts, who were gathered together. Following the completion of the session, the researcher used the NGT method to carry out a specific calculation in order to collect data that was relevant to the goals of the study.

In essence, there are two sections to this research: In the first stage, the researcher aims to provide a brief literature with the intent of developing therapies or enhancing psychological health as well as the second stages, when the researcher synthesizes the outcomes. Based on his findings, the researcher recommends 15 different strategies for improving individual's psychological health in accordance with Islamic approach. The researcher also consults with experts to evaluate whether or not this strategy is effective in fostering mental health. In the last stage of the process, the NGT method was applied for the analysis. In addition, experts joined for a brainstorming session and voting by researchers. This session reviews and assesses each expert's viewpoint. NGT-PLUS software was used to calculate session findings. The findings are addressed in the conclusion part of the research.

Nominal Group Technique

NGT is a systematic technique for identifying the consensus view of a group. Designed as a "participation tool for social planning scenarios," (Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson, 1975) The four main components of social planning scenarios exploratory studies, public participation, use of many experts, and evaluation of proposals were outlined (Kennedy & Clinton, 2015). The method has now been used to a wide variety of collective contexts, including empirical studies in the social sciences. While it has been utilized in certain education research (O'Neil and Jackson, 1983; Lomax and McLeman, 1984), It seems to be used more often in studies of health related social concerns.

The process helps in identifying problems, researching potential solutions, and establishing priorities. It is especially useful in "stranger groups," where it is essential to achieve a balance between group members' status and verbal dominance. The comprehensive approach of NGT comprises the following four phases:

1. Brainstorming: Participants work in quiet and on their own to independently write down their responses to a stimulus question that has been provided to them.
2. Round Robin session: Every member of the group contributes one recommendation to a huge flip-chart, which is then written down. The discussion of the ideas is not allowed in this location at this time. Everyone is able to see the completed pages since they have been pinned to the wall. The facilitator of the group will continue to call on members until the group has produced a significant number of ideas in order to ensure that all of the members' ideas are recorded.
3. Participants discuss about each idea on the list to ensure that everyone knows what it means.
4. Voting: Participants choose the most interesting concepts and rank their choices, then vote on the flipchart and suggest about the voting pattern (optional).

Voting anonymously and in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines encourages authentic outcomes and devotion. By recording all contributions and approved changes to them on flipchart sheets, NGT creates a permanent record of the group's work and results. It is simple for groups to pick up where they left off at the previous meeting, and presenting these documents is a useful method to educate others who missed part or all of a meeting. (Fox, 1989; Mustapha et al., 2022).

Sampling

The appropriate sample size for NGT-based studies is a topic of debate among researchers. NGT may be performed on a single cohort or on a large group. (Lomax & McLeman, 1984; Dobbie et al., 2004; Muqsith et al., 2017; Mustapha et al., 2022), However, it may also be divided into smaller groups to facilitate efficient communication depending on the needs of the research. For the following reasons, past research have used the sample sizes shown in table 1

Table 1

Experts Sample

Author	Sample
Van de Ven dan Delbecq (1971)	5 – 9 experts/participants
Horton (1980)	7 – 10 experts/participants
Harvey dan Holmes (2012)	6 – 12 experts/participants
Abdullah & Islam (2011)	7 – 10 experts/participants
Carney et al (1996)	Min. 6 experts/participants

Sources: (Mustapha et al., 2022)

Based on the aforementioned reference, the researcher selected five experts to take part in this investigation's based on NGT technique. This amount is deemed suitable for this study given the existing scenario, which restricts the number of contacts.

Finding

Islam is religion which supports and provided Muslim with Al-Quran and Hadith Prophet Nabi Muhammad SAW. These evidences support and granted with code of behavior, ethic which helps Muslim to deal with life events. After conducting the NGT session, as a result of the recommendations and views of experts, the researcher formulated alternatives or methods that can be used to treat mental problems among students.

This section and table 2 will discuss the study's findings in detail. After a thorough analysis of the literature, we propose some approaches or ways to cultivate mental well-being based on Islamic guidelines. The following approaches may be used

NO	ITEMS/ELEMENTS	SOURCE
1	Ritual Prayers: The performance of the five daily prayers	"Which deed is the dearest to Allah?" He replied, "To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times." (Sahih al-Bukhari 527).
2	Ruqya: Verse and recitation from Holy Quran seeking the refuge in Allah as treating problems as the Quran is source of healing	Expert
3	Doa: a prayer of invocation, supplication or request, even asking help or assistance from Allah.	"Your Lord has proclaimed, "Call upon Me, I will respond to you. Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humbled." (Quran, 40:60).
4	Recitation of Holy Quran: The act of reciting verses (ayat) of the Holy Quran from memory or direct reading from the book of Allah (SWT).	"The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion" (Quran 2:185)
5	Fasting: Abstention from food or drink, or both, for reasons of health, ritual, religion, or ethics from before the break of the dawn till sunset	"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) taqwa (self-restraint)" (Al-Quran, 2:183)
6	Repentance: The act or process of repentance, particularly for wrongdoings or moral inadequacies	Expert
7	Reliance Upon Allah: The word for the Islamic concept of the reliance only for Allah. Trusting everything on Him	"And put your trust in Allah, for Allah is sufficient as a Trustee of Affairs." (Al-Quran; 33:3)
8	Contemplation: To glean a lesson from any given event or experience and concentrate on it in order to obtain a thorough knowledge	Expert
9	Reflection: Reflection is a commonplace process that leads to the acceptance of truth or information.	Expert
10	Remembrance of Allah (Zikr): In form of worship/ verses of Quran can do in any time, any place.	"O believers! Always remember Allah often," (Quran, 33:41)
11	Patience: the capacity to bear or endure delay, difficulties, or discomfort without becoming frustrated or agitated.	"Only those who are patient shall receive their rewards in full, without Hisaab (without limit, calculation, and estimation)." (Quran, 39:10).
12	Positive Thinking: The way face adversity in a more positive and constructive manner	Expert
13	Family/Community: Moral support from family	Expert
14	Forgiveness: Human people to be forgiving, and be forgiveness	Expert

15	Mujahadah An-Nafs: Those who persistently strive to repent are shown the way of sincerity, those seeking understanding the path of practise, and those desiring to act on the Sunnah the path to Paradise.	Expert
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Results

According to the point of view of the expertise, the overall solution evaluations for the best ways to improve mental health are shown in Table 3. Based on the findings of this research, it would seem that all percentages of the components that were investigated are eligible for use. The outcomes of these studies indicate that a percentage that is higher than 70% is recommended. (Deslandes, Mendes, Pires & Campos 2010; Dobbie et al., 2004; Mustapha et al.2022). The researchers are able to draw the conclusion that all of the people who took part in the study believe that the main components of the model are valid and can be used. Instead of going through multiple rounds of expert evaluation as is required by the Delphi method, the modified NGT technique allows researchers to quickly gather data.

SAMPLE: Table 3

NGT voting result

ITEMS	VOTER 1	VOTER 2	VOTER 3	VOTER 4	VOTER 5	TOTAL ITEMS SCORE	PERCENTAGE	Ranking Priority	Result of consensus
Ritual Prayers	5	5	5	5	5	25	100	1	Suitable
Ruqya	4	4	5	5	4	22	88	4	Suitable
Doa	4	5	5	5	5	24	96	2	Suitable
Recitation of Holy Quran	5	5	5	5	5	25	100	1	Suitable
Fasting	4	4	5	4	4	21	84	5	Suitable
Repentance	5	4	5	4	5	23	92	3	Suitable
Reliance upon Allah	5	4	5	5	5	24	96	2	Suitable
Contemplation	5	5	4	5	5	24	96	2	Suitable
Reflection	5	5	5	5	5	25	100	1	Suitable
Remembrance of Allah (Zikr)	5	5	5	5	5	25	100	1	Suitable
Patience	5	5	5	5	5	25	100	1	Suitable
Positive Thinking	5	3	4	5	5	22	88	4	Suitable
Family/Community Support	4	5	5	5	5	24	96	2	Suitable
Forgiveness	5	5	4	4	5	23	92	3	Suitable
Muhajadah An-Nafs	5	5	5	4	5	24	96	2	Suitable

Discussion

A mental illness is a problem that may be identified by shifts in a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions, which can make it challenging for them to function normally in day-to-day life. The spread of mental health diseases may have a negative impact on Islamic societal advancement. The government is particularly concerned about mental health because of its rising bad influence and images on national development agenda. Islam's most important component is the principles of human being and shariah ruling (*Maqasid Shariah*). Therefore, if Islam is to progress as a civilization, the mental health of individuals and communities must

be prioritized. In order to obtain Allah's blessings, a variety of methods must be implemented to cure mental disorders and ultimately ensure the success of the Islamic social development phase. Thus, these findings (refer table 3 indicate an option that may be utilised to improve mental health. This recommended strategy is the ideal alternative to explore and implement Islamic psychological approaches. The Islamic approach is mainly focused on internal and spiritual purification humanity based on Tawhid and community support. This is outlined in the Quran and Hadith and has been proven effective in many ways.

Guideline for Further Research

This research may be improved and expanded in the future to be more comprehensive Future researchers may undertake a qualitative study to see which strategies are most effective in tackling this problem. Future researchers may also use the structures described in these studies to build particular modules. In the future, this module may be utilised to handle this issue in more detail.

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