

Khushoo In Salah: An Overview of Nafs (Islamic Psychological Perspective)

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ABSTRACT

Worship practices have been found to contribute to mental health. Salah is an obligatory act of worship and has priority in Islam. The benefits of salah services are also studied about the movements carried out in salah. Even though the movements of salah can be seen, not all Muslims can do it well because of the lack of humility or solemnity in salah. This research aims to explain the dynamics of khushoo from the perspective of nafs from an Islamic psychology perspective and how to achieve a state of khushoo in salah. This research uses a literature review method from various scientific articles and books about khushoo. The research results show that khushoo is related to the mental stages of nafs al ammarah, nafs al lawwamah, and nafs al mutmainah. Further discussion regarding the dynamics of khushoo in the review salah of the three nafs is also discussed in this article. Several strategies for achieving khushoo in salah are briefly reviewed.

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INTRODUCTION

Worship practices have been found to contribute to mental health. Regardless of one's religious beliefs, all religious believers have various vulnerabilities in health conditions, both physical and mental, so there is a desire to find strategies to overcome and resolve these challenges (Carey et al., 2021). The practice of worship plays an important role in a person's mental health by helping overcome disappointment, anger, fear, low self-esteem, self-isolation, increasing relaxation, minimizing anxiety, and reducing cardiovascular risk (Schumaker, 1992; Doufesh et al., 2014). Counsellors and therapists have referred to religious texts and worship as an aid in their practice to address such problems (Sayeed & Prakash, 2013). In Islam, for example, it has been found that salah has an impact on the welfare of the congregation (Sayeed & Prakash, 2013; Munsoor & Munsoor, 2017).

Salah (Muslim salah) is an obligatory worship practice and has priority in Islam. Salah is a pillar of religion and must be performed by every Muslim who has a *mukallaf*, namely 'aqil baligh (Damit et al., 2016). The obligation to pray is confirmed in QS. An-Nisa' (4): 103, "Indeed salah is an obligation whose time has been determined for the believers." Abu Hurairah narrated, "I heard the Messenger of Allah say, "If there was a river in front of the door of one of you and he bathed there five times a day, would you see any dirt on his body? They said, "There is not a single dirt left". The Prophet added, "That is the parable of the five daily salahs with which Allah erases evil deeds" (Khan, 2005). Allah SWT praises His khushoo servants in their salahs in QS. Al-Mu'minuun (23): 1-2, "Indeed, lucky are the believers, (namely) those who are khushoo in their salahs" (Kemenag, 2023).

The benefits of salah services are also studied, including the movements carried out in salah. Salah is a Muslim worship that involves specific physical movements (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2008), in which almost all human body muscles become more active than any other type of exercise without muscle fatigue

(Chamsi-Pasha & Chamsi-Pasha, 2021). Scientific evidence also supports the idea that even moderate-intensity activity, if done daily, can provide some long-term health benefits (Romadhon & Fanani, 2018). The research found unique differences in heart rate (HR) change patterns in salah positions. The highest HR is in the standing position, followed by bowing sitting, and the lowest is in the prostrate position. The prostration position is very beneficial because there is a significant increase in blood flow to the brain compared to other positions (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2008). During salah, parasympathetic activity increases, and sympathetic activity decreases (Doufesh et al., 2014).

Salah movements can be seen, but not all Muslims can do them well. Among Muslims, they do not comply with the implementation of this ritual, resulting in distraction, focus on the external, and sometimes responding to external stimuli. This condition is caused by life problems and psychological pressure, for example, thinking about things other than salah, so it conflicts with the condition of khushoo or solemnity in salah (Aldahadha, 2023). Allah says in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 45, *"Indeed (salah) is complicated, except for those who are humble."* This verse shows that salah is not only psychomotor in the form of movements but also has an important thing, namely khushoo.

Khushoo is an essential condition for achieving quality in salah. However, it takes work to achieve the state of khushoo in salah. Worship is the work of the heart (qalbu), *al-ashlu fi al-ibadati a'mal al-qulub*, although there is the involvement of the body parts (Al-Biq'a'i, 2006). Islamic psychology discusses the structure of the soul in the form of nafs, qalb, aql, and ruh, which have various functions or qualities of one integral soul. Several studies also mention salah as mental therapy (tazkiyatun nafs); on the other hand, tazkiyat an nafs involves the condition of the nafs (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). So salah is also associated with certain conditions of the nafs because human actions, both psychomotor or physical, as well as those related to cognitive, are always associated with specific stages of the soul, be it nafs al ammarah (a soul that tends to evil), nafs al lawwamah (a soul that reproaches itself), as well as nafs al mutmainah (quiet soul) (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). The explanation above shows the importance for Muslims to understand how the dynamics of khushoo in salah are related to the condition of the nafs to determine steps to achieve khushoo in salah. This research aims to explain the dynamics of khushoo by reviewing nafs from an Islamic psychology perspective and how to strategize to achieve the condition of khushoo in salah.

This research is a literature review of various research journal articles and books related to khushoo. Literature studies from various references were chosen to explain the dynamics of khushoo. This research also attempts to formulate recommendations based on an Islamic psychology perspective at the end of the study. Amid the development of Islamic psychology, research to understand khushoo from an Islamic psychology perspective needs to be carried out to add to the literature on Islamic psychology.

DISCUSSION

Khushoo in Salah

Khushoo comes from the root word **خضع** which means submission (humbly submissive, humility). This word is mentioned 17 times in the Al-Quran. The word khushoo basically means submission, submission, and inferiority. When applied to believers, khushoo means submission, obedience and respect because they remember Allah, as in QS. al-Hadid verse 16 (Suleman, 2013; Amalia et al., 2023). Ibnu Qayyim defines khushoo as an upright heart before Allah with all forms of submission and humility (Ibrahim, 2008).

The term khushoo describes the condition of a person who submits and surrenders to Allah SWT. Several verses in the Koran specifically use this term to describe this condition in people who pray, for

example, in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 45 and Al-Mu'minun (23): 2. A Muslim who performs salah does not just do physical activity in the form of salah movements but also carries out a series of accompanying mental activities, namely reading verses of the Al-Quran, concentration, and so on (Bai et al., 2012). This activity aims to focus the individual's attention on Allah SWT (QS. Taha (20): 14) until reaching a state of khushoo because khushoo is a mental condition in the form of focusing thoughts and attention on Allah (Suleman, 2013).

Dynamics of Khushoo in Salah: A Review of the Nafs

Nafs in Arabic refers to something neutral, which can be positive or negative. Linguistically, nafs can be interpreted as a person's self, soul or something that has existence, spirit, body, life, will, qualities that can be good and bad, and intentions. Lust in the study of Sufism refers to two things, namely the soul and will, which are worldly and akhirah (Mushodiq & Saputra, 2021). QS. Al-Syams (91): 7 explicitly mentions the nafs as the soul, which is the inner side. The Qur'an mentions the nafs twice as the inner side, which contains the potential to act as a driver of behaviour, namely in QS. Ar-Ra'd (13): 11 and QS. Al-Anfal (8): 53 (Khair et al., 2023).

A Muslim who performs prayers in a humble state will feel peace of mind. Prayer accompanied by khushoo brings the heart to be able to pray (converse) with Allah because khushoo pays attention and awareness to Allah (Ancok & Suroso, 2011; Ijaz et al., 2017). The condition of the soul due to khushoo is more bowed and cool, accompanied by physical calm and politeness, which in the twigs results in total humility towards Allah (Ibn 'Atiyah, 2002; Firdaus, 2015). This is explained in QS. Ar-Ra'd (13): 28, which means, *"Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured"*. The condition of mental calm is mentioned in the form of the root word **طمأن** which means secure, satisfied, reassured, at rest, comforted, contented, and at ease. Psychologically, the soul is in a state of calm. nafs al-mutmainnah comes from the same root word (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020).

A study from Fachrunisa & Chizanah (2020) describes the dynamics in nafs al-mutmainnah based on an explanation from Imam Al-Ghazali. The human soul is described as a chaotic condition because there are various components in the soul that compete with each other to take control of the soul. Individuals will feel calm when the soul is controlled by 'aql. 'Aql is an activity of the soul that can direct and control behaviour based on considerations that lead to the motive of serving God or the motive of serving Allah SWT. A soul dominated by the 'aql function can control disturbances originating from oneself (for example, those influenced by lust and ghadhab) and external conditions (for example, from the influence of Satan).

In salah activities, focusing attention and thoughts on Allah SWT is basically the function of 'aql. Reading Al-Quran verses and other salah readings, understanding the meaning of each reading, and appreciating the meaning of salah readings involves cognitive functions, including awareness, thinking, remembering, attention, language use, and executive functions (Boy et al., 2022). Apart from involving cognitive functions, the activities of 'aql also direct individuals to completely surrender themselves as servants to Allah SWT, which means that all individual dimensions, including cognitive, affection and psychomotor, need to submit to salah.

In the affective and psychomotor dimensions, khushoo people do not show feelings originating from an uneasy mental condition. This can be explained both physically and through deeper psychological dynamics. A study from Chamsi-Pasha & Chamsi-Pasha (2021) summarizes the psychophysiological effects of salah activities, which encourage relaxation, minimize anxiety, reduce systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and relieve symptoms of chronic disease. This calmer mental condition can also be explained through the dynamics of the nafs by Fachrunisa & Chizanah (2020), where in this situation, the influence of lust and ghadhab can be controlled by 'aql. If not controlled by 'aql, both of them can

give rise to emotional reactions in the form of feelings of doubt, guilt, anxiety and unease. With the control of the soul by 'aql, the adverse emotional conditions that arise due to lust and ghadhab become less dominant, and the individual will feel a calmer mental condition.

Humble Muslims will remain connected to Allah through their salahs and deal quickly with distractions during salah. Khushoo comes from the heart (qalbu), if the heart is humbled, then all members of the body will also humble themselves, thus avoiding movements that divert the heart from deep contemplation (tafakur) on the word of Allah (Al-Humaidi, 2019). The condition of the soul in khushoo that is presented during salah is a safe soul (mutmainnah) from various disturbances that divert attention from Allah SWT, especially disturbances in the form of anxiety or satanic disturbances (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020).

Even though the khushoo condition is the ideal condition for Muslims to carry out salah activities, not every Muslim can condition himself to achieve this condition. There are two possible mental conditions: nafs lawwamah and nafs ammarah bis suui (Rothman & Coyle, 2018; Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020). Nevertheless, nafs al lawwamah is a good soul, even Allah says in QS. Al-Qiyamah (75): 2, "*I (Allah) swear by the soul that regrets (itself)*". Nafs al lawwamah is a soul that reminds and warns a Muslim to restrain himself or regret (repent) from bad/evil actions (Hassan, 2022).

Nafs al lawwamah is a soul that criticizes oneself (regrets oneself) in the context of goodness and disobedience (badness). In good deeds, nafs al lawwamah occurs when Muslims do not do good deeds optimally, so they regret not maximizing their good deeds. Nafs lawwamah also occurs when Muslims do bad things. Then self-reproach or regret appears as if there is a signal that rebukes when Muslims commit sins (warnings to remember Allah SWT from within their souls) (Andirja, 2020; Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020; Andirja, 2023). If Muslims ignore these regrets, it will lead to the condition of nafs al ammarah, but when Muslims reflect on these regrets, it will lead to nafs al mutmainnah. Nafs al lawwamah is the stage where most of the soul's work is being done, a battlefield where one tries to resist the downward pull (nafs al ammarah bi suui) and move upward (nafs al mutmainnah) through perseverance and self-awareness (Rothman & Coyle, 2018).

Praying without offering khushoo may lead to nafs al ammarah bis suui. This condition occurs when Muslims are anchored in selfishness rather than awareness of God, and they are in a state of ghafla, namely forgetting God (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). The condition of a Muslim who is not khushoo can occur because the person who was previously in the nafs lawwamah condition chose to ignore the warnings to remember Allah SWT from within his soul. Muslims who are in this mental condition ignore the function of 'aql, so their behaviour is not based on serving God's motives but instead follows lust and ghadhab (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020; Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2021). The characteristics of the influence of lust give rise to the soul's attraction and attachment to affairs that are not in line with serving God's motive, where these affairs are worldly. An example of this condition of lust is when a Muslim performs salah, worldly thoughts occur to him, for example, related to work or performing salah to gain judgment from other people. Meanwhile, the characteristic of ghadhab influence is the desire to reject and oppose during salah. An example of this ghadhab condition is that Muslims refuse to surrender to Allah SWT entirely and tend to feel arrogant about submitting to Allah SWT.

Muslims who are not khushoo may be negligent in their salahs. Allah says about people who are negligent in their salahs in QS. Al-Ma'un (107): 4-5, which means, "*Woe to those who perform salah [4] who are negligent in their salah [5]*". This negligence is mentioned in a term that has its roots in the word سهو which means heedless, unmindful, neglectful, and forgetful. Sayyid Quthub interpreted that being careless in salah means that a person performs salah, but his heart and mind are not in his salah. So that person's salah is not khushoo, and he cannot present the essence (Muhtarom, 2023). Salahs performed carelessly will not leave a mark on the soul (Al-Khalaf, 2021). By understanding the dynamics of the nafs, the explanation from QS. Al-Ankabut (29): 45, which means, "*Recite what has been revealed to you from the Book and establish error. Indeed, one prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah*

is greater. And Allah knows that which you do" becomes easier to understand because a soul that is unable to present khushoo in its salahs will tend to be easily controlled by the desire to do bad things that are not in line with God's serving motive.

Efforts to perform salahs with khushoo are a form of effort (jihad) of a Muslim that can lead Muslims to a state of nafs al mutmainah. Nafs al mutmainah is the state of the soul that is genuinely hoped to be achieved. However, when Muslims succeed in reaching the state of nafs al mutmainah, Muslims may fall back to the lowest level if they lack discipline in carrying out jihad an nafs (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). The dynamics of nafs will continue as long as humans live until they reach the end of their lives (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020). This change, like the nafs, causes us to be diligent in keeping the nafs in harmony and on the right path by exerting effort in the struggle of the soul or jihad an nafs (mujahada) (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). Therefore, it is essential for a Muslim to always carry out tips to achieve the state of nafs al-muthmainnah, including by trying to bring khushoo in salah.

Strategy for Achieving Khushoo in Salah

Based on studies regarding khushoo from an Islamic psychology perspective, this research provides several important recommendations to be followed up together regarding khushoo. However, this recommendation is a partial solution; several opinions can still be discussed. This research recommends strategies to increase khushoo that can be done before salah and during salah.

In principle, the state of khushoo can be achieved when a person's soul is prepared to become calm. In this calm condition, the individual is controlled by the 'aql function, which leads to the actualization of the motive of serving God. The characteristic of functioning 'aql is when individuals can think, consider, and understand something based on knowledge and wisdom (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2020). The dominance of 'aql is shown in the act of seeking closeness to God and fulfilling the motive of serving God, because by maximizing the function of aql, this will be followed by a decrease in the influence of lust (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2021). So what needs to be done to strengthen the function of 'aql is always to study knowledge and wisdom that leads to an introduction to Allah SWT. The knowledge that is important to understand is the knowledge of the nature of Allah and the concept of ihsan. So, Muslims can make efforts to recognize the characteristics of Allah SWT and feel the presence of Allah SWT or always be seen by Allah (Firdaus, 2015).

The strategy for achieving khushoo is not only by memorizing but also by understanding each prayer reading. Research shows that understanding each reading in salah will increase solemnity in worship (Dमित et al., 2016). In addition, salah has positive implications for energy levels and the body's immune response, where this effect is especially accentuated when individuals fully understand the meaning of the reading during salah or when salah is performed in congregation (Ibrahim et al., 2008; Munsoor & Munsoor, 2017).

The effort made to calm oneself during salah is called tuma'ninah. Like the word muthmainnah, tuma'ninah comes from the root word **طمن** meaning peace, guarantee, trust, security. Ibn Taymiyah stated that khushoo, meaning self-submission, also means tuma'ninah (Al-Haddad, 2017). Research by Nurhadi & Zulkifli (2020) explains that tuma'ninah brings people closer to khushoo and obtains wisdom that is useful for Muslims in finding peace in salah. So, even though khushoo is a condition of the soul, it can also be reflected in the body in the form of calm (Asy-Syaukani, 2008).

Based on the explanation above, further research can integrate khushoo prayer as part of psychotherapy for Muslim participants by implementing strategies to achieve khushoo. Further research must be conducted to explore other variables that might influence khushoo.

CONCLUSION

Salah has psychological benefits, but not all Muslims can do it well because salah is about movement and other aspects, namely humility, which determines the quality of a Muslim's salah. Khusyu is related to a specific state of the soul (nafs). Muslims who show humility will lead to the condition of nafs al mutmainah. A Muslim who does not show humility in salah may lead to nafs al ammarah bi suui. Meanwhile, nafs al lawwamah is the condition where most of the soul's work is being done, the battlefield where Muslims try to fight the downward pull (ignoring Allah's warning in salah so they are not humble) to move upward (following Allah's warning) through perseverance and self-awareness. Based on the research results, several strategies were found to achieve khusyu: understanding the concepts of Allah's nature and Ihsan, salah readings, and tuma'ninah. Future research can integrate khushoo prayer as part of psychotherapy for Muslim participants, and research needs to be carried out to explore other variables that might influence khushoo.

Ethics statement

This study was conducted based on ethical standard.

Authors contribution

SWR contributes in designing the study, directing the whole process of the study, conducting analysis, and writing the manuscript. RAF contributes in conducting analysis and writing the discussion. BS contributes in writing the introduction.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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