# Bulding of Self-Resilience Based on Spiritual Approach in Facing Self-Injury Conflict: A Literature Review

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**Abstract**
Ministry of Education Malaysia seriously views the formation of a knowledgeable, generous and resilient generation towards the building of a productive community. However, nowadays there are various cases involving the young generation such as self-injury. Till now, most of the resilience models that are discussed by researchers are discussed from the Western perspective, and in the context of Malaysian society where the majority of them are Muslim, spiritual health in religious aspects starts to get attention as well as physical and mental aspects and should to be given attention in order to form holistic individual self-resilience. Therefore, this study aims to identify important elements in building self-resilience based on Ibn Ataillah's and al-Ghazali's approaches, as a solving structure in confronting self-injuring conflict. This qualitative study is in the form of grounded theory which involves a document analysis method where the data analysis involves the identification of main concepts, relationships between those concepts, and theories development based on the reviewed literature. Study findings show that the most important element that is emphasized by Ibn Ataillah and Al-Ghazali is standing on the concepts of creation, *qada'* and *qadar*, *al-nafs*, *al-ruh*, *al-qalb*, and al-*'aql*.  Spiritual concepts, science of life, servant and God concept, conflict-solving skills, as well as good values assimilation also are highlighted.  Each of these elements plays its own role as a protective factor in facilitating the process of strengthening individuals to be more self-resilient in facing a variety of life pressures. This thoroughness may contribute in expanding the development of the existing self-resilience model, especially in confronting the conflict of Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). This is also can have implications on the

formation of a well-being society, along with achieving the objective of National Education Philosophy in developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, and also to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically balanced, and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God.

**Keywords:** Self-Resilience, Spiritual Approach, Ibn Ataillah, Al-Ghazali, Self-Injuring, Self-harm.

**Introduction**

Ministry of Education Malaysia seriously view on the formation of knowledgeable, generous and resilience generation towards the building of productive community. However, there is questioning whether this desire is achievable, as nowadays there is various of cases involving young generation such as self-injury, and more worrying is that it can lead to suicide (Mohamad et al., 2018). Why this situation is still happening? Till now, most of resilience model that are discussed by researchers are discussed from the Western perspective (Russell & Russell, 2003; Tian et al., 2019; Yusoff et al., 2019) and in the context of Malaysian society which is majority of them are Muslim, spiritual health in religion aspects starts to get attention as wells as physical and mental aspects Pihasniwati et al (2022) and should be given attention in order to form holistic individual self-resilience.

The issues of the involvement of young generation in the self-injury cases (although without suicidal intents) is seen to be more critical, where psychological factors such as cognitive distortion, self-esteem and self-resilience is identified to play important roles in leading these behaviors (Danish et al., 2019; Maniam, 2010). Study found that most of adolescents that are confronting with these conflicts and ranging from 18 to 25 years old are fond to center their thinking towards irrational thinking (Nyarko & Amissah, 2014). Among the self-injurious behaviors which are reported nowadays are barcode, self-hitting, wall-fisting or other hard objects as well as putting hot things to body. It is also reported that females usually injuring themselves by barcode, meanwhile male tend to hit themselves and using fire to injure themselves. Study found that the tendency of one individual with no self-resilience in confronting conflict by injuring themselves begins from adolescence age (age 14), however there is individual aged 30 did this same acts. Statistics shows that 5% in population, generally, adults injuring themselves, meanwhile general population of adolescent is 15%. More worrying is, there is some individual maybe acts to injure themselves just for a few attempts and the stop forever, but there are some of them always and continuously injuring themselves (Jiwadamai, 2020).

Not only abroad, but in Malaysia, cases of self-injury, most of which involve the young generation, are feared to lead to suicide. According to Hisham (2015) Ministry of Health Malaysia identified 338 death cases are caused by self-injuring acts and mental disturbance factors such as depression, life tragedy and relationship problems caused by conflicts and life pressure. Meanwhile, abroad researchers found that various general factors can distribute to adolescence to involve in self-injurious behaviours such as social factors, environment, clinical and psychiatric disorders symptoms (Martin et al., 2010; Beatens et al., 2014). Besides, there are studies that shows that low self-resilience factors can lead to cognitive distortion which then lead to self-injurious behaviors. Therefore, it is not surprising when some researchers suggesting that there is clarification on the self-resilience aspects to be high attention by focusing on self-resilience model development and efficient intervention to help preventing self-injuring behaviours (Yusrie et al., 2019).

In order to confront self-injuring conflicts, although nowadays some of researchers suggesting the idea to focusing on the development of self-resilience model (Yusrie et al.,

2019; Tian et al., 2019), but until now, most of self-resilience model are discussing based on western perspective (Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Russell & Russell, 2003; Hajar, 2017; Tian et al., 2019; Yusoff et al., 2019) and in the context of Malaysian society which is majority of them are Muslim, spiritual health in religion aspects starts to get attention as wells as physical and mental aspects (Yusoff et al., 2019) and should to be given attention in order to form holistic individual self-resilience. However, there is still little of researchers related on self-resilience model that touch on spiritual aspect as well as other aspects especially in helping to face self-injury conflict. Therefore, it is not surprising when Yusrie et al. (2019), Tian et al (2019); Masroom (2016) emphasized in national needs on developing self-resilience and certain intervention in preventing the self-injuring issues. Besides, Yusrie et al (2019) claim that forming cognitive and self-resilience character, seven values need to be highlighted, but sometimes its under-looked by society, which are religious stand, family monitoring, self-need, teaching and learning in school, peer influence, spiritual and environment. This value education directly supporting National Education Philosophy which emphasized on balance between knowledge, emotion, body and spiritual, towards on translating knowledge, skills and social values gained as a core of building positive self-characters. Therefore, by considering on views and suggestions of some of previous researchers, Ibn Ataillah (2003); al-Ghazali (1920) approaches are seem potential to be developed as a resolution framework towards self-resilience character building, in dealing with self-injury conflicts.

In attempts to solve spiritual problems and human soul illness, several attempts implemented by several recent and past islamic scholars' figures. Among of the scholars are Al-Muhasibi (1996); Al-Tabari (1928); Al-Makki (1991); Al-Ghazali (1920); Al-Jailani (1996), Ibn Ataillah (2003) and many more. Meanwhile the recent Islamic scholars are Syeikh Abdul Al-Mandili (2015); Hawwa (2017); Rajab (2006); Sa'ari (2015); Masroom (2016) and so on. However, in treating human soul to develop mental well-being, spiritual element treatment, which is integrated with aqidah, fiqh and Sufism need to be given attention. In fact, the knowledge of Sufism is very important in religious life because it can educate the human heart to be better. The demand in deepening these three sciences simultaneously is recommended by contemporary scholars and it is also a very important thing to to be learned. Because of this, this study presents a few important elements that are highlighted by Ibn Ataillah and al-Ghazali in building self-resilience as well as protective factors in efforts of facing self-injury. So, the main objective of this study is to identify important elements in building self-resilience based on Ibn Ataillah and al-Ghazali approaches as a solving structure in confronting self-injuring conflict.

## Methodology

This qualitative study is in the design of grounded theory, generally, enable researcher develop theory from the data without any previous theory framework. In literature review context, it means that researcher approaching literature without bringing certain theory or hypotheses, where data analysis involving the identification of main concepts, relationships between those concepts, and theories development based on the reviewed literature (Creswell, 2014).

Grounded Theory process begins with the data collection from relevant literature such as reading articles, books, and other resources which related research topics. In the context of this study, the method of document analysis was carried out on the writings of Islamic scholars, especially al-Ghazali (1920); Ibn Ataillah (2003), as well as the study of literature

related to the issue of self-injury without suicidal intent, and also literature related to the spiritual approach to the self-injury issues.

## Literature Review
### Self-injurious behavior

According to Tian et al (2019); Yusrie et al (2019) the problem of self-injurious behavior is increasing where such behavior can affect the physical, mental, and emotional health, not only to the individual who injures himself, but also to the individuals in the surrounding who may be influenced by the behavior. The terms that are commonly used to describe self-injurious behavior are non-suicidal self-injury, self-injury, self-harm, self-mutilation, deliberate self-harm, and parasuicide (Klonsky et al., 2011). What these terms have in common is that it is self-injurious behavior but does not have suicidal intent.

According to Whitlock (2010), self-injury usually refers to various types of behavior where individuals intentionally cause harm to their own bodies and this act violates social norms and does not have suicidal intentions. Self-injury is also defined as behavior that intentionally causes immediate injury and tissue damage, is done without suicidal intent, and is not allowed or accepted in a social context (Taliaferro & Muehlenkamp, 2014) where this behavior is usually done by individuals intentionally to reduce emotional pain or overcome uncontrollable feelings. This self-injurious behavior is usually done due to different motives. According to Schmeelk-Cone and Zimmerman (2003), an individual has a high tendency to experience stress is caused by peer factors, poverty, schooling as well as low holding and appreciating of religious values.

### Building self-resilience based on the approach of Ibn Ataillah and al-Ghazali

In facing the issue of cognitive distortion that can lead to self-injuring behavior even without suicidal intent, in addition to using Western approaches (Tian et al., 2019) and spirituality such as meditation (Masroom, 2016). Even Pihasniwati et al (2022) claim that for the issue of Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI), spiritual values applied through religious approach are essential in helping to build an individual's self-resilience. The study of Pihasniwati et al (2022) founds that there is six from seven articles 2012-2020 which is investigated shows that there is relationship between religiosity and religion addressing NSSI. The study found personal religious, institutional elements as well as intrinsic and extrinsic religious as the protective factors in addressing NSSI. Addressing NSSI by developing a positive religious approach to coping requires religious practices and principles. Risk factors include religious doubts and questions, religious transitions, unstable religious identities, and the possibility of religiosity leading to negative religious coping. It provides a forum for discussion of religious questions, encourages parental oversight, assesses the teenagers' function and role in their NSSI, respectfully questions the teenagers' beliefs and their importance in life, and appropriately adjusts religious coping styles. It is important to evaluate helps and mitigate NSSI and its related factors. Therefore, the approach of Ibn Ataillah and al-Ghazali is seen to be potentially used in helping individuals in dealing with the stated risk factors.

Salasiah et al (2011) claim that psychotherapy approaches through a spiritual approach is very necessary, where this approach does not just involve the process of helping individuals in adapting to problems based solely on the Western approach, but even involves a psycho-spiritual approach which emphasizes the five important elements highlighted in the concept of *al-khalq* (creation) as well as the concept of *qada'* and *qadar*

as emphasized by (Ibn Ataillah, 1998). This is because by ignoring the concept of submission to God can encourage individuals to determine their own destiny without remembering God's provisions, even though they are basically servants who have no rights and no power like The Creator. Lack of the aspects of understanding and practice related to the concept of *al-khalq* (creation) as well as *qada'* and *qadar* can cause individuals with no self-resilience in facing conflict until leading to stress, anxiety, and depression when they fail to understand or control the *'aql* (cognitive), actions of the Creator and servant behavior, as well as God's provisions (Ibn Ataillah, 1998).

The understanding of the concept of creation as well as the concept of *qada'* and *qadar* emphasized by Ibn Ataillah (1998) alongside the elements of *al-nafs*, *al-ruh*, *al-qalb* and *al-'aql* which are explained in detail from the point of view of AlGhazali (1985) are seen to be potential in forming humans to be more resilient. This is because individuals who are believe, confident, and always aware of God's power will always expect care from their Creator until they can stay resilient when faced with a conflict that challenges their physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual abilities. Ibn Ataillah (2003) says that this is proof of real strength when an individual can accept a situation calmly through the efforts in developing self-resilience holistically without following his lust (*nafs*).

The effort to purify the soul is very important in building mental well-being and the results of a study by Hajar et al (2017); Yusoff et al (2019), prove the existence of a relationship between self-resilience and cognitive distortion. Al-Ghazali's Psycho-spiritual Counseling Theory was introduced by Yatimah and Tajudin (2008, 2011). This theory takes al-Ghazali's philosophy of thought which is sourced from al-Quran and al-Hadith as the main source of reference. This theory focuses on three basic things, namely (i) philosophy on humans; (ii) assumptions on humans; and (iii) counseling techniques used. This theoretical philosophy states that the spiritual aspect in humans helps them to return back to God and move towards reaching the level of a perfect human being. Al-Ghazali's Counseling Theory makes al-Ghazali's philosophy about the elements of *qalb, ruh, nafs* and *'aql* as the core in this theory building. Al-Ghazali's Counseling Theory describes human characteristics consisting of four elements, namely (i) *qalb* or heart; (ii) *ruh* or spirit; (iii) *nafs* or lower self; and (iv) *'aql* or intellect (Yatimah & Tajudin, 2008, 2011). These four elements interact dynamically where the elements of the *qalb*, *ruh*, and *nafs* are the elements that influence the inner nature of humans while *'aql* is the element that influences the outer nature of human. However, the most important element that affects human behavior is the heart (*qalb*) (Yatimah & Tajudin, 2008, 2011).

According to al-Ghazali's Counseling Theory, the heart (*qalb*) is the core of human philosophy, and it has relationship with other elements. *Qalb* is the foundation for humans. It has a direct connection with the rest of the body. The heart (*qalb*) also encourages human to move towards *insan kamil* or a perfect person who aims to worship God. *Qalb* becomes the manager of other body parts whether it is moving towards goodness or bad. As long as the heart *qalb* is under the guidance of *'aql*. then the heart *qalb* will be on a straight path but if the heart is dominated by the nafs, then it will deviate far from the path of truth (Ezdianie & Tajudin, 2016). So here, it can be summarized that all the important elements emphasized by Ibn Ataillah (1998) related to the concept of creation as well as the concept of *qada'* and *qadar*, as well as the elements of *al-nafs*, *al-ruh*, *al-qalb*, and *al-'aql* which are described in detail by Yatimah and Tajudin (2011) from the point of view of al-Ghazali (1985) indirectly emphasizing the concept of spirituality, the science of life, the concept of

servitude and divinity, conflict resolution skills, as well as the application of virtues that are necessary for individuals to stay resilient when facing conflict.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, the spiritual approach is seen as having the potential to help build the self-resilience of individuals who face pressure in helping to deal with the issue of self-harm without suicidal intent, which is a step that should be explored nowadays. In discussing the conflict of Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI), spiritual values in religion, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, are protective factors that should be focused on. Religion in extrinsic terms refers to religious practices that are external or formal in nature, such as attending religious activities, while in intrinsic terms it is related to the individual's belief and appreciation of religious values and principles, as well as the values that exist in oneself (practices that are felt by individual as part of his identity) and institutions (influence and support received from certain religious institutions). Therefore, it is not surprising when there are studies that show that the higher the religious practices and principles, the lower the tendency to be involved in NSSI. At the same time, in dealing with NSSI issues, risk factors such as doubts and individual questions about religion, transitions that occur in religious matters, unstable religious identity, and possible risks of religiosity lead to negative religiosity coping. To overcome this risk, support from the community and family is essential, where parents need to continuously monitor and provide support to help the individual be more resilient and not repeat NSSI acts.

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