

Islamic Spiritual Approach in Developing a Positive Mindset

Hanin Hamjah, S^a, Mohd Arifin, S.N.A^b, Ismail, Z^c, Mastor, K.A^d, Mohamad Rasit, R^e, Ab. Rahman, Zaizul^f, ^{a,b,c,e}Centre for Human and Community Well-being, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 Bangi, Selangor, ^dCentre for Liberal Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 Bangi, Selangor, ^fFaculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Email: ^asalhanin@ukm.edu.my, ^bnazratulain92@gmail.com, ^czainab@ukm.edu.my, ^dkam2000@ukm.edu.my, ^erosmawati@ukm.edu.my, ^fzaizul@ukm.edu.my

Various emotional problems are faced by people in today's society such as anger and hatred. Many studies have proven that a spiritual approach in counselling is effective and can resolve client problems. One of such spiritual approaches is tazkiyat al-nafs which is a process of purifying the soul. Hence, the objective of this paper is to examine the tazkiyat al-nafs approach in counselling and analyse its effect on the clients' minds based on a survey with 58 counsellors. The results indicated that the counsellors applied tazkiyat al-nafs approach in counselling and found resultant positive effects on the clients' minds. The clients were convinced that every test in life has an underlying wisdom leading them to be more calm and think positively. It can be concluded that the tazkiyat al-nafs approach in counselling has positive effect on the clients' minds whereby they can overcome problems by using this unique novel Islamic-based soul purification approach.

Key words: *Tazkiyat al-nafs, Islamic, spiritual, counselling, thinking, religion.*

Introduction

Developing positive thinking in the client's mind is something that counsellors always emphasize in counselling services. The client's minds includes the client's ability to think and provide reason. In positive psychology, the mind attends to what is happening, and to what is being done and will tune into sensation and or mindfulness. According to Pang & Ruch (2019), the mindfulness training could help cultivate certain character strengths such as creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective, bravery, perseverance, zest, love,

social intelligence, forgiveness, self-regulation, appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, and spirituality. These findings were concurred with by most counsellors who found that positive thinking can motivate clients to solve problems because positive thinking can eliminate the client's negative perception of himself as useless, unsuccessful, and hopeless (Knettel et al. 2019; Gordeyeva et al. 2018; Mason et al. 2018; Rostami et al. 2017; Ivtzan & Lomas 2016; Bunyan et al. 2017).

Various client life problems can be addressed successfully in counselling including the problems that are related to marriage, family, finance, time management, environmental adjustments, unemployment, career problems, peers and personal weaknesses such as lack of confidence, laziness, negative thinking, blaming others, stress, anger, sadness and frustration (Cardoso et al. 2019; Ionut et al. 2019; Kwenin et al. 2013; Hemphill and Kulik 2019; Zakhirehdari et al. 2019; House and Walton, B. 2018). Therefore, there is a need to incorporate aspects of spiritual psychology into counselling to help clients resolve their problems more effectively.

In line with the increasing complexity of clients' life problems, counsellors today are more creative in providing counselling services to help clients to overcome their life problems. Various methods are studied, thoroughly examined and implemented in counselling sessions to fulfill current needs. When counselling services were first offered, religious and spiritual issues were deemed inappropriate to be applied in counselling and it was even considered unethical (Corey, Corey and Callanan 2002; Faiver et al. 2000; Weld and Eriksen 2007; Sahker 2016).

Today, circumstances have changed and research shows applying the religious element is necessary (Gordon 2018; Farshadnia et al. 2018; Oxhandler 2019; Damari et al. 2018; Sajadi et al. 2018; Shaw, Bayne and Lorelle 2012; Read 2015; Owens 2014) and improves the effectiveness of counselling session to help the client facing psychological disorders and chronic diseases (Kim, Chen and Brachfeld 2018; Oxhandler and Pargament 2018; Haghight et al. 2018; Pandya 2018; Pirutinsky et al. 2019; Mastor et al. 2016; Faisal et al. 2017; Muthupalaniappen et al. 2012). Based on this literature, religious and spiritual issues need to be applied in counselling sessions to improve the effectiveness of the process to help the clients overcome their problems.

One of the religious approaches which may be applied in counselling is *tazkiyat al-nafs* which has the potential to change the client's mindset and behavior toward a more positive direction (Sardar 1996; Syed Abdul Rahman 2017). According to al-Ghazali (2000), *tazkiyat al-nafs* means the process of cleansing or purifying the self or human soul from all evil inclinations (due to immoral character) and its beautification with good values and virtues. It is a long process and requires much patience. There are two essential components in the *tazkiyat al-*

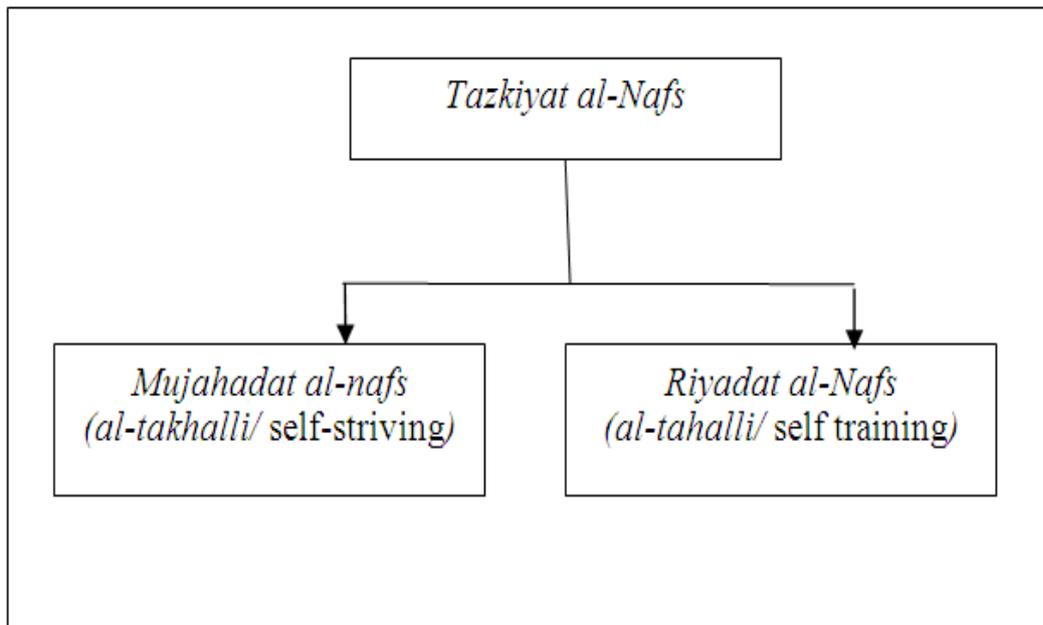
nafs process, namely, *al-takhalli* (purifying the soul from *mazmumah* (blameworthy) traits and *al-tahalli* (adorning the soul with *mahmudah* (praiseworthy) qualities as follows:

I know that the path of the sufi is complete only with knowledge and practice. The purpose of their practice is to liberate their souls from the shackles of desire (lust) as well as cleansing the souls (emptying their hearts) from other than Allah S.W.T as well as beautify (tahalliyah) the hearts with remembrance of Allah S.W.T. (al-Ghazali 1994).

In this context, Al-Ghazali (1994) defined *mujahadat al-nafs* as a personal effort to seriously resist one's lust or remove it. The method used is to fight against lust and resist temptation (al-Ghazali 2000; Hanin Hamjah 2016). Al-Ghazali (2000) also analysed the meaning of *mujahadat al-nafs* (self-striving) that is, a method of eliminating *mazmumah* (blameworthy) qualities until Allah overflows his heart with the light of knowledge. *Riyadat al-nafs* (self-training) is an exercise for the soul to gradually eliminate bad character and replace it with good character until a certain level is reached whereby something which was heavy and difficult to do at the beginning stage ultimately becomes easy and light to implement. From this meaning it is understood that *mujahadat al-nafs* is the same as *al-takhalli* process while *riyadat al-nafs* is equal to *al-tahalli* process.

Based on the above discussion, it can be summarized that according to al-Ghazali, *tazkiyat al-nafs* is an endeavour to purify the human soul, heart and self from the dirt of despicable qualities. This can be achieved through the process of self-striving and then beautifying it with moral or pure qualities through the process of self-training which requires patience. This process requires persistent effort and strong zeal. Figure 1 below illustrates *mujahadat al-nafs* (self-striving) and *riyadah al-nafs*, which are components in the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (Hanin Hamjah & Mat Akhir 2007; Hanin Hamjah 2016; Hanin Hamjah et al. 2017).

Figure 1. Tazkiyat al-Nafs according to al-Ghazali



Discussion of *tazkiyat al-nafs* is extensive because it covers the process of self- striving and self-training. Hence, this article only focus on the self-striving approach. Although this approach is fundamentally based on the teachings of Islam, the noble values that are to be achieved such as converting bad into good values which are universal in nature and are in line with other religions in the world. Thus, the objectives of this research are to identify the self-striving approach applied in the counselling session and to analyze its implications in the counselling session on the client's minds.

Literature Review

Past studies on *tazkiyat al-nafs* such as by Sa'ari (2002) discussed *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) as explained by al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111). Besides that, *tazkiyat al-nafs* was also discussed by Picken (2005) and Mohamad et al. (2017) who analyzed the view of al-Harith al-Muhasibi on it. Noordin & Ab. Rahman (2017) also made a comparison between the views of al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim on the *tazkiyat al-nafs* process. Zaini & Sa'ari (2016) also researched on *tazkiyat al-nafs* according to the view of Syeikh Abdul Qadir Al-Mandili. The latter had submitted a breakdown of the soul purification concept into three main components, that is, control and prevention of damage to external parts; second, treatment and rehabilitation of despicable traits; and lastly, imbuing the soul with praiseworthy traits. This shows that past research examined *tazkiyat al-nafs* and the various views and approaches of Muslim scholars about it such as al-Ghazali, al-Muhasibi, Ibn Qayyim and Syeikh Abdul Kadir.

Among the researchers who emphasized on the importance of the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach to be implemented in development is Sardar (1996), who suggested the growth concept through

purification and human well-being replacing the idea of development, and how they can become the key concepts for a Muslim civilisation of the future. In addition, *tazkiyat al-nafs* was found suitable to be implemented in human capital development. This idea was supported in a study by Uyun, Kurniawan & Jaufalaily (2019) and Syed Abdul Rahman (2017) who found that *tazkiyat al-nafs* is an effective process to know God and its effectiveness in transforming humans to be balanced in the physical, emotional, mental and psychic aspects. This is also in line with a study by Mohd. Fakhrudin & Suhid (2016) which found that the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach may help in the process of effective strengthening of the soul to develop a balanced and holistic individual.

In addition, the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach also brings positive effect to the improvement of religious practices as it reminds one of death and the day of resurrection. This is supported by Ahaddour, Van and Broeckaert (2017) who studied *tazkiyat al-nafs* as a method of remembering death and preparation for the hereafter. A study by Masyhuri (2012) and Yusoff et al. (2017) also explained the benefit of *tazkiyat al-nafs* which can help in building mental health as they are very closely related and can create tranquility, peace and a healthy psyche so that life is peaceful in this world and hereafter.

Past research frequently associate *tazkiyat al-nafs* as a *sufi* method (*tasawwuf*), as preparation to face death, to know God, mechanism to create peace of minds, and mental health as well as self-development, although not many studies have examined *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach in counselling. Nonetheless, research on *tazkiyat al-nafs* in counselling has been conducted by Hanin Hamjah & Mat Akhir (2007) and the said research found that counsellors at Pusat Kaunseling Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan (Counselling Centre of Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Council) in Malaysia apply the *tazkiyat al-nafs* element in counselling sessions. The research found that counsellors encourage clients to practice praiseworthy traits such as being patient, contented and grateful in order to overcome life problems.

Further, Saper (2012) also researched on *tazkiyat al-nafs* in counselling. He constructed a Module for Guidance on *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (MBTN) and tested the module for adolescent religiosity and resilience. Research results proved that a person's resilience was enhanced through *tazkiyat al-nafs*. The implications of his research can further expand the knowledge relating to guidance and counselling according to the Islamic perspective. In addition, research on *tazkiyat al-nafs* in counselling was conducted by Mohd. Arifin (2018) who studied the application of *tazkiyat al-nafs* in counselling at Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSM), Malaysia. Her research found that counsellors at MRSM apply the *tazkiyat al-nafs* approach in counselling and found it was effective in helping clients overcome life problems. Generally, research on applying *tazkiyat al-nafs* in counselling has been conducted by counselling practitioners but not much research examined the effect of applying *tazkiyat al-nafs* on the

client's minds. Hence, the present study is conducted to identify the self-striving approach on the client's minds.

Based on previous researchs, it can be concluded that there were studies conducted on the application of tazkiyat al-nafs in counselling but no studies examined the effect of applying tazkiyat al-nafs on the clients' mind. Thus, the purpose of this study is to achieve such objectives and the findings from this study will be used as a main reference internationally and in Malaysia specifically.

Method

Participants

There are 100 counsellors in 52 MRSM schools in Malaysia. MRSM schools are highly performing schools with academically excellent students and counsellors at MRSM schools are highly educated and experienced. According to Neuman (1991), a small total population such as below 1000 requires a research sample selection of only 30 percent of the population. In this study, a total of 58 counsellors from MRSM school were selected as research participants.

Research participants were selected through purposive sampling. Among the selection criteria for participants are that they are registered with the Malaysian Board of Counsellors, have at least one year's experience in handling counselling sessions and practice religious approach in counselling. They are 36 females (62.1%) and 22 males (37.9%). Most of them are aged 31-35 years (N=33, 56.9%), 48 married (82.8%), hold a bachelor's degree (N=44,75.95) and experienced in providing counselling between 6-10 years of service (N=32, 55.2%).

Measures

Data collection in this study is through a questionnaire. The constructed questionnaire items are based on the thinking of Imam al-Ghazali, a renowned Muslim scholar in the field of *tazkiyat al-nafs*. In addition, questionnaire items were also modified from a philosophical doctoral study by Hanin Hamjah (2008) entitled '*al-Irsyad al-Nafsiyy* Preaching (Da'wah) Approach according to al-Ghazali : A Study at the Counselling Centre of the Negeri Sembilan Religious Council, Malaysia'. Based on al-Ghazali (2000) and Hanin Hamjah (2008), a set of questionnaire had been built into six variables that are related to self-striving such as managing anxiety by not giving in to despair and to place hope in Allah (al-Ghazali 2000), managing stress by increasing dependence on Allah in facing life problems, managing sad emotions by believing in getting good (reward) for patience in the face of sadness, controlling feelings of hatred by exercising patience, making invocations to God and forgiving others and choosing good words and not using harsh words in communicating (al-Ghazali 2000).

The questionnaire form was divided into four parts. In order to achieve the objectives only part A, C and D were selected for discussion in this paper. Part A is about a background of research participants, part C is self-striving, and part D is the implication after receiving self-striving approach in counselling. The items for part C and D were constructed using a Likert scale style ranging from 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, to 4=strongly agree.

Procedures

In the early stage, before running this study, the researcher applied for approval from Graduate School Centre of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. After receiving the approval from the university, the researcher sent an ordinary mail to the Malaysia Ministry of Education (KPM) to gain permission to conduct the study at MRSM. After written approval from KPM was obtained, the researcher asked MRSM administrator to distribute questionnaires among counsellors. With the permission letter from the MRSM administrator, the researcher started distributing the questionnaire among counsellors.

The research questionnaire constructed was reviewed by two external experts in the field related to *tazkiyat al-nafs* to validate the items. They are from University Malaya and University Science Malaysia. In order to test the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted. The purpose of pilot test is to examine the reliability analysis of item. The pilot test is a trial test on a small group of individuals prior to conducting the actual research (Chua 2006). The result of the pilot test showed that this instrument scored a high coefficient value for reliability in the application of *tazkiyat al-nafs*, that is, $\alpha (a) = 0.987$ and client positive reflection (α value $(a) = 0.961$). The result was acceptable consistency and reliability since the alpha cronbach value for the variable exceeds 0.6 and this is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Analysis of Reliability of Measuring Instrument

No.	Instrument	<i>alpha (a) value</i>	Level of Reliability
1.	Application of <i>tazkiyat al-nafs</i>	0.987	High
2.	Client Positive Reflection	0.961	High

The alpha cronbach value are based on Bryman & Cramer (2005) suggestion is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Alpha Cronbach Value and Reliability of Measuring Instrument

Nilai alpha cronbach (a)	Reliability
>0.90	Very High
0.70 – 0.89	High
0.30 – 0.69	Moderate
0.30	Low

Source: Bryman & Cramer (2005)

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical technique: percentage, frequency and mean. In this study, data were coded to analyse the self-striving approach and its implication to the clients in counselling. Then, data were coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. After coding, this study found the majority of counsellors were strongly agree, only few counsellors were strongly disagree. Findings were interpreted in tabular and figure representations.

Findings

Generally, this research found that the self-striving approach adopted by the counselor relates to emotional and psychological disorders such as anxiety, stress, sadness, hatred, anger and verbal harshness. Table 3 below shows that the item with the highest mean value is the item “I suggest to the client to control his feelings of anxiety, not to give in to despair and to place hope in Allah” (mean=3.31), second highest item “I suggest to the client to control stress by increasing his dependence on Allah in facing life problems” (mean=3.27), third highest item “I suggest to the client to control his sad emotions by believing that reward will be given for patience in facing the sadness” (mean=3.22) and item “I suggest to the client to control his feelings of hatred by being patient, invoking to God and forgiving others” (mean=3.22) followed by item “I suggest to the client to control his anger by taking ablution (*wudhu*)” (mean=3.12) and item “I suggest to the client to select good words when communicating and not to use harsh words” (mean=3.08).

Table 3: Self -Striving Approach in Counselling

		Strongly Dis- Agree	Dis- agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
1	I suggest to my client to control his feelings of anxiety by not giving in to despair and to place hope in Allah.	1 (1.7%)	5 (8.6%)	27 (46.6%)	25 (43.1%)	3.31
2	I suggest to my client to control stress by increasing dependence on Allah in facing life problems.	1 (1.7%)	6 (10.3%)	27 (46.6%)	24 (41.4%)	3.27
3	I suggest to my client to control his sad emotion by believing in getting good (reward) for patience in the face of sadness.	1 (1.7%)	7 (12.1%)	28 (48.3%)	22 (37.9%)	3.22
4	I suggest to my client to control feelings of hatred by being patient, making invocations to God and forgiving others.	1 (1.7%)	6 (10.3%)	30 (51.7%)	21 (36.2%)	3.22
5	I suggest to my client to control his anger by taking ablution (<i>wudhu</i>).	1 (1.7%)	9 (15.4%)	30 (51.7%)	18 (31.0%)	3.12
6	I suggest to my client to choose good words and not to use harsh words in communicating.	1 (1.7%)	11 (19.0%)	28 (48.3%)	18 (31.0%)	3.08

In addition to discussing the self-striving approach in counselling, this research also examines the effect of the approach on the client's minds. As shown in Table 4 below, this research found that the positive change in the client's minds is an effect of applying the self-striving approach in counselling. The positive changes in the client's minds can be identified in the item "After the client has gone through the counselling sessions, I find that he is convinced that every trial faced has an underlying wisdom" (mean = 3.36) followed by item "After the client has gone through the counselling sessions, I find that he is convinced that all problems can be solved with Allah's permission" (mean=3.32), item "After the client has gone through the counselling sessions, I find that the client is convinced that every trial is Allah's will"

(mean=3.29), item “ After the client has gone through the counselling sessions, I find that he is constantly grateful and accepting Allah’s will (mean=3.20), item “ After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he is more calm and constantly positive in thinking” (mean=3.17) and item “ After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he knows who he is, where he comes from and where he is going to after death (mean=3.05).

Table 4: Implications of Self-striving Approach on Clients’ Minds

		Strongly dis-agree	Dis-agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
1	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he is convinced that every trial faced has an underlying wisdom.	0 (0.0%)	3 (5.2%)	31 (53.4%)	24 (41.4%)	3.36
2	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he is convinced that all problems can be solved with Allah’s permission.	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.4%)	35 (60.3%)	21 (36.2%)	3.32
3	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he believes that every trial is by Allah’s will.	0 (0.0%)	6 (10.3%)	29 (50.0%)	23 (39.7%)	3.29
4	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he accepts and is content with Allah’s will.	0 (0.0%)	4 (6.9%)	38 (65.5%)	16 (27.6%)	3.20
5	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he becomes calmer and constantly thinks positively.	0 (0.0%)	3 (5.2%)	42 (72.4%)	13 (22.4%)	3.17
6	After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that he knows who he is,	0 (0.0%)	11 (19.0%)	33 (56.9%)	14 (24.1%)	3.05

where he comes from and where he is going to after death.					
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Discussion

Research results shown in Table 3 above indicate that the psychological element most emphasized by counsellors in this study is the problem of anxiety and stress in the item “I suggest to my client to control his feelings of anxiety by not giving in to despair and to place hope in Allah” (mean=3.31) and item “I suggest to my client to control his stress by increasing his dependence on Allah in facing life problems” (mean=3.27). In this context, the counsellor makes an effort to overcome anxiety among clients by the method of motivation, that is, by suggesting to the client to remove despair and replacing it with hope in Allah SWT. Counsellors also suggest to the client that they control stress by increasing dependence on Allah in facing life problems. This finding is in line with that of a study by Haghghat et al. (2018) who state that using a spiritual approach in counselling reduces stress and anxiety.

The counsellor’s approach in suggesting to the client to control his feelings of anxiety by not giving in to despair and to place hope in Allah (mean=3.31) is supported by al-Hambali (2006) who stated that a person who is overwhelmed by misfortune or problems has to be patient and surrender all affairs to Allah. This is also in line with a study by Hanin Hamjah (2016) who found that counsellor helps the client to be more self-confident and not easily despair as well as place full trust in Allah SWT. Research results found that when the counsellor suggested to the client to control his feelings of hatred and revenge with patience, invocations and forgiveness of others (mean=3.22), that this item has the highest agreement among the respondents (51.7 %, N=30). This research result is in line with the view of Al-Ghazali (2000) who encouraged Muslims to stay away from feelings of hatred and revenge and instead encouraged Muslims to forge *silaturrahim* (ties or bonds) and love each other.

Counsellors in this research suggest that clients remove feelings of hatred and revenge because people who harbour these feelings in the heart will make efforts to take revenge for their dissatisfaction or hurt on the persons who caused it. Individuals who keep these feelings find it difficult to forgive and will consider that only by revenging all the actions of the people who have caused dissatisfaction or hurt will make them satisfied and quiet (Adz-Dzaky 2001; Hanin Hamjah 2016; Zhang et al. 2019). In fact, if feelings of hatred and revenge are left unchecked to smoulder in the heart, it will cause the soul of the owner to be restless and not calm. Hence, counsellors suggest that the clients educate their souls to forgive others in order to have peace of minds and pave the way to find solutions to his problems. This matter is in line with research by Roxas et al. (2019) and Tsang et al. (2019) which found that forgiving others mediated the association between compassion for others and subjective well-being.

Further, another method in self-striving approach applied by the counselor in this research is to suggest to the client to control his anger by taking ablution (*wudu*) (mean=3.12). This finding is in line with research by Hanin Hamjah (2016) which found that the ablution (*wudhu*) may be performed to control anger. This is also in line with a scientific theory that water has a major role in neutralizing the body's system, especially in controlling the body temperature by reducing excessive heat (Darus 1999). Logically, when a person is angry, his heart will feel hot and hence, one of the effective steps is by using water because water can reduce body temperature and heat in the heart. Performing ablution (*wudhu*) is a method to avoid being influenced by satan who constantly incites man to get angry. This is in line with al-Hadi's (1995) view which suggested that a method of removing anger is by meditation and seeking Allah's protection from satan's incitement. This is consistent with al-Quran (7:200) which explains to humans to seek protection from Allah if incited by satan.

Generally, research found that counsellors succeed in changing the minds and psychology of clients to be more positive such as believing every trial has an underlying wisdom and trials in life are by the will of Allah. This finding is in line with the views of al-Hambali (2006) who stated that a person who meets with misfortune or problems in life should hope and pray that Allah SWT will replace (reward) it with good as everything that is determined has its underlying wisdom and does not occur in vain. This clearly describes the change in the client's minds whereby he thinks more positively in facing life problems. This finding is in line with Kim, Chen and Brachfeld (2018) and Hanin Hamjah et al. (2017) findings of which highlighted the importance for psychotherapy patients to develop a safe and secure relationship with their God to experience spiritual transformation and positive psychological outcomes.

Counsellors in this research generally succeed in changing the clients' minds toward a more positive direction until the client becomes more convinced that all problems may be resolved by the permission of Allah (mean=3.32). This belief is the source of strong encouragement for the client to seriously make efforts to overcome problems in life. Applying this belief in the client's minds is in line with research by Mustaffa & Ahmad (2005) which found that research respondents believe that guidance and counselling services can help in resolving various problems such as in personal, family, and friendship. This finding is also consistent with findings of research done by Wiggins & Moody (1982) who found that clients from various levels of intelligence across race and socio-culture believe that counselling can help them solve problems.

This research found that there are positive effects on the client's minds when the client accepts Allah's will (mean=3.20). This finding is in line with the objectives of Islamic counselling discussed by Mustaffa (1998) that is, helping the client to consciously and openly make their own decisions or choices, but not without Allah's pleasure, and encourage acceptance of destiny decreed upon him. This finding is supported by research done by Hanin Hamjah & Mat

Akhir (2007) which found that counsellors at Pusat Kaunseling Majlis Agama Islam Negeri Sembilan (PKMAINS) very much emphasize their clients to be content with Allah's will, scoring 63.9% (23 persons). Applying the trait of being content is the second highest given emphasis by counsellors, after the trait of being patient which scored 94.4% (34 persons).

The other positive effect toward the change in the client's minds can be identified in the item "After the client has gone through counselling sessions, I find that the client becomes more calm and constantly thinks positively" (mean=3.17). This finding shows that the self-striving approach has an effect on cognitive change in the client. This approach has the same objectives as the cognitive approach known as Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE). The research by Hart et al. (2019) proved that the COPE approach succeeded in overcoming problems of depression and anxiety among students. This approach focuses on the shaping of a positive student minds, especially in building self-confidence and applying the problem-solving skills to achieve success in learning.

Among the other positive effects on the client's minds after getting guidance on self-striving in counselling is that the client knows who he is, where he comes from and where he is going to after death (mean=3.05). This finding explains that client has awareness of himself and his life goals. This is consistent with the goal of Islamic counselling, that is, to encourage clients to understand themselves as well as to make decisions in order to achieve happiness in this world and hereafter based on Islamic shariah (Zakaria & Mat Akhir 2019; Sumari & Baharudin 2016). In addition, self-striving in counselling also is a training process of spiritual intelligence that can help clients to become mindfulness and *ihsan* (Ismail 2015) particularly in worshipping Allah (Baharuddin & Ismail 2015).

Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that the tazkiyat al-nafs approach in particular self-striving was applied in counselling sessions specifically to overcome psychological problems such as anxiety, stress, sadness, hatred, anger and verbal harshness. The respondents in this study found that there are positive effect on the client's minds. They realized that every trial in life has an underlying wisdom, all problems can be solved by Allah's permission, every trial is by Allah's will, be grateful with God's provision, be calm, positive thinking and know one's self. All of these implications are summarized in Figure 2 below.



Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest has been declared.

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