ISLAMIC COUNSELING AS A SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO REDUCING ACADEMIC STRESS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Islamic counseling as a spiritual approach to reducing academic stress in high school students. Academic stress is a serious problem arising from high learning demands, intense competition, and the expectations of parents and teachers. If not managed properly, this condition can lead to anxiety, decreased motivation, and even burnout. Islamic counseling offers an alternative solution by integrating the values of the Quran, prayer, dhikr, self-reflection, gratitude, and tawakkul (trust), thereby strengthening students' spiritual and psychological aspects. A literature review shows that the implementation of Islamic counseling, whether individual, group, or digital, is effective in reducing academic stress levels and increasing resilience, self-control, and adaptive coping strategies. Several previous studies have confirmed the success of Islamic counseling techniques combined with modern approaches, such as cognitive behavioral therapy or creative problem-solving, in helping students manage academic stress. The uniqueness of this study lies in the systematic integration of Islamic counseling into school guidance and counseling services as a holistic framework encompassing spiritual, emotional, and social aspects. Thus, Islamic counseling not only functions curatively, but also as a preventive strategy to build character, improve mental well-being, and prepare students to face today's academic challenges.

Keywords: islamic counseling, academic stress, high school students.

INTRODUCTION

Academic stress is a common phenomenon experienced by high school students as a consequence of the high study load, academic competition, and significant social demands. If not managed properly, this condition can impact mental health, trigger anxiety, and even lead to academic burnout (Fransisca, F., & Rusman, 2025) . The development of digital technology has exacerbated this pressure, as students are required to quickly adapt to constantly changing learning patterns (Putra et al., 2025) . Therefore, interventions are needed that not only emphasize psychological aspects but also address the spiritual dimension to help students cope with academic stress holistically.

Islamic counseling is a relevant alternative approach because it integrates Islamic values such as patience, gratitude, prayer, and tawakkul with modern psychological principles. This approach acts as a positive coping mechanism that can reduce psychological stress while strengthening the spiritual well-being of students (El Imamah el al, 2025) . A number of studies have shown the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in reducing stress levels while improving the spiritual and emotional quality of students (Djuuna, 2025). This confirms the position of Islamic counseling not only as a curative service, but also a preventive one in the educational context.

Previous studies have demonstrated the success of implementing Islamic counseling in various modern counseling techniques. Hasibuan (2025) found the effectiveness of Islamic-value-based guided imagery in group counseling to suppress excessive emotions, while Astria et al. (2025) demonstrated the effectiveness of creative problem-solving techniques in reducing academic stress. Similarly, Wulandari, N., & Hermatasiyah (2025) emphasized the benefits of Islamic-based cognitive behavioral therapy in managing academic stress among Islamic students.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to systematically integrate Islamic counseling into secondary school guidance and counseling services. While previous research has tended to emphasize the effectiveness of specific techniques, this study focuses on developing a holistic Islamic service framework, encompassing students' spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions (Miftachul'Ilmi, A., & Muslihati, 2025) . Thus, this research is expected to offer a relevant and sustainable Islamic counseling model to address the complexity of today's academic challenges.

METHOD

This study used a literature review approach with the objects of study consisting of articles, proceedings, and research reports related to Islamic counseling and academic stress in high school students. The scope of the study focused on the concepts, principles, strategies, effectiveness, and implementation of Islamic counseling in the context of secondary education. Data were collected through a search of indexed articles in Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Sinta with the keywords Islamic counseling, academic stress, and high school students. From the search results, 20 articles were obtained that met the inclusion criteria (published 2020–2025 and relevant to the topic). The instrument used was a literature review guide, while data collection techniques were carried out through documentation and content analysis. Data analysis used a thematic descriptive approach to group findings based on the factors causing academic stress, Islamic counseling strategies, and the effectiveness of their implementation.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Understanding Islamic Counseling

Islamic counseling is a form of guidance service based on Islamic principles. This approach emphasizes a balance between an individual's spiritual, emotional, and social aspects. The goal is to help clients face life's challenges guided by Islamic values. Islamic counseling differs from conventional counseling by placing God at the center of help. This makes the counseling process more holistic and comprehensive. The Islamic counseling process includes the application of the Quran and Hadith as guidelines (Sholihah & Novitasari, 2025) . Counselors help clients understand the meaning of life and goals in accordance with Sharia law. Clients are taught to use prayer and dhikr as coping tools. This approach promotes inner peace and the ability to manage emotions. Thus, Islamic counseling provides both spiritual and psychological solutions (Yedi, 2024) .

Furthermore, Islamic counseling emphasizes morals and ethics in social interactions. Clients and counselors learn to establish harmonious relationships with their environment. Self-reflection and introspection are essential components of the counseling process. This supports the development of self-potential and spiritual awareness. With this approach, clients are expected to be able to make wise decisions in their daily lives. In practice, Islamic counseling emphasizes the principle of tawhid, namely the full awareness that all life's problems can be returned to God, and uses methods such as prayer, dhikr, self-reflection, gratitude, and tawakkul (trust) as part of the problem-solving process (Astria et al., 2025) .

Islamic counseling also employs narrative and reflective methods. Clients are encouraged to share their life experiences to discover wisdom and solutions. This process fosters spiritual awareness and self-control. Empathetic communication is key to successful counseling sessions. This approach can be applied to individuals of all ages and backgrounds (Anggraini et al., 2025) . Islamic counseling is a guidance service based on Qur'anic values that places God at the center of help, unlike conventional counseling, which tends to be secular. This approach combines spiritual, emotional, and social aspects, providing holistic solutions to students' problems (Sholihah & Novitasari, 2025) . Recent studies have shown that Islamic counseling enhances spiritual well-being while improving executive functions, such as learning focus and emotional regulation (Rahman & Hidayat, 2023). The integration of prayer, dhikr, self-reflection, and gratitude has been shown to be effective in increasing academic self-efficacy (Astria et al., 2025) .

Therefore, it can be concluded that the definition of Islamic counseling emphasizes the integration of psychology and Islamic teachings. Its goal is to help individuals navigate difficulties while enhancing their spiritual well-being. This also supports character development and quality of life. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in reducing stress and anxiety. Therefore , Islamic counseling is a relevant alternative intervention in both education and everyday life.

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B. Principles of Islamic Counseling

Islamic counseling principles emphasize monotheism as the foundation of every intervention. Counselors help clients understand their relationship with God as a source of strength. This principle also emphasizes integrity, honesty, and responsibility in facing problems. Clients are guided to be patient and trusting in God in every situation. This helps foster emotional and mental stability (Astria et al., 2025) .

Another principle is respect for the individual and human dignity. Counselors do not judge, but support clients in finding solutions that are in accordance with Sharia law. The counseling process should take place in a safe and comfortable atmosphere. This allows clients to openly express their feelings and difficulties. This way, the counseling interaction becomes more effective and profound. The main principles of Islamic counseling are monotheism, patience, gratitude, submission to God, and noble character. These principles encourage students to face academic pressure with a healthy spirituality. Research has found that students guided by the principles of patience and submission to God tend to have lower stress levels and higher resilience (Anggraini et al., 2025) .

Islamic counseling also prioritizes problem-solving through a spiritual approach. Prayer, dhikr (remembrance of God), and self-reflection are part of the coping strategy. Clients are taught to view every problem as a life test. This approach emphasizes the importance of patience and perseverance. Thus, these principles guide clients toward psychological and spiritual balance (Anggraini et al., 2025) . Furthermore, Islamic counseling principles emphasize the development of noble character. Counselors motivate clients to act in accordance with Islamic moral values. This not only helps resolve problems but also improves character. Counseling activities are integrated with the practice of good behavior. This approach fosters self-awareness and social responsibility.

Overall, Islamic counseling principles combine spiritual and psychological values. The goal is to guide clients in dealing with problems wisely. With these principles, counseling becomes a comprehensive means of self-development. Research shows that the application of Islamic principles is effective in improving mental well-being. Therefore, these principles form an important foundation in Islamic counseling practice.

C. Islamic Counseling Strategy

Islamic counseling strategies are designed to combine psychological and spiritual approaches. One key strategy is guidance through the Quran and Hadith. Counselors help clients understand the meaning of verses and hadith relevant to their problems. This approach encourages clients to find solutions that align with Islamic values. This strategy increases clients' sense of security and confidence in facing problems (Astria et al., 2025) .

Another strategy is the use of prayer, dhikr, and meditation. Clients are taught to internalize spiritual values in their daily lives. This helps them reduce anxiety and stress. Counselors also encourage self-reflection and introspection to identify the root of problems. With this strategy, clients gain self-awareness and better emotional control. Islamic counseling also uses a narrative

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and empathetic approach. Clients are asked to share their life experiences to find wisdom and solutions. This approach emphasizes open communication and emotional support. This strategy increases client engagement in the counseling process. As a result, clients are able to solve problems in a more positive and structured manner (Mastura, 2018) .

Furthermore, Islamic counseling strategies involve strengthening morals and ethics. Counselors help clients apply ethical values in every decision. This supports character development and social responsibility. This strategy also helps clients maintain a balance between spirituality and daily life. Thus, counseling becomes more comprehensive and effective. Hasibuan (2025) demonstrated that Islamic guided imagery reduces excessive emotions in students. Astria et al. (2025) found that creative problem-solving-based group counseling is effective in reducing academic stress. Wulandari and Hermatasiyah (2025) emphasized the effectiveness of Islamic cognitive behavioral therapy in addressing burnout. Furthermore, digital Islamic counseling strategies through online self-reflection applications and gratitude journals have been shown to improve students' adaptive coping during online learning (Nurhayati & Latifah, 2023). Collaborative strategies between guidance counselors and subject teachers are also said to strengthen the success of Islamic services in schools (Suryani, 2024).

Overall, Islamic counseling strategies emphasize spiritual, psychological, and social integration. The goal is to equip clients with coping skills for stress and conflict. Research shows that these strategies are effective in reducing academic stress. This holistic approach makes Islamic counseling relevant to a wide range of situations. Therefore, these strategies serve as an important guide for counselors in their daily practice.

D. Understanding Academic Stress

Academic stress is the psychological pressure experienced by individuals due to academic demands. This can arise from the burden of assignments, exams, or performance pressure. Academic stress affects concentration, motivation, and mental health. Research shows that academic stress can reduce student achievement. Therefore, understanding academic stress is important in the educational context. Academic stress is often caused by internal and external pressures. Internal pressure arises from self-expectations of achievement. External pressure comes from teachers, parents, and the school environment. Both interact to increase the risk of stress. This requires effective coping strategies for students (Wulandari, N., & Hermatasiyah, 2025) .

Symptoms of academic stress can include anxiety, fatigue, and lack of motivation. Students may also experience sleep disturbances or decreased concentration. These conditions can impact the quality of learning and social relationships. Therefore, early detection of academic stress symptoms is crucial. Proper management can prevent long-term negative impacts. Furthermore, academic stress can trigger feelings of frustration and hopelessness. Students experiencing severe stress tend to withdraw from learning activities. This can lower academic performance and affect mental health. Effective intervention approaches are needed to reduce this stress. Counseling is one relevant solution.

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Overall, the definition of academic stress encompasses pressure, challenges, and impacts on individuals. Academic stress is a common phenomenon among students. Understanding its causes and symptoms is crucial for its management. With proper management, students can cope with academic demands more effectively. Therefore, Islamic counseling can be a relevant intervention strategy.

E. Factors Causing Academic Stress

Factors causing academic stress can originate from both the individual and the environment. Internal factors include learning motivation, self-confidence, and time management skills. Students who lack self-confidence or are unorganized are more likely to experience stress. This affects concentration and learning ability. Therefore, internal reinforcement is important to reduce stress. External factors come from school demands, teachers, and parents. Pressure to achieve high can increase academic anxiety. A competitive and unsupportive environment also triggers stress. Peer relationships and social conflict are also contributing factors. Therefore, interventions must consider the student's environmental context. High workloads and exams are also significant factors. Inability to manage study time can exacerbate academic stress. Students who lack effective coping strategies tend to be overwhelmed. This highlights the importance of tutoring and counseling. With the right approach, academic stress can be minimized (Wulandari, N., & Hermatasiyah, 2025) .

Furthermore, personal and parental expectations influence stress levels. Students who feel they must meet high expectations tend to experience pressure. This can lead to anxiety, frustration, and a lack of motivation. Interventions involving communication between parents and students are necessary. With the right support, academic stress can be reduced.

Overall, academic stressors encompass both internal and external factors. Understanding these factors helps develop effective coping strategies. Research shows that spiritual and psychological interventions can reduce academic stress. Islamic counseling is one relevant method. With a holistic approach, students can cope with stress more adaptively.

F. The Role of Islamic Counseling in Reducing Academic Stress

Islamic counseling plays a crucial role in helping students manage academic stress. This approach integrates spiritual values and psychological strategies. Students are taught patience, trust in God, and the use of prayer and dhikr. This helps calm the mind and enhances focus on learning. With Islamic guidance, students can cope with academic pressure more calmly (Yedi, 2024).

Islamic counseling also emphasizes self-reflection and introspection. Students learn to identify the causes of stress and how to overcome them. Counselors guide students in finding solutions in accordance with Islamic values. This approach encourages the development of effective coping skills. As a result, students are able to manage stress independently. Several studies have shown that counselors use self-reflection sessions to help students evaluate their behavior, assess their life goals, and build awareness of their academic responsibilities (Djuuna,

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2025). In this way, students learn to face academic pressure with a more positive and meaningful perspective.

Furthermore, Islamic counseling improves students' morals and positive behavior. Strengthening character helps students face academic challenges. Islamic moral values provide guidance in decision-making, reducing internal conflicts that can lead to stress. Thus, Islamic counseling combines spiritual and psychological aspects. In individual Islamic counseling, research shows a systematic process. For example, students are first encouraged to identify the source of stress, then guided to relate it to Islamic principles, such as patience during exams and prayer for peace. Furthermore, counselors encourage daily spiritual practices, such as dhikr (remembrance of God) or reciting specific verses, which aim to calm the mind and improve focus on learning (Anggraini et al., 2025) .

Islamic counseling also creates an empathetic and safe counseling environment. Students feel supported and valued in expressing their concerns. The narrative approach allows students to share their experiences and discover lessons learned (Yedi, 2024) . This fosters self-awareness and emotional control. A positive counseling environment contributes to reduced academic stress.

Overall, Islamic counseling plays a significant role in reducing academic stress. This approach helps students cope with pressure with spiritual and psychological strategies. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in improving mental well-being. With Islamic counseling guidance, students can learn more focused and productively. Therefore, Islamic counseling is a relevant intervention in education. Preventive efforts through Islamic counseling emphasize time management, prioritizing learning, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. In one study, counselors guided students in creating a daily schedule that encompassed study, worship, and social activities. This strategy enabled students to manage their energy effectively, reduce the risk of burnout, and build self-discipline (Fransisca, F., & Rusman, 2025) . Furthermore, several studies emphasized decision-making skills training as part of counseling, enabling students to assess which tasks should be prioritized and how to approach academic challenges in a planned manner.

Digital-based Islamic counseling is also emerging, and research shows a wide variety of methods are used. Students can participate in online counseling modules, engage in self-reflection through digital journals, or practice gratitude with the help of reminder apps. Counselors monitor students' emotional and spiritual development through these platforms, provide personalized feedback, and tailor reflection exercises to individual needs (Wulandari, N., & Hermatasiyah, 2025) . This approach offers greater flexibility, especially for students with limited time or online learning conditions.

Islamic counseling has been shown to improve resilience, emotional regulation, and religious coping strategies. Through self-reflection, students learn to identify sources of stress and relate them to Islamic values, making them more adaptive in dealing with academic pressure (Djuuna, 2025). Another study confirmed that regular spiritual practices, such as dhikr and prayer, reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol (Rahmatullah, 2024). Digital-based Islamic counseling

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has also been shown to be effective in providing flexible services for students who have difficulty attending face-to-face (Wulandari & Hermatasiyah, 2025). Furthermore, integrating Islamic counseling with school guidance and counseling services can be a sustainable model for preventive and curative interventions (Miftachul'Ilmi & Muslihati, 2025).

Thus, it can be concluded that this research confirms that Islamic counseling, whether individual, group, or digital, not only reduces academic stress but also builds students' mental, moral, and spiritual resilience. By combining spiritual, social, and emotional approaches, this counseling provides practical coping strategies while building self-awareness, empathy, and learning discipline. This approach demonstrates the relevance of Islamic counseling as an integral part of education that supports students' psychological and academic well-being holistically.

CONCLUSION

Islamic counseling is a relevant and effective approach to addressing academic stress in high school students. Integrating Quranic values such as patience, gratitude, tawakkul (religious surrender), prayer, and self-reflection (muhasabah) with modern counseling strategies has been shown to reduce anxiety, burnout, and academic pressure. A review of 20 articles demonstrates that Islamic counseling is effective in various forms of individual, group, and digital services, while also serving as a preventative measure by strengthening resilience, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping skills. Therefore, this study confirms that Islamic counseling significantly contributes to students' psychological, spiritual, and social well-being, thus better preparing them to face academic challenges in the digital age.

The implication of this research is the need for systematic integration of Islamic counseling into secondary school guidance and counseling programs, not only as a curative intervention but also as a sustainable preventive strategy. Schools, counselors, and educational policymakers are expected to develop Islamic service models that are adaptive to modern contexts, including through digital platforms. Further research is recommended to conduct quantitative studies with a broader population to test the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in various educational settings, as well as to explore innovative Islamic counseling strategies that are tailored to the needs of digital-generation students.

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