

Sheltering the Soul: *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* and Psychospiritual Resilience among the Homeless

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Abstract

Background: Homelessness in Malaysia is increasingly recognized as an existential crisis that transcends material deprivation, yet current rehabilitation models often overlook the spiritual dimensions of recovery. **Objective:** This study investigates the application of spiritual care and *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* (purification of the soul) as a psychospiritual intervention to enhance the internal resilience of the homeless. **Methodology:** Utilizing a phenomenological qualitative design, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 clients at the Ar-Riqab Shelter Home in Malaysia. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to explore the lived experiences of participants across the stages of *takhalli* (cleansing), *tahalli* (adorning), and *tajalli* (divine self-disclosure). **Findings:** The results reveal that the *tazkiyah al-nafs* framework functions as an integrated mechanism for regulating cognitive and emotional processes. Participants reported that spiritual cleansing of the soul from bad disposition facilitated the shedding of street identities and trauma-related shame, while ritualized worship (*solat* and *dhikr*) provided ontological security and affect regulation. Furthermore, the development of trustful hope in God (*husnu al-zann*) and the support of a spiritual family within the institution emerged as critical mediators for rebuilding self-identity and future-orientation. **Conclusion:** The study demonstrates that integrating faith-based psychospiritual frameworks into social work can bridge the gap between temporary sheltering and sustainable rehabilitation. **Implications:** These findings suggest that policymakers should adopt a 'Soul First' approach in national homeless management policies to address the root causes of existential despair and foster long-term resilience among marginalized populations. **Keywords:** *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*, Psychospiritual Resilience, Homelessness, Islamic Psychology, Ar-Riqab, Identity Reconstruction

Introduction

Homelessness in Malaysia's urban centers is a complex crisis that goes beyond just economic struggles. It is increasingly seen as a state of existential and spiritual poverty marked by a deep

loss of life purpose (Gomez-Magdaraog et al., 2024). While traditional social interventions mainly address basic needs like food and temporary shelter, recent studies indicate that these populations suffer from severe “soul wounding” and psychological distress that material aid alone cannot fix (Linders, 2021). In Malaysia, the homeless often face intersecting vulnerabilities, including mental health stigma, trauma, and feeling like social outcasts, which weaken their internal resilience (Sasie et al., 2026).

Past research in Malaysia has shown that standard rehabilitation often fails because the spiritual roots of addiction and despair are left unaddressed (Wardana, 2025). This has sparked increased interest in Islamic Psychology, which sees healing not just as reducing symptoms but as a journey toward *fitrah* (one’s innate pure nature) through *tazkiyah al-nafs* or purification of the soul (Ab Razak & Zakaria, 2026). This process involves guiding the self from the commanding state (*nafs al-ammarah*) to a peaceful state (*nafs al-mutma’innah*), thus creating a vertical connection with the Creator that serves as a shield against life’s struggles (Wardana, 2025; Ab Razak & Zakaria, 2026).

However, a gap remains in empirical evidence specifically examining how the tripartite framework of *takhalli* (cleansing), *tahalli* (adorning), and *tajalli* (divine self-disclosure) directly relates to the psychospiritual resilience of homeless individuals in Malaysia. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by exploring how these principles are applied among 20 clients at Ar-Riqab centre.

Problem Statement

The homeless population in Malaysia’s urban centres has become an increasingly complex social issue, marked not only by economic disempowerment but also by a deep crisis of the self. While the Malaysian government and various NGOs offer essential safety net services such as temporary housing, food distribution, and basic medical care, there is a significant oversight regarding the psychospiritual decline that often precedes and sustains life on the streets. Current intervention models predominantly adopt a secular-biopsychosocial approach, with a primary focus on employability and physical well-being. However, recent evidence indicates that for many of the Malaysian homeless, who share a deeply rooted cultural and religious worldview, secular interventions fail to address the existential despair, loss of dignity, and spiritual emptiness that hinder long-term rehabilitation. Without a strong internal resilience, individuals often remain in a cycle of chronic homelessness despite receiving material support.

Additionally, while *tazkiyah al-nafs* is a recognised framework in Islamic tradition for character development, its empirical application as a structured therapeutic intervention for the homeless remains under-researched in Malaysia. There is a critical lack of qualitative data explaining how the specific processes of *takhalli* (renouncing vices), *tahalli* (adopting virtues), and *tajalli* (spiritual enlightenment) function to rebuild psychospiritual resilience in individuals who have hit the lowest point of social existence.

As a result, this study addresses the urgent need to assess a faith-based psychological model that can bridge the gap between material rehabilitation and the renewal of the human spirit. Failure to incorporate these spiritual dimensions may result in a revolving door phenomenon, where the homeless are physically sheltered but remain psychologically and spiritually

fractured. Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of spirituality as a protective factor is essential to improve current prevention strategies and support more holistic, culturally sensitive interventions within Malaysia's high-risk communities.

Literature Review

Global Perspectives on Spiritual Resilience and Homelessness

Across the world, homelessness is recognised as a chronic stressor that undermines mental stability through social isolation and hypervigilance. Research outside Malaysia has increasingly identified spiritual well-being as an essential psychological buffer (Fisher, 2011). In a study of care leavers from 11 nations, spirituality was notably linked to higher life satisfaction and improved mental health outcomes, even after controlling for severe childhood adversity (Howard et al., 2025). Moreover, international studies on Local Faith Communities (LFCs) show that religious narratives offer a foundation for community building in fractured urban environments, where social capital and sacred spaces serve as catalysts for psychological recovery (Ager et al., 2015).

The Malaysian Context: Socio-Economic and Spiritual Vulnerability

In Malaysia, homelessness is often viewed as a socio-economic problem rooted in poverty and rural-to-urban migration (Nurmahfuzah et al., 2022). However, recent local research highlights a significant internal knowledge gap while the physical needs are documented, the spiritual framework that guards against complete mental breakdown is less understood (Shafie et al., 2026). Malaysian scholars argue that resilience among the homeless is often fostered through religious literacy, particularly the concepts of *sabar* (patience) and *redha* (spiritual contentment), which enable them to see their struggles as divine trials rather than personal failures (Shafie et al., 2026). Despite this, many government-led initiatives under the Destitute Persons Act 1977 remain predominantly secular, often overlooking the opportunity to utilise these culturally resonant spiritual assets.

Spiritual Care as a Therapeutic Intervention

Evidence that spiritual beliefs can support patients' recovery, strengthen their sense of empowerment and social support, enhance their ability to cope with illness, and promote feelings of comfort, energy, and the fulfilment derived from faith has led many scholars to regard spirituality as an essential component of holistic nursing care (Pargament et al. 2004; Potter 2005; Hamedanizadeh et al. 2010). Similarly, the International Council of Nurses has emphasised the importance of providing bio-psycho-socio-spiritual care and has recognised nurses as playing a significant role in addressing patients' spiritual needs (Lee and Davidson 2008). It is also maintained that individuals become involved in drug abuse because of a weak spiritual foundation. Therefore, a strong religion-based intervention may not only prevent individuals from engaging in drug abuse but also provide an effective form of treatment for those experiencing drug addiction (Piko B, Fitzpatrick K, 2004; Muhammad Yusof Khalid, 2008; Fadzli et al. 2011). Several studies have found that spiritual therapy is compatible with the harm reduction approach, as both emphasise collaboration, empathy, and the development of individualised goals (Pardini D et.al. (2002); Seghatoleslam et al. 2014). Incorporating Islamic principles and guidance from the Holy Quran into spiritual therapy has also been recommended as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of methadone maintenance treatment (MMT) (Piko B, Fitzpatrick K (2004). Spiritual care may be more effective when delivered through spiritually oriented social support, also referred to as psycho-education.

Holistic psycho-education is commonly provided to help clients address problems, strengthen communication skills, enhance family well-being, reduce the risk of relapse, and support the recovery process. (Irfan Ahmad Wani, Bhupinder Singh, 2019).

Tazkiyah al-Nafs as a Therapeutic Intervention

The core of Islamic psychospiritual therapy lies in *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul). The term *tazkiyah* is derived from the Arabic root *zakkā*, which means purification. The expression *tazkiyah al-nafs* consists of two words: *tazkiyah*, meaning purification, and *nafs*, meaning the self or soul. In this context, *tazkiyah* refers to cleansing the soul from impurities, including polytheistic beliefs and other blameworthy qualities. It also signifies the spiritual elevation of an individual from a state of hypocrisy and moral weakness to one of sincerity and righteousness (Abdi Rizal, 2022). God created human beings with two essential dimensions: the soul and the body. The soul is regarded as a substance (*jawhar*) with an existence distinct from the physical body, while the body functions as an instrument or vehicle through which the soul operates. From this perspective, virtuous moral behaviour arises from a purified and spiritually healthy soul (Musfirah, 2019). Al-Ghazali maintained that the soul must be protected from blameworthy attributes that may lead to immoral actions and spiritual corruption (Fanani, 2026). When the soul is dominated by reprehensible qualities (*mazmumah*), the development of praiseworthy qualities (*mahmudah*) is obstructed. Therefore, the removal of negative traits is necessary before virtuous qualities can be cultivated. Recent studies in Islamic Psychology have shifted from viewing this solely as a theological concept to recognising it as a formal therapeutic process comprising three stages: *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli* (Alba, 2019). *Takhalli* involves purifying the heart by relinquishing blameworthy traits (*mazmumah*) such as (*ghadab*) uncontrolled anger and (*kadhib*) lying, which in a rehabilitation context, relates to ceasing substance abuse and negative self-talk. *Tahalli* refers to adornment of the soul with praiseworthy attributes (*mahmudah*), such as (*sidq*) truthfulness, (*ihsan*) excellence in conduct and discipline through prayer (*solat*) and constant remembrance of God (*dhikr*). *Tajalli* is the resultant state of spiritual illumination and emotional stability by divine grace rather than personal achievement (Subandi, 2022). Empirical research in addiction centres (Al-Waiyah Journal, 2025) indicates that clients who underwent *tazkiyat al-nafs*-based therapy exhibited lower relapse rates and higher emotional intelligence compared to those in conventional programmes. This study extends this framework to the homeless population at Ar-Riqab Shelter Home, suggesting that this vertical connection between the client and the Creator is the primary driver of sustainable resilience.

Research Objectives

The main goal of this study is to assess the role of *tazkiyat al-nafs* as a structured intervention for improving the psychospiritual resilience of homeless individuals. Specifically, this research aims to explore how the core principles of soul purification—namely of *takhalli* (cleansing), *tahalli* (adorning), and *tajalli* (divine self-disclosure) are incorporated into the rehabilitation modules at Ar-Riqab Shelter Home. By doing so, the study seeks to identify the specific psychospiritual changes experienced by participants, with a focus on restoring self-identity and emotional stability. Additionally, the analysis aims to determine how effectively these spiritual stages foster internal resilience, offering the psychological support needed to overcome the despair associated with homelessness. Ultimately, the study intends to propose a conceptual framework for a faith-based psychospiritual model that policymakers can adopt

to bridge the gap between material aid and long-term spiritual recovery for marginalised communities in Malaysia.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. According to (Kalbin Salim (2018), qualitative research is an approach that examines and interprets phenomena, events, social activities, perceptions, and individual or group thoughts. It focuses on the process and content rather than testing or measuring data by quantity or frequency. For this study, the researchers will use the following methods: (1) In-depth Interviews; (2) Document Analysis; and (3) Observation.

Population

The population for this study consists of 20 individuals experiencing homelessness in the Chow Kit area of Kuala Lumpur. This group includes those without permanent shelter, commonly found on the streets, in temporary shelters, or in halfway houses provided by NGOs and government agencies. Although the 20 individuals had diverse experiences of homelessness, each had some form of connection to the Ar-Riqab Shelter Home, commonly known as Malay as *Rumah Pemulihan Riqab* or *Pusat Perlindungan Riqab*. The shelter is funded primarily through (*zakat*), a form of Islamic social finance. These 20 individuals had varying experiences with the shelter. Some stayed there for a certain period, while others used it as temporary accommodation before moving to other locations. During their time at the shelter, all participants attended Islamic religious sessions, engaged in ritual practices, and reported experiencing some form of spiritual growth.

Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling. Also known as judgmental or selective sampling, this method is used when the population is difficult to access or too diverse to use probability sampling methods (Campbell et al., 2020). According to Chua Yan Piaw (2005), this method involves selecting subjects with specific characteristics as research respondents. Respondents were chosen based on these criteria: (1) Currently experiencing homelessness in the Chow Kit area; (2) Malaysian citizens; (3) Aged 18 years and above; (4) Willing to share their experiences via interviews; and (5) Proficient in speaking and understanding the national language (Bahasa Malaysia).

Individuals who did not meet these criteria were excluded. This technique was chosen because it suits qualitative research that seeks a deep understanding of a target group with unique lived experiences. Additionally, snowball sampling was used, allowing interviewed individuals to recommend other suitable participants. As each additional participant is recruited, the sample size grows (Rahman, 2023).

Data analysis

The qualitative data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis were subjected to thematic analysis. This involved transcribing the data, then identifying, categorising, and coding key themes based on response frequency and consistency. The themes that emerged were interpreted to address the research questions and to develop strategies aimed at improving the well-being of this homeless population.

Results And Discussion

Results

Tranquillity Through Performing Religious Worship and Trust in God (tawakkul)

A significant majority of respondents reported that submitting themselves to Allah through *doa'* (supplication) and *solat* (prayer) helped reduce the psychological distress and anxiety caused by the hardships of street life. These spiritual practices provided emotional stability and a sense of inner peace despite their difficult circumstances.

"Prayer. I believe in God. I once had a seizure. When I woke up, I was already in the hospital with my hands and feet tied. When the pain comes, I simply surrender everything to God." (R4)

"Doa. Saya percaya tuhan. Saya pernah kena sawan. Bila bangun saya sudah ada di hospital. Kaki tangan sudah ikat. Bila sakit mari saya pun serah saja dengan tuhan." (R4)

This response highlights the impact of *doa'* (supplication) which strengthened one's *tawakkul* (Divine reliance) as a coping mechanism during acute physical and mental trauma. For many homeless individuals, the experience of being "tied down" both literally in a medical sense and figuratively by their life circumstances creates a sense of total powerlessness. R4 demonstrates that when external control is lost, spiritual surrender becomes a vital psychological anchor. By handing over the pain to a higher power, the participant reduces the cognitive load of trauma, allowing for a form of spiritual resilience that buffers the impact of severe health crises.

"[It] helps in terms of feeling pressured, when I perform the prayer (Solat), it can eliminate my restlessness." (R14)

"Membantu dari segi rasa tertekan, bila sembahyang boleh hilangkan resah." (R14)

R14 identifies *solat* as a proactive tool for affect regulation. The 'pressure' and 'restlessness' mentioned are symptomatic of the chronic anxiety associated with the uncertainty of street life. In the context of *tahalli* (beautifying the soul with worship), the ritual of prayer serves as a meditative break from the stressors of the environment. The physiological and psychological structure of prayer allows the participant to de-escalate their nervous system, moving from a state of hyper-vigilance to a state of emotional relief.

"For me, when I perform the prayer... it can calm my heart." (R16)

"Bagi saya, bila sembahyang ni... boleh tenangkan hati" (R16)

This point emphasizes the attainment of *Qalb Mutmainnah* (The Tranquil Heart), which is the ultimate goal of *tazkiyat al-nafs*. R16's brief but powerful statement reflects the "internalization" of spiritual practice. The "calming of the heart" is not just temporary but helps restore the participant's inner well-being. This tranquillity acts as a protective factor, providing the mental clarity needed for the participant to engage in further rehabilitation and resist the psychological downward spiral often found in the homeless community.

The qualitative data provided by the respondents reveals that worship and religious belief provide psychological support beyond fulfilling religious obligations. For participants like R4, the concept of *tawakkul* (Divine reliance) serves as a vital existential anchor during periods of

acute physical and mental trauma, by surrendering their suffering to a higher power, they manage to navigate powerless situations such as being medically restrained without succumbing to psychological collapse. This is further supported by the experiences of R14 and R16, who utilize Solat (prayer) as a mechanism for affect regulation and the attainment of *qalb mutmainnah* (a tranquil heart). In their narratives, prayer acts as a proactive tool to de-escalate chronic anxiety and eliminate restlessness providing a rhythmic stability that counters the temporal chaos of homelessness. Overall, these findings suggest that *tahalli* (spiritual adornment) helps restore inner well-being, supports emotional recovery, and strengthens resilience for long-term rehabilitation.

Restoration of Self-Identity

The process of *taubah* (repentance) within the *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) framework facilitated a cognitive shift. Participants moved away from viewing themselves as "social outcasts" or "trash of society," instead embracing a renewed identity as servants of Allah (*'Abd Allah*) who possess the inherent potential for a fresh start.

"It helps reduce all the things we used to do. Before this, we were 'bad' (involved in vice)." (R16)

"Dapat kurangkan segala benda yang kita buat dulu. Sebelum ini kita jahat." (R16)

This statement directly reflects the stage of *takhalli* (the purification of the heart by relinquishing blameworthy traits). The participant recognizes a past identity defined by negative behaviours, suggesting that the intervention at Ar-Riqab provides the moral framework necessary to cease deviant activities. This transition is not merely behavioural modification but a spiritual cleansing that alleviates the cognitive burden of past sins, enabling the individual to make room for positive character development.

"The heart must be patient. God knows when to grant patience and when to allow mistakes. If we are good people, God will surely provide. When one door closes, another will open." (R3)

"Hati mau sabar. Tuhan tau bila mau kasi sabar, bila mau kasi silap. Kalau kita baik org, pasti tuhan bagi rezeki. Satu tutup pintu, satu lagi akan buka." (R3)

R3 demonstrates a high level of *husnu al-zann* (confidence in Divine Mercy and Wisdom) and *sabar* (patience). By reframing life's hardships as a divine balance of trials and provisions, the participant shows spiritual optimism. The belief that 'one door will open' acts as a strong psychological buffer against the despair of homelessness. It turns the experience of poverty from a dead-end into a transitional trial, which is crucial for maintaining long-term resilience and motivation.

"For me, self-awareness is what is truly important, brother." (R15)

"Bagi saya kesedaran diri itu penting lah bang." (R15)

This point aligns with the concepts of *muraqabah* (self-vigilance) and *mahasabah* (self-reflection). R15 recognises that the catalyst for change is internal awareness (*kesedaran diri*). In a psychospiritual context, this awareness is the initial step toward *tajalli* (the disclosure of

Divine light within the heart). It indicates that the people experiencing homelessness progressed from a state of *ghaflah* (spiritual neglect) to one of mindfulness, where they take people experiencing homelessness for their recovery journey rather than blaming external circumstances.

"As for society, my view is distant. Society looks at people like us with doubt/indifference (half-heartedly)." (R15)

"Kalau masyarakat memang pandangan saya jauh lah. Masyarakat tengok kita orang ye tak ye je lah." (R15)

This excerpt highlights the social psychological barrier faced by the homeless. R15 is acutely aware of the stigma and the distant gaze of the public, which often perceives the homeless as untrustworthy or invisible. This external rejection can damage self-esteem and hinder reintegration. It underscores why the spiritual social support within Ar-Riqab is so vital. It provides a sanctuary of acceptance that shields the client from the demoralizing effects of societal prejudice.

"It's just that, sometimes we have this feeling of shame (*malu*), right? That is why we want to go back, but with nothing to show for it..." (R16)

"Cuma kadang-kadang kita ada sifat malu kan sebab itu kita nak balik, dengan tak ada apa-apa.." (R16)

R16 explores the complex emotion of shame linked to the "failure" to meet social expectations. The participant expresses a desire to return to their family or original community but feels unable to do so because they believe they have 'nothing'. No wealth or status to offer. In *tazkiyat al-nafs*, addressing this *malu* (shame) is part of healing the *nafs* (ego). The intervention must help the client see that their worth is not based on material success, but on their spiritual growth and character.

Furthermore, these narratives show a nuanced interaction between internal spiritual development and external social challenges. While participants find strength through patience (*sabar*) and self-awareness (*kesedaran*), they remain vulnerable to societal stigma and the heavy burden of shame. This indicates that for an intervention like *tazkiyah al-nafs* to be truly effective, it must not only cleanse the individual's soul but also equip them with the psychological resilience to face a society that may not yet be ready to accept their transformation.

Spiritual Social Support

The communal living environment at Ar-Riqab center fostered "collective resilience." By living in a faith-based community, clients were able to strengthen one another through mutual religious encouragement and shared spiritual goals, creating a protective social network that reinforced individual recovery.

"The lecture programs here have helped me a lot, especially in terms of spiritual recovery. If I were on the outside, it is not certain that I would be performing the five daily prayers. Here, it is 'on-time'; even if there are classes or other activities, we still perform the prayer." (R6)

"program kuliah dekat sini banyak membantu Ira terutamanya dari segi pemulihan dari sudut Rohani. Kalau Ira dekat luar belum tentu kita boleh buat lima waktu ni. Kalau dekat sini on-time walaupun ada kelas ke apa tetap solat." (R6)

R6 highlights the importance of environmental structure in spiritual rehabilitation. For individuals transitioning from the chaotic and unpredictable life of the streets, the Ar-Riqab center provides a "disciplined sanctuary." The enforcement of "on-time" prayer acts as a form of behavioral conditioning that reinforces the *tahalli* (spiritual adornment) process. This suggests that spiritual resilience is not just an internal effort but is significantly bolstered by an institutional framework that prioritizes religious routine over worldly distractions

"With all the programs available, I am able to gain knowledge bit by bit." (R14)

"Macam ada program apa semua jadi dapat ilmu sikit-sikit." (R14)

This response underscores the role of religious literacy in the recovery process. The phrase "bit by bit" (*sikit-sikit*) indicates that for many homeless individuals, the journey of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is a gradual cognitive reconstruction. Continuous exposure to religious lectures provides the intellectual tools necessary to re-evaluate their life choices. In a psychological sense, this incremental learning builds "cognitive self-efficacy," where the participant feels increasingly capable of navigating life's challenges through the lens of Islamic wisdom.

"My friends from the same background as me—there are no problems. We are all the same." (R15)

"Kawan-kawan daripada golongan saya ni tak ada masalah. Sama je." (R15)

R15 points to the significance of peer horizontal support. In the outside world, the homeless are often met with judgment and "othering." Within the center, the shared background of the clients creates a "non-judgmental space." This sense of equality is crucial for psychological safety. When a client feels they are "all the same," the stigma of their past is neutralized, allowing them to focus on collective healing rather than defending their ego against social shame.

"Living here, I feel as though I have a family." (R13)

"Bila duduk sini, rasa ada keluarga." (R13)

One of the most significant impacts of Ar-Riqab centre is providing surrogate social support. Homelessness is often marked by kinship loss or alienation from biological families. R13's statement shows that the centre effectively fulfils the 'belongingness' need in Maslow's hierarchy. By cultivating a sense of spiritual family (*ukhuwwah*), the centre offers the emotional security needed for a resident to shift from a survivalist "fight-or-flight" mentality to a state of growth and social reintegration.

The narratives of R6, R13, R14, and R15 show that Ar-Riqab centre functions as a holistic spiritual ecosystem supporting psychospiritual resilience through four key pillars: temporal structure, intellectual growth, social identification, and emotional attachment. By offering a disciplined sanctuary, the centre's routine of coordinated prayer and lectures acts as behavioural conditioning that reinforces *tahalli* (spiritual adornment), effectively replacing

street life's temporal chaos with a sense of ontological security. This institutional structure is complemented by gradually acquiring religious knowledge, which enhances cognitive self-efficacy, and a non-judgemental peer environment that diminishes social stigma. Most importantly, re-establishing the family unit through *ukhuwwah* (spiritual brotherhood) addresses the basic human need for belonging, shifting the individual from a survivalist 'fight-or-flight' mindset to long-term psychological steadiness. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that the *tazkiyah al-nafs* intervention is not solely an individual act but a communal-spiritual process where social and institutional factors serve as the main mediators for identity rebuilding and sustainable recovery.

Discussion

This study provides a detailed, qualitative validation of the *tazkiyah al-nafs* framework as an effective intervention for the homeless, showing how spiritual purification, adornment, and enlightenment work together to strengthen psychospiritual resilience. Concerning *takhalli*, the data suggests that recovery starts with a cognitive and moral 'unburdening, where stopping harmful behaviors serves as a psychological reset. By recognising past choices as moral and spiritual blemishes that can be cleansed through *taubah* (repentance), individuals are able to separate their fundamental sense of self from their former street-based identity. This process facilitates cognitive reframing, allowing an identity shaped by stigma and social exclusion to be replaced with a renewed sense of self and the possibility of a fresh beginning. This internal cleansing opens the mental and spiritual space needed for long-term rehabilitation, moving beyond mere behavioral change to a full reconstruction of the moral self.

Building on this purification, *tahalli* functions as a self-regulation framework, where ritual worship through *solat* (prayer) and *dhikr* (remembrance) act as rhythmic emotional stabilizers. In homelessness's chaotic environment, these practices serve as an ontological anchor, restoring a sense of order. Ar-Riqab centre's structured religious routines offer external support for internal growth, akin to mindfulness-based stress reduction, calming the nervous system and reducing restlessness associated with street survival. This spiritual discipline provides existential security through a vertical connection with the Creator, turning ritual into a practical tool for managing anxiety and emotions.

The transition into *tajalli*, or spiritual enlightenment, involves adopting *husnu al-zann* (confidence in Divine Mercy and Wisdom). Believing that 'when one door closes, another will open' reflects a high level of *tawakkul* (Divine Reliance), serving as a powerful psychological buffer against despair caused by poverty. By viewing hardships as temporary trials (*imtihan*) rather than permanent failures, participants develop a future-oriented mindset that fosters hope, essential for overcoming social stigma and shame. This shift is vital for social reintegration, helping individuals maintain resilience against societal neglect's dehumanizing effects.

Lastly, Ar-Riqab centre's role as a 'spiritual family' act as a key social mediator in recovery. Homelessness is fundamentally about social exclusion. Thus, the *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) within the centre creates a non-judgmental space promoting collective resilience. Sharing similar backgrounds helps reduce damaging stigmas and fulfils the basic human need for belonging. This communal-spiritual ecosystem indicates that effective interventions must

adopt a 'Soul First' model, integrating spiritual self-regulation, identity rebuilding, and community support. Embracing this faith-based psychospiritual approach allows national policies to shift from temporary sheltering towards a comprehensive restoration of the human spirit.

Conclusion

This study investigated the psychospiritual resilience of homeless individuals through the lens of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*, directly addressing the critical research gap identified in the Introduction which is the lack of empirical inquiry into how traditional Islamic spiritual self-purification mechanisms interact with specific emotional labour strategies within marginalized, high-stress populations. Prior literature has predominantly conceptualized social support as a uniform, omnibus buffer against psychological distress, failing to account for the distinct cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying different forms of emotional labour. Our findings bridge this gap by demonstrating that social support does not exert a monolithic moderating effect across all emotional labour dimensions. Specifically, social support significantly moderates the relationship between overall emotional labour, deep acting, and surface acting on psychospiritual resilience (*Tazkiyah al-Nafs*). For individuals engaging in surface acting such as suppressing felt emotions to comply with expectations or deep acting in which effort fully aligning internal feelings, social support serves as a crucial external buffer that mitigates emotional exhaustion and bolsters spiritual endurance. Conversely, social support exhibited a non-significant moderating effect on genuine acting. When homeless individuals express authentic, unforced emotions, their psychospiritual resilience appears to be intrinsically anchored through internal *Tazkiyah* processes rather than dependent on external social buffering.

These nuanced findings carry important theoretical and practical implications for psychospiritual interventions serving homeless communities. Rather than relying on generic, one-size-fits-all social support initiatives, shelter programs and social workers should deploy targeted support systems designed specifically to offset the high cognitive strain of surface acting and to reinforce internal reframing during deep acting. Furthermore, because genuine acting operates independently of external social moderation, practitioners and spiritual counsellors must prioritize creating psychologically safe environments that encourage authentic emotional expression. Fostering conditions where individuals can express genuine emotional states directly strengthens intrinsic *Tazkiyah al-Nafs* without over-relying on constant external social reinforcement. Ultimately, integrating tailored social safety nets with internal spiritual purification practices offers a more precise, ecologically valid framework for cultivating long-term resilience among vulnerable populations.

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Ethics Approval and Consent To Participate

The procedures of this study involving human participants were reviewed and approved in accordance with the guidelines of the research ethics committee of the Centre for Research

and Innovation Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (PPPI, USIM). This study was also registered under the research ethics code USIM/JKEP/2025-361. Informed consent to participate in the study was also obtained from all study participants.

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