

THE CONCEPT OF SELF-LOVE IN STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH FROM AN ISLAMIC COUNSELING PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This study examines the concept of self-love in strengthening mental health from an Islamic counseling perspective through a contemporary literature review. The study employs a qualitative library research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data were obtained from relevant scientific literature discussing self-love, self-compassion, Islamic psychology, religious coping, Islamic counseling, and Islamically integrated psychological interventions. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify conceptual patterns, normative foundations, empirical evidence, and practical implications for counseling practice. The findings indicate that Islamic self-love differs from narcissism, selfishness, and excessive self-indulgence because it is grounded in human dignity, gratitude, self-acceptance, self-care, spiritual responsibility, and accountability before Allah. Self-love is closely associated with *shukr*, *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *tawakkal*, and *taqwa*. Contemporary evidence also suggests that Islamically integrated interventions can strengthen self-compassion and support psychological well-being when they are culturally sensitive and consistent with clients' religious values. Therefore, Islamic counseling can position self-love as a therapeutic resource that integrates psychological well-being, spiritual awareness, moral responsibility, and healthy interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: *Self-Love*, Mental Health, Islamic Counseling

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep *self-love* dalam penguatan kesehatan mental perspektif konseling Islami melalui kajian literatur kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan desain penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis. Data diperoleh dari literatur ilmiah yang relevan mengenai *self-love*, *self-compassion*, psikologi Islam, *religious coping*, konseling Islami, dan intervensi psikologis yang terintegrasi dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Analisis tematik dilakukan untuk mengidentifikasi pola konseptual, landasan normatif, bukti empiris, serta implikasi praktis bagi praktik konseling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *self-love* Islami berbeda dari narsisme, egoisme, dan pemanjaan diri secara berlebihan karena berlandaskan pada martabat manusia, rasa syukur, penerimaan diri, perawatan diri, tanggung jawab spiritual, dan pertanggungjawaban di hadapan Allah. *Self-love* berkaitan erat dengan konsep *syukr*, *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *tawakkal*, dan *taqwa*. Bukti kontemporer juga menunjukkan bahwa intervensi yang terintegrasi dengan nilai-nilai Islam dapat meningkatkan *self-compassion* dan mendukung kesejahteraan psikologis apabila diterapkan secara sensitif terhadap budaya dan selaras dengan nilai keagamaan klien. Dengan demikian, konseling Islami dapat menempatkan *self-love* sebagai sumber terapeutik yang mengintegrasikan kesejahteraan psikologis, kesadaran spiritual, tanggung jawab moral, dan hubungan interpersonal yang sehat.

Kata Kunci: *Self-Love*, Kesehatan Mental, Konseling Islami

INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary society, particularly among adolescents and young adults who face complex academic, social, familial, economic, and digital pressures. In Indonesia, the urgency of this issue is reflected in national health data. Analysis of the 2018 Indonesia Basic Health Survey found depression among 5.1% of adolescents aged 15–17 years and 5.6% of young adults aged 18–24 years, with several individual, behavioral, family, and health-related factors contributing to the condition (Suryaputri et al., 2022). These findings demonstrate that mental health problems among young people cannot be understood solely as individual psychological difficulties but must also be situated within broader social and relational contexts. The seriousness of this condition is further associated with limited utilization of professional mental health services, indicating the importance of preventive and promotive approaches that strengthen psychological resources before mental health problems become more severe. Within this context, developing positive ways of relating to oneself becomes particularly important.

One psychological resource that has received increasing scholarly attention is self-love, which refers broadly to a positive, accepting, caring, and responsible relationship with oneself. Although the term has become increasingly popular in contemporary discourse, self-love should not be reduced to self-indulgence,

excessive self-focus, or the unrestricted pursuit of personal pleasure. Its psychological dimension is closely related to self-compassion, which involves treating oneself with kindness, recognizing one's shared humanity, and maintaining balanced awareness when facing personal weaknesses or failures (Neff, 2011). Empirical research provides substantial evidence concerning the importance of self-compassion for psychological functioning. A meta-analysis of 79 samples involving 16,416 participants found a positive relationship between self-compassion and well-being, particularly psychological and cognitive well-being (Zessin et al., 2015). Similarly, a meta-analysis focusing specifically on adolescents demonstrated a significant association between self-compassion and lower psychological distress, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Marsh et al., 2018). These findings are particularly relevant because adolescence and early adulthood represent developmental periods in which self-concept, identity, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships are continuously reconstructed.

The relationship between self-compassion and mental health is also supported by intervention research. Ferrari et al. (2019), through a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials, found that self-compassion interventions were associated with improvements in psychological outcomes across different populations. More specifically, interventions targeting self-compassion

have demonstrated potential for reducing depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress (Han & Kim, 2023). A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found that self-compassion interventions can produce beneficial psychosocial outcomes, reinforcing the argument that compassionate self-relating is not merely a desirable personality characteristic but can also function as a psychological resource that is amenable to intervention (Ferrari et al., 2019). Similarly, Mistretta and Davis (2022) reported beneficial effects of self-compassion interventions on psychological symptoms among adults with chronic illness. These findings strengthen the theoretical argument that self-love, when operationalized through self-compassion, self-acceptance, and responsible self-care, can become an important component of mental health promotion.

Nevertheless, the contemporary construction of self-love frequently emerges within cultural frameworks that emphasize individual autonomy, personal fulfillment, subjective happiness, and individual choice. When transferred uncritically into Muslim communities, such a framework may create conceptual tensions because human identity in Islam is not understood exclusively through individual autonomy. Human beings are simultaneously servants of Allah, recipients of divine dignity, and holders of moral and spiritual responsibilities. Consequently, self-love within an Islamic framework requires a balance between self-acceptance and self-discipline,

personal well-being and social responsibility, and self-care and devotion to Allah. This distinction is important because psychological constructs developed within particular cultural settings cannot always be transferred directly into another religious and cultural context without adaptation. Research on Arab-Muslim psychotherapy has shown that therapeutic approaches that overlook cultural and religious structures may become less appropriate for clients whose identities are strongly embedded within family, community, and religious systems (Dwairy, 2009).

The relevance of cultural and religious adaptation becomes even more apparent in contemporary mental health research involving Muslim populations. A systematic review and thematic synthesis by alHarbi et al. (2023) found that Muslim communities hold distinctive beliefs and attitudes concerning mental health problems and that the acceptability of psychological interventions such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can be influenced by religious and cultural understandings. Likewise, research involving a national sample of American Muslims identified the importance of practitioners understanding basic Islamic beliefs, recognizing intragroup cultural differences, avoiding assumptions, and appropriately incorporating Islamic beliefs and practices as strengths in helping relationships (Hodge et al., 2024). These findings indicate that counseling for Muslim clients requires more than

general cultural sensitivity; it requires an understanding of how religious beliefs shape self-concept, interpretations of suffering, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of psychological well-being.

Islam provides a substantial theological foundation for understanding human dignity and the responsible treatment of the self. The Qur'an states in Surah Al-Isra' 17:70 that Allah has honored the children of Adam and endowed them with various forms of distinction and provision. This principle establishes that human worth is fundamentally connected to divine creation and dignity rather than merely to achievement, social status, physical appearance, or external recognition. Recent studies examining self-love from an Islamic perspective have similarly emphasized that self-respect, forgiveness, personal development, and a meaningful relationship with Allah constitute important dimensions of healthy self-love (Husna & Sa'adah, 2023). From this perspective, caring for oneself is not necessarily an expression of selfishness; rather, it can represent gratitude for divine blessings and fulfillment of the amanah entrusted by Allah. Self-love therefore involves recognizing one's strengths and limitations, avoiding destructive self-judgment, maintaining physical and psychological well-being, and continuously directing the self toward spiritual growth.

The Qur'anic perspective also provides several concepts that can enrich the theoretical construction of self-love.

Previous literature has identified gratitude (*shukr*), contentment (*qana'ah*), humility (*haunan*), and God-consciousness (*taqwa*) as concepts relevant to an Islamic understanding of self-love. A Qur'anic psychology study identified these concepts as expressions of accepting oneself, appreciating divine blessings, maintaining humility, and directing personal life toward obedience to Allah. Such concepts distinguish Islamic self-love from an exclusively individualistic conception of self-esteem. Gratitude encourages individuals to recognize their value as a divine blessing; *qana'ah* develops acceptance without eliminating effort; humility prevents self-love from becoming arrogance; while *taqwa* provides an ethical and spiritual orientation for personal development. Consequently, self-love from an Islamic perspective can be understood as a constructive relationship with oneself that remains embedded within one's relationship with Allah and responsibility toward others.

Importantly, empirical evidence among Muslim populations provides further support for connecting self-compassion with religious and psychological functioning. Ghorbani et al. (2012), in research involving Iranian Muslims, found that self-compassion was positively associated with integrative self-knowledge, self-esteem, and basic need satisfaction, while being negatively associated with depression and anxiety. The findings further indicated that religious orientation strengthened the

relationship between integrative self-knowledge and self-compassion, suggesting that self-compassion can operate within a religious framework rather than necessarily contradicting religious commitment. More recent scholarship has explicitly examined self-compassion from an Islamic perspective and argues that Islamic teachings concerning compassion, self-acceptance, the relationship with Allah, and social harmony can provide a meaningful foundation for mental well-being among Muslims. This perspective is important because it allows self-love to be reconstructed not as an imported psychological slogan but as a concept that can be interpreted through Islamic anthropology, spirituality, and ethical responsibility.

Existing studies have made important contributions to the discussion of self-love and Islam, but significant gaps remain. Previous research has predominantly approached self-love through Qur'anic interpretation, Islamic psychology, or theological analysis. For example, comparative research on the interpretations of Al-Maraghi and M. Quraish Shihab demonstrates that human dignity and divine capacity are important foundations for understanding self-love in the Qur'an. Likewise, Husna and Sa'adah (2023) have shown that Islamic self-love is associated with self-respect, forgiveness, potential development, and one's relationship with Allah. However, these studies have not sufficiently synthesized the theological meaning of

self-love with contemporary evidence concerning psychological intervention and its implications for Islamic counseling practice. The gap is particularly important because counseling requires not only a conceptual understanding of the client but also practical strategies capable of translating religious values into psychologically meaningful interventions.

The need for religiously and culturally responsive counseling is supported by recent research on Muslim mental health services. Abrar and Hargreaves (2024) found that mental health services for Muslim communities in England and Wales remain fragmented, with many Muslims uncertain about how to access services that adequately accommodate their religious beliefs and practices. Their findings emphasize the importance of collaboration among mental health organizations, therapists, counselors, faith leaders, and Muslim communities. Similarly, contemporary research on Muslim clients' experiences demonstrates that religious beliefs can significantly influence how clients understand therapy and psychological distress. When Islamic beliefs are minimized or excluded from therapy, Muslim clients may experience a sense of being unseen or forced to choose between their faith and psychological treatment (Islam & Chadwick, 2026). These findings strengthen the argument that Islamic counseling should recognize religion not as an external addition to psychological practice but as a potentially

central component of the client's meaning system.

The potential of Islamic integration is also reflected in empirical intervention research. Dehghanizadeh et al. (2024), for instance, found that Islamic Spiritual Dignity Therapy significantly improved self-compassion and reduced contingent self-esteem among Iranian adolescent girls from single-parent families. The study demonstrates that spiritual and psychological dimensions can be integrated into a structured intervention without separating religious meaning from psychological well-being. Similarly, Islamic approaches to mental health emphasize that culturally appropriate interventions should be developed in ways that recognize Muslim clients' religious worldviews and coping resources. The integration of Islamic principles is therefore not merely a matter of adding religious terminology to conventional counseling techniques but involves reconsidering how concepts such as self-worth, suffering, acceptance, responsibility, hope, and personal transformation are understood.

The novelty of the present study lies in integrating the normative foundations of self-love in Islam with contemporary psychological evidence concerning mental health, self-compassion, and culturally responsive counseling. Rather than treating self-love solely as a theological concept or as a psychological construct detached from religious meaning, this study conceptualizes it as an integrative

process involving self-acceptance, gratitude, self-compassion, responsibility, spiritual awareness, and continuous self-improvement. This approach is particularly relevant to Muslim clients who may experience tension between contemporary messages encouraging self-acceptance and religious teachings emphasizing humility, dependence upon Allah, and moral responsibility. By synthesizing literature on Qur'anic concepts, Islamic psychology, self-compassion, and Islamically informed interventions, this study seeks to formulate a more comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding self-love as a resource for strengthening mental health.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the concept of self-love from an Islamic counseling perspective by identifying its defining characteristics, exploring its Qur'anic and Islamic foundations, examining its relationship with psychological well-being and self-compassion, and analyzing empirical evidence concerning Islamically integrated counseling interventions. The study further seeks to formulate practical implications for Islamic counseling, particularly in the Indonesian context. Such an approach is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of Islamic counseling scholarship while offering a culturally and religiously congruent framework for counselors working with Muslim clients. In this framework, self-love is neither an unrestricted celebration of the self nor a

rejection of personal needs in the name of religious devotion; rather, it represents a balanced form of self-care grounded in gratitude, dignity, responsibility, self-compassion, and *taqwa*. This conceptual balance provides a potentially important foundation for strengthening mental health while preserving the spiritual and ethical orientation that characterizes Islamic counseling.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research design using a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the concept of self-love in strengthening mental health from an Islamic counseling perspective. Library research was selected because the study focused on systematically examining, interpreting, and synthesizing existing scholarly literature rather than collecting primary data from research participants. The descriptive-analytical approach enabled the researchers to describe the conceptual foundations of self-love, identify its relationship with mental health and self-compassion, examine its Islamic normative foundations, and analyze its implications for Islamic counseling practice.

The data sources consisted of relevant scientific publications addressing self-love, self-compassion, mental health, Islamic psychology, Islamic counseling, Qur'anic perspectives on human dignity, and Islamically integrated psychological interventions. The primary literature

comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published predominantly between 2015 and 2025, while several earlier seminal publications were retained when they provided essential theoretical foundations for understanding self-compassion and psychological well-being. The literature was obtained from reputable academic databases and publishers, including Scopus-indexed journals, PubMed, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley Online Library, and other scholarly databases. In addition, relevant Qur'anic verses and Islamic scholarly interpretations were examined as normative sources for constructing the Islamic conceptual framework of self-love.

The literature selection process was conducted through several stages. First, relevant keywords were identified, including "self-love," "self-compassion," "mental health," "Islamic counseling," "Islamic psychology," "Muslim mental health," "Qur'anic psychology," and "Islamically integrated therapy." Second, the identified publications were screened based on their relevance to the research objectives, publication quality, accessibility of full-text information, and consistency with the conceptual focus of the study. Third, duplicate, irrelevant, and insufficiently documented publications were excluded. Particular attention was given to empirical studies investigating the relationship between self-compassion and psychological well-being, as well as intervention studies examining the effectiveness of culturally

and religiously adapted psychological approaches among Muslim populations.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The selected literature was initially read comprehensively to identify significant concepts, arguments, methodological characteristics, and research findings. Relevant information was then coded into several thematic categories, including the conceptual meaning of self-love, psychological dimensions of self-compassion, Islamic foundations of human dignity, Qur'anic values related to self-love, relationships between self-love and mental health, and implications of Islamically integrated interventions for counseling. The findings from each category were subsequently compared and synthesized to identify convergent patterns, differences, and conceptual relationships across the literature.

To ensure the credibility of the analysis, the study applied source triangulation by comparing findings from psychological research, Islamic psychology literature, Qur'anic interpretation, and empirical studies of Islamic counseling interventions. The researchers also prioritized peer-reviewed and internationally recognized publications and retained seminal sources when their theoretical relevance remained significant. The final stage involved integrating the thematic findings into a conceptual framework explaining self-love as an Islamic counseling construct that combines self-acceptance, self-compassion, gratitude,

human dignity, spiritual awareness, responsibility, and *taqwa*. Through this methodological process, the study sought to produce a theoretically grounded and empirically informed understanding of self-love and its potential contribution to strengthening mental health among Muslim clients.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of Self-Love from an Islamic and Mental Health Perspective

The analysis of the literature indicates that *self-love* from an Islamic perspective has a broader meaning than merely having positive feelings toward oneself. Islamic *self-love* can be understood as an attitude of accepting, appreciating, caring for, and developing oneself based on the awareness that human beings are creations of Allah who possess dignity as well as responsibility. This understanding places human beings in a balanced position: individuals have the right to receive care, security, health, and appreciation, while simultaneously having the responsibility to use their lives and potential in accordance with moral and spiritual values. Husna and Sa'adah (2023) demonstrate that *self-love* in Islamic psychology encompasses self-appreciation, the ability to forgive oneself, potential development, and one's relationship with Allah. Therefore, loving oneself does not mean making oneself the center of existence, but rather developing a healthy relationship with oneself as part of a broader

relationship with Allah and the social environment.

This finding has important implications for understanding mental health. In contemporary psychology, *self-compassion* is one of the concepts closely related to *self-love*, particularly in terms of accepting one's limitations, treating oneself compassionately when experiencing failure, and recognizing that suffering is part of the human experience (Neff, 2011). Meta-analytic research has demonstrated that *self-compassion* is positively associated with psychological well-being and negatively associated with various forms of psychopathology (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Zessin et al., 2015). Among adolescents, this relationship is also evident in connection with psychological distress, suggesting that *self-compassion* can be regarded as a relevant psychological resource for strengthening mental health (Marsh et al., 2018). These findings demonstrate that an individual's ability to accept oneself realistically can serve as an important mechanism for coping with failure, criticism, social pressure, and negative experiences.

Nevertheless, Islamic *self-love* cannot be directly equated with *self-esteem* or *self-compassion* in contemporary psychology. The fundamental distinction lies particularly in its value orientation. Within Islam, self-acceptance does not mean accepting all of one's behavior as morally correct. An individual may accept oneself as a

human being with weaknesses while simultaneously acknowledging that certain behaviors need to be corrected. Thus, a distinction must be made between accepting oneself and justifying all one's actions. This distinction is important to prevent *self-love* from developing into narcissistic, hedonistic, or egocentric tendencies. Research examining Qur'an Surah Al-Isra' [17]:24 also demonstrates that *self-love* in Islam cannot be separated from social relationships, particularly respect and affection toward parents. Therefore, loving oneself should coexist with concern for others (M. Nur et al., 2024).

A comparative study of the interpretations of Al-Maraghi and Al-Mishbah further strengthens this understanding. Both interpretations demonstrate a relationship between human dignity, human capabilities, responsibility, and trust. Human beings are not merely viewed as individuals possessing psychological needs, but also as beings who have responsibilities toward Allah, other people, the environment, and themselves (Shofa, 2025). This conception produces an understanding of *self-love* that is relational and responsible. Individuals who love themselves do not merely seek comfort, but also strive to improve the quality of their lives, avoid self-destructive behavior, and develop the potential granted by Allah.

Within the context of Islamic counseling, this conceptualization is important because counselors cannot

merely assist clients in developing a positive self-image. Counselors also need to help clients understand the deeper source of their self-worth. When self-esteem depends solely on achievement, social acceptance, physical appearance, or the judgment of others, individuals become vulnerable to crises when these standards are not fulfilled. Conversely, awareness that human beings possess dignity as creations of Allah provides a relatively stable source of self-acceptance. Therefore, Islamic *self-love* can be positioned as an integrative construct connecting mental health, self-acceptance, *self-compassion*, spirituality, moral responsibility, and personal development. This understanding distinguishes Islamic *self-love* from popular interpretations that frequently equate it with the freedom to fulfill all personal desires.

Qur'anic and Spiritual Foundations in the Formation of Islamic Self-Love

The findings demonstrate that the Qur'an does not explicitly employ the term *self-love* as a modern psychological construct, but it provides numerous principles that can be used to construct such a framework. Therefore, Islamic *self-love* is more appropriately understood as a conceptual synthesis of various Qur'anic values concerning human dignity, gratitude, acceptance, responsibility, patience, self-reflection, and God-consciousness. This approach is important because it prevents the study from forcing a contemporary

psychological concept into Qur'anic terminology. In other words, *self-love* is a modern term, whereas the substantive values underlying it can be identified throughout Islamic teachings.

One of the most important foundations is the concept of *karamah al-insan*, or human dignity. Qur'an Surah Al-Isra' [17]:70 states that Allah has honored the children of Adam. This verse establishes that human worth is not determined solely by achievement, social status, wealth, appearance, or human recognition. Such dignity is a divine gift inherent in human existence. From a counseling perspective, this principle has strong therapeutic implications for individuals experiencing feelings of worthlessness. Counselors can help clients distinguish between their value as human beings and the failures or shortcomings they are currently experiencing. An individual may fail at work, make mistakes, experience the loss of a relationship, or encounter social rejection without losing their fundamental dignity as a human being.

The next concept is *shukr*, or gratitude. Gratitude does not merely mean expressing thanks to Allah, but also recognizing and appropriately utilizing divine blessings. In the context of *self-love*, gratitude can be directed toward one's body, abilities, opportunities, relationships, and potential. Individuals who are grateful for themselves do not necessarily stop seeking improvement. Rather, they

develop themselves because they appreciate the trust and blessings granted by Allah. Thus, there is a distinction between *self-improvement* arising from hatred toward oneself and *self-improvement* arising from gratitude.

The concept of *qana'ah* is also relevant to mental health. In this context, *qana'ah* does not mean passively accepting circumstances without effort, but rather possessing the ability to accept what Allah has provided while continuing to strive for improvement. Such an attitude can serve as a buffer against the tendency to compare oneself excessively with others. Amid a social media culture that encourages social comparison, *qana'ah* can help individuals understand that their worth does not have to be determined by other people's standards of living. Therefore, *qana'ah* can be positioned as a spiritual dimension that supports emotional regulation and self-acceptance.

Furthermore, *muhasabah*, or self-reflection, provides an evaluative dimension to *self-love*. Loving oneself does not mean rejecting self-criticism altogether. Rather, individuals need to regularly evaluate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. However, *muhasabah* differs from destructive self-criticism. *Muhasabah* aims to identify mistakes for the purpose of improvement, whereas excessive self-criticism can trap individuals in guilt and feelings of worthlessness. Consequently, Islamic counseling should redirect the process of self-evaluation from the

question, "Am I a bad person?" toward the question, "What behavior needs to be improved, and how can I improve it?"

The final dimension is *taqwa*, or God-consciousness. *Taqwa* provides a moral direction for the entire process of self-acceptance and self-development. Without spiritual orientation, *self-love* can potentially develop into self-justification. Conversely, when *self-love* is situated within the framework of *taqwa*, self-care becomes part of one's responsibility toward Allah. Research on Islamic *self-love* also demonstrates that the relationship with Allah is an important component of mental health and personal development (Husna & Sa'adah, 2023).

These findings demonstrate that Islamic *self-love* is constructed through a balance between self-appreciation and willingness to correct oneself. Individuals are not instructed to hate themselves because of their sins and weaknesses, but neither are they permitted to use self-acceptance as a justification for maintaining wrongful behavior. This balance represents a defining characteristic of Islamic *self-love*. In counseling, this principle can be manifested through a combination of self-acceptance, *muhasabah*, *tawbah*, *shukr*, *qana'ah*, *tawakkal*, and *taqwa*. Accordingly, Islamic spirituality is not merely an additional component of counseling but can serve as a meaning framework that helps clients understand themselves, their suffering, their

mistakes, and their possibilities for change in a more constructive manner.

Implications of Self-Love Interventions for Islamic Counseling Practice

The findings indicate that the integration of Islamic values into psychological interventions has considerable potential for strengthening *self-compassion* and mental health. However, such effectiveness should not be interpreted simplistically as evidence that Islamic approaches are always superior to secular approaches. A more appropriate conclusion is that interventions consistent with clients' values, beliefs, and identities have the potential to increase therapeutic relevance, acceptance, and meaningfulness. This is consistent with research on counseling Muslim populations, which emphasizes the importance of understanding Islamic beliefs, cultural contexts, and clients' religious experiences in developing effective therapeutic relationships (alHarbi et al., 2023; Hodge et al., 2024). Research involving American Muslims similarly demonstrates that culturally responsive practice requires counselors to understand basic Islamic beliefs, recognize cultural differences within Muslim communities, avoid assumptions, and appropriately utilize Islamic beliefs and practices as potential strengths in counseling (Hodge et al., 2024).

Recent research further strengthens this argument by demonstrating that religious inclusion is not merely a matter of cultural preference but can influence

clients' experiences of therapy. Islam and Chadwick (2026), based on qualitative interviews with 25 Muslim therapy users in the United Kingdom, found that participants experienced feelings of powerlessness, invisibility, and internal conflict when Islam was minimized or excluded from therapy. The authors argue that therapists need to actively explore clients' religious worldviews and develop culturally responsive practices. Similarly, a systematic review and narrative synthesis by Mahmood and McAloney-Kocaman (2026) found that cultural, relational, and religious factors significantly influence Muslim clients' engagement with mental health services. The review also emphasized that therapeutic relationships characterized by empathy and cultural humility may be more important than simply sharing the same religious identity, particularly when therapeutic practice is aligned with Islamic values.

Important empirical evidence is provided by Dehghanizadeh et al. (2024) through a quasi-experimental study of *Islamic Spiritual Dignity Therapy*. The study involved adolescent girls from single-parent families and found that an eight-session intervention resulted in increased *self-compassion* and decreased contingent self-esteem compared with the control group. The intervention involved 16 participants aged 15–18 years who were randomly assigned to intervention and control groups, and the results showed significant differences between the groups. This finding is relevant to the Islamic *self-love* construct because it demonstrates that

the concept of human dignity developed within a spiritual framework can be translated into a structured psychological intervention. Thus, human dignity in Islam is not merely a theological doctrine but can function as a psychological resource for helping individuals establish a healthier relationship with themselves.

The potential effectiveness of Islamically integrated intervention is also supported by Khan et al. (2023), who examined *Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy* (TIIP) among American Muslims receiving outpatient therapy. The study involved 107 patients who received 420 therapy sessions from five clinicians trained in the TIIP model. The intervention combined Islamic spiritual interventions with cognitive and emotion-focused therapeutic techniques, and the findings indicated reductions in clinical and functional psychological distress over time. Although the study provides preliminary rather than definitive evidence of efficacy, it demonstrates the feasibility of implementing an inherently Islamic psychotherapy model within a clinical setting.

This finding can also be considered alongside the research of Ghorbani et al. (2012) involving Iranian Muslims, which identified relationships between *self-compassion*, integrative self-knowledge, mental health, and religious orientation. This study provides evidence that *self-compassion* does not necessarily have to be positioned in opposition to religiosity. Rather, in certain contexts, spirituality can provide a framework that helps individuals

develop self-acceptance and cope with suffering more adaptively. Ghorbani et al. (2012) specifically found that *self-compassion* was positively related to integrative self-knowledge and negatively associated with depression and anxiety, while intrinsic religious orientation strengthened the relationship between integrative self-knowledge and *self-compassion*. This strengthens the argument that Islamic counseling can utilize contemporary psychological concepts as long as those concepts are interpreted and integrated consistently with Islamic understandings of human nature.

The relationship between *self-compassion* and Islamic spirituality is also relevant to educational and counseling contexts. Ningrum et al. (2021), in a study involving 350 students from public schools in Semarang, found that *self-compassion* and Islamic spiritual orientation had significant negative effects on academic anxiety. The findings further suggested that positive self-perception played an important role in explaining the reduction of academic anxiety. This evidence is particularly relevant to the present study because it indicates that Islamic spiritual orientation may operate alongside psychological resources such as *self-compassion* rather than functioning as an alternative that excludes psychological mechanisms.

The first practical implication concerns the importance of cognitive reframing based on Islamic values. A client who states, "I am worthless because I failed," can be assisted in distinguishing

between failure as an experience and personal worth as a human being. Counselors can guide clients to understand that mistakes require evaluation and correction but do not automatically eliminate their dignity. This approach can be combined with the principle of *tawbah*, allowing guilt to become constructive rather than developing into feelings of worthlessness. Clients can be guided from the thought, "I am my mistake," toward the understanding, "I made a mistake and have the opportunity to correct it." Such reframing combines *self-compassion* with moral accountability. The importance of this approach is consistent with evidence that positive religious coping can provide psychological resources for dealing with distress, whereas maladaptive religious interpretations may intensify psychological difficulties (Mohammadzadeh & Najafi, 2020). Their study among Muslims demonstrated differences in depression, death anxiety, and obsession according to patterns of positive and negative religious coping.

The second implication involves the use of *muhasabah* as a form of therapeutic reflection. Counselors can develop reflective journals that help clients identify positive experiences, mistakes that need correction, ways in which they have treated themselves unfairly, and realistic self-care actions. This technique can serve as a bridge between *self-compassion* and spirituality. However, *muhasabah* must be implemented carefully with clients who have a strong tendency toward excessive self-blame. Unstructured self-reflection

may reinforce guilt; therefore, counselors need to ensure that *muhasabah* produces insight and constructive change rather than self-punishment. This distinction is important because religious coping is not uniformly beneficial; its psychological effects depend partly on whether religious beliefs and practices are used constructively or interpreted in ways that intensify guilt, fear, or hopelessness. Systematic evidence concerning religious coping and mental health similarly suggests that positive religious coping tends to be associated with better mental health outcomes, whereas negative religious coping can be associated with psychological distress (Pankowski & Wytrychiewicz-Pankowska, 2023).

The third implication concerns the integration of spiritual practices such as prayer, *dhikr*, *salah*, *tawakkal*, and Qur'anic recitation. Such practices should not be prescribed mechanically to every client but should be adapted to the client's needs, level of religiosity, and consent. This principle is important because effective Islamic counseling is not a process of imposing religious rituals, but rather of helping clients utilize spiritual resources that are meaningful to them. Research concerning Muslims in mental health services indicates that sensitivity to religious beliefs can enhance the relevance of services, while neglecting religious dimensions may result in therapeutic experiences that are less appropriate for some Muslim clients (alHarbi et al., 2023; Hodge et al., 2024). Recent qualitative evidence further demonstrates that Muslim

clients may experience therapy as invalidating when their religious identity is excluded or minimized (Islam & Chadwick, 2026).

Empirical evidence regarding Islamic spiritual practices is also provided by Mohd. et al. (2022), who examined an Islamic-based intervention among 62 Muslim patients using a randomized controlled design. The intervention significantly reduced anxiety among women and depression among men compared with the usual-care control groups, with reported effect sizes of $d = 0.75$ for anxiety and $d = 0.80$ for depression. Although the study does not directly measure *self-love*, its findings support the broader argument that carefully structured Islamic religious interventions may contribute to psychological well-being among Muslim populations.

The fourth implication concerns the importance of understanding *self-love* as a relational process. Research examining Qur'an Surah Al-Isra' [17]:24 emphasizes that *self-love* cannot be separated from respect for parents and social relationships (M. Nur et al., 2024). Therefore, Islamic counseling should not teach healthy boundaries as a form of social disengagement, but rather as a means of maintaining relationships that are healthy, just, and non-exploitative. Individuals who are able to care for themselves appropriately may actually have greater capacity to care for others without experiencing excessive psychological exhaustion. This relational orientation is

consistent with culturally responsive counseling approaches, which emphasize that Muslim clients' psychological experiences are shaped not only by individual factors but also by family, community, cultural expectations, and religious identity (Qasqas & Jerry, 2014).

The importance of religious coping is further demonstrated in recent research conducted within the Indonesian context. Efendy et al. (2026) examined the adaptation and construct validity of the Iranian Religious Coping Scale among Indonesian Muslim university students. The study highlights the continuing need for culturally appropriate and psychometrically validated instruments for assessing religious coping among Indonesian Muslims. This finding is particularly significant for the development of Islamic counseling in Indonesia because it demonstrates that psychological constructs developed in other cultural settings cannot automatically be transferred without adaptation and validation.

The fifth implication is therefore methodological as well as practical: Islamic *self-love* requires culturally sensitive measurement and intervention development. The existence of religious values alone does not guarantee therapeutic effectiveness. Counselors need to identify which aspects of Islamic spirituality are meaningful to particular clients and how those dimensions interact with psychological characteristics, family circumstances, and social environments. A recent systematic review of Muslim clients'

mental health experiences confirms that Islamic faith can function both as a source of comfort and as a factor that delays professional help-seeking when beliefs concerning spiritual causes of illness, stigma, or family honor discourage formal treatment (Mahmood & McAloney-Kocaman, 2026). Consequently, Islamic counseling should not romanticize religiosity but should examine its actual function in the client's psychological life.

The sixth implication concerns the development of integrative therapeutic models. The evidence from TIIP demonstrates that Islamic spiritual interventions can be combined with cognitive and emotion-focused techniques rather than being treated as separate therapeutic domains (Khan et al., 2023). This suggests that Islamic counseling can incorporate evidence-based psychological strategies while maintaining an Islamic anthropology of the human person. Such integration may include cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, *self-compassion*, mindfulness, *muhasabah*, *tawakkal*, and spiritual reflection. The key requirement is theoretical coherence: psychological techniques should not simply be given Islamic terminology, but should be integrated through a clearly articulated understanding of human nature, suffering, responsibility, and spiritual development.

Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted in light of the limitations of the available evidence. Some Islamic intervention studies still involve relatively small samples and are conducted within specific cultural contexts. The *Islamic*

Spiritual Dignity Therapy study, for example, involved only 16 adolescent participants in Iran, meaning that its findings cannot be directly generalized to all Muslim populations. Similarly, the TIIP study provides preliminary practice-based evidence rather than the same level of causal evidence that would be obtained from a large randomized controlled trial. Research on Islamic *self-love* also remains largely conceptual and literature-based. Future studies should therefore develop valid instruments for measuring Islamic *self-love*, experimentally examine the effectiveness of interventions, and investigate their application in the Indonesian context, which is characterized by considerable cultural diversity, religious organizations, and different levels of religiosity.

Recent evidence also reinforces the need for future research to move beyond simply asking whether religion should be incorporated into counseling and instead examine *how, when, and for whom* religious integration is therapeutically beneficial. Mahmood and McAloney-Kocaman (2026) argue that culturally responsive care needs to account for the complex interaction of religious beliefs, cultural norms, relational factors, stigma, and therapeutic engagement. Likewise, Islam and Chadwick (2026) demonstrate that clients themselves should have an active role in determining whether and how their religious worldview is incorporated into therapy. Through such efforts, Islamic *self-love* can develop from a normative idea into a measurable, testable, culturally

responsive, and responsibly applicable psychological construct in counseling practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *self-love* from an Islamic counseling perspective represents a balanced and spiritually grounded form of self-acceptance, self-appreciation, and self-care. Unlike interpretations that associate self-love with narcissism, selfishness, or unrestricted personal gratification, Islamic self-love is rooted in the recognition of human dignity as a divine gift and the understanding that the self is an *amanah* entrusted by Allah. The findings indicate that *self-love* is closely connected with *shukr*, *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *tawakkal*, and *taqwa*, which collectively establish a framework for maintaining psychological well-being while preserving moral and spiritual responsibility. The literature also demonstrates that *self-compassion* and Islamically integrated interventions have considerable potential to support mental health, particularly when therapeutic approaches are culturally and religiously congruent with clients' beliefs. Islamic counseling can therefore incorporate self-acceptance, spiritual reflection, cognitive reframing, and appropriate religious practices as complementary therapeutic resources. Nevertheless, existing empirical evidence remains limited by differences in cultural contexts, sample characteristics, and research designs. Future studies should develop valid instruments for measuring Islamic *self-love* and conduct empirical,

longitudinal, and culturally sensitive investigations, particularly within the Indonesian context. Overall, Islamic *self-love* offers a holistic framework that integrates psychological well-being, spiritual awareness, personal responsibility, and healthy relationships with others.

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