



"Dhikr as a Psychospiritual Therapy for the Elderly: A Phenomenological Study at the Elderly Boarding School of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia"

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and describe the subjective experiences of the Muslim elderly community in practicing *dzikir* as a form of psychospiritual therapy at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, the study involved five elderly informants who actively participated in morning and evening *dzikir* sessions. The research data were collected through three methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, which served to complement and strengthen the primary data. The collected data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The results of the study revealed five main themes: inner peace and anxiety reduction, spiritual connection and meaning of life, emotional regulation enhancement, reactualization of self-worth, and spiritual loneliness therapy. The findings indicate that *dzikir* is not merely a ritual act of worship, but can also serve as a psychospiritual therapy for the mental health and psychological well-being of the elderly. *Dzikir* provides profound meaning for the elderly by strengthening their spiritual connection, improving their emotional state, and reconstructing their sense of life purpose and self-worth. This study recommends the integration of *dzikir* practices into elderly development programs, particularly within educational and guidance institutions for the elderly, such as Madrasah Ibnu Masud in Segamat, Johor, Malaysia.

Keywords: Dhikr; Psychospiritual Therapy; Elderly; Phenomenology; Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud

INTRODUCTION

In a psychospiritual context, elderly individuals are expected to experience their later years with a good quality of life, which includes psychological well-being and inner peace. Old age is often marked by various physical and psychological changes that can lead to feelings of anxiety, stress, and loneliness ‘kesepian’ (Raudhoh & Pramudiani, 2021 ; Afrizal, 2018). Physical changes such as declining organ function, chronic health problems, and reduced mobility frequently impact the psychological condition of the elderly, causing them to feel vulnerable and less confident (Muchsin et al., 2023;; Astuti, 2022; Utama, 2020; Kaunang et al., 2019). In addition, social changes such as the loss of a spouse, reduced social interaction, and a diminished role within the family or community also contribute to feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation. These conditions are often exacerbated by the elderly’s inability to manage stress and anxiety effectively, thereby increasing the risk of mental disorders that may significantly affect their overall quality of life (World Health Organization, 2023). Therefore, maintaining the mental health of the elderly is a crucial aspect to ensure they can continue to live a meaningful life with a peaceful soul. This psychospiritual well-being not only contributes to mental health but also supports the elderly’s ability to adapt to the changes that come with aging.

Normatively, society and religious institutions emphasize the importance of a spiritual approach as part of efforts to maintain the mental health of the elderly. One spiritual practice considered effective is *dzikir*, which involves the regular remembrance and invocation of Allah’s name, believed to bring peace to the heart and mind (Tahir & Husna, 2023). *Dzikir* not only serves as a ritual act of worship in Islamic tradition, but also plays a significant role as an effective psychospiritual therapy in reducing anxiety, stress, and feelings of loneliness often experienced by the elderly (Anwar et al., 2024). Through the repetition of sacred phrases and the deep reflection on their meanings, elderly individuals can experience inner calm and enhanced spiritual focus that soothes both mind and emotions. Research has shown a connection between religiosity-based *dzikir* therapy interventions and the psychological well-being of the elderly (Fithry, 2022). Regular practice of *dzikir* has been found to lower stress hormone levels such as cortisol, thus aiding in the management of anxiety and depression symptoms (Anwar et al., 2024). Moreover, *dzikir* strengthens both spiritual and social connectedness, which contributes to reducing loneliness and emotional isolation among the elderly (Ningsih & Juanda, 2025). This approach offers a safe, non-pharmacological alternative that aligns with religious values, making it highly acceptable within Muslim elderly communities. Therefore, *dzikir* as a form of psychospiritual therapy not only enhances the quality of worship but also provides significant benefits for the mental health and emotional well-being of the elderly.

Ideally, every elderly individual should have access, support, and opportunities to engage in regular *dzikir*, either independently or in group settings. A conducive environment that supports *dzikir* practices plays a vital role in strengthening the therapeutic effects of this practice, especially for older adults facing various psychological and social challenges. When *dzikir* is performed in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere and in the company of peers on a regular basis, it not only enhances its effectiveness as a psychospiritual therapy but also fosters stronger social bonds among the elderly (Luthfiah & Nuhuda, 2024). The social interactions that occur during group *dzikir* activities can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation, promote a sense of togetherness, and provide the emotional support that elderly individuals greatly need (Fithry,

2022). Thus, *dzikir* functions not only as a means of personal healing, but also as a medium for building a supportive community dedicated to maintaining and improving collective psychospiritual well-being (Syarifuddin, 2023). Such a supportive environment also encourages the elderly to actively participate in religious and social activities, thereby reinforcing their sense of identity and purpose in later life. This approach is crucial to be developed and integrated into elderly welfare programs, particularly within religious institutions such as at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia, in order to holistically enhance the quality of life for older adults.

Although elderly individuals are normatively expected to enjoy their later years with psychospiritual well-being, the reality shows that many still face serious psychological issues (Kaunang et al., 2019). Anxiety, depression, and a decline in psychological well-being are common problems, particularly within elderly communities that often lack specific attention to psychospiritual aspects psychospiritual (Anitasari & Fitriani, 2025). Empirical studies in Indonesia reveal that older adults who are not actively engaged in spiritual activities have a higher risk of psychological disorders compared to those who regularly participate in worship (Sulandari et al., 2024). The risk of suicide among spiritually inactive elderly individuals can be up to four times higher (Harahap, 2020). These findings indicate that involvement in spiritual practices such as *dzikir* functions not only as a form of worship but also as a crucial protective factor in maintaining the mental health of the elderly (Azmi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, many elderly people still lack access to structured and sustainable psychospiritual interventions, resulting in persistently high levels of anxiety and psychological distress that remain inadequately addressed.

Phenomenological studies that specifically explore the experiences of elderly individuals in practicing *dzikir* as a means to address psychospiritual challenges remain very limited, especially in the context of Madrasah Ibnu Ma'ud, Segamat, Malaysia. A previous study on *dzikir* therapy and self-acceptance among the elderly was conducted at the Tresna Werdha Puger Social Care Home in Jember. The study found that *dzikir* therapy was effective in enhancing self-acceptance among elderly individuals (Makani, 2020). However, another study investigating the influence of *dzikir* therapy on psychological well-being among the elderly revealed that *dzikir* therapy did not have a significant effect in improving their psychological well-being (Wulandari & Nashori, 2014). These two contrasting findings prompted the researcher to conduct a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of the elderly in finding meaning through *dzikir* in their lives. This study thus serves to reinforce and complement previous findings related to the same theme.

In-depth phenomenological studies on the subjective experiences of elderly individuals in practicing *dzikir* as a form of psychospiritual therapy remain very limited, particularly in Malaysia, and more specifically at Madrasah Ibnu Masud. One of the studies identified was conducted by Sukandar et al (2024), which explored a religious-guidance-based da'wah program aimed at improving the subjective well-being of the elderly: a study at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. This study described various spiritual guidance programs provided at Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, such as routine congregational prayers, morning and evening *dzikir*, recitation guidance of selected Qur'anic verses, Qur'an classes, *qiyamullail*, and *dhuha* studies (covering creed, worship, and Sufism). However, the study did not delve into the spiritual meaning experienced by the elderly but merely outlined the existing programs.

Another study was conducted by Masut & Mutalib (2019) regarding quality aging at Pondok Warga Emas (Elderly Home). This study found that at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia fulfilled the emotional and spiritual needs of the elderly living there. However, the study discussed spirituality in general and did not focus specifically on *dzikir*. In contrast, the current study focuses particularly on *dzikir* as a form of spiritual therapy for the elderly at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. Research related to spirituality and psychological well-being is also found in a study by Mustaffa et al (2021), which investigated the impact of spiritual practices in overcoming loneliness in a nursing home (Darul Hanan) in Penang, Malaysia. The study identified several spiritual practices engaged in by the elderly residents, including congregational obligatory prayers, *qiyamullail*, supplementary religious practices, Qur'an recitation, *dzikir*, and religious studies. The study found that eighteen positive emotions were experienced by the elderly after participating in these activities, including feelings of happiness, joy, and relief, all of which positively impacted their experience of loneliness. However, existing research has not sufficiently explored how elderly individuals interpret the meaning of *dzikir* within the cultural and religious institutional context. Moreover, the personal psychospiritual changes experienced by the elderly during and after engaging in *dzikir* have yet to be widely examined through qualitative approaches. This gap highlights the need for more in-depth phenomenological research to understand the experiences of the elderly holistically and contextually within the setting of a *madrasah*.

This study aims to explore and describe the subjective experiences of elderly individuals in practicing *dzikir* as a form of psychospiritual therapy at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. Specifically, it seeks to understand the process of implementing *dzikir* therapy, the meaning of *dzikir* for the elderly, and the psychospiritual impact they experience through a phenomenological approach. This research offers novelty by employing a phenomenological method to deeply investigate the experiences of the elderly in undergoing *dzikir* as psychospiritual therapy at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. The findings of this study are expected to contribute new insights to the development of psychospiritual interventions based on psychological and religious principles and to serve as a reference for religious institutions and mental health practitioners in designing more contextual and humanistic therapeutic programs.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The purpose of this approach is to explore and understand the deeper meaning of the elderly's experiences in practicing *dzikir* as a form of psycho-spiritual therapy. The research focuses on the subjective experiences and individual perceptions of psychological and spiritual changes they have undergone. The study was conducted at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia, an Islamic educational institution that also serves as a residence and spiritual development center for the elderly, located in Segamat, Johor, Malaysia. The research will be carried out over a period of three months, from July to September 2025, covering the stages of field observation, data collection, transcription, analysis, and data validation.

The study involves five participants selected through purposive sampling based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for selection include: being 60

years of age or older, actively participating in routine *dzikir* activities at the madrasah (morning and evening), being able to express inner experiences and spiritual reflections verbally, and being willing to participate in the study. Data were collected using three methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the meaning and experiences of *dzikir* from the perspectives of the elderly; participant observation to understand the context and spiritual atmosphere during *dzikir* sessions; and documentation, including photographs of activities, madrasah records, and *dzikir* materials, to support and enrich the primary data. All interviews were audio-recorded (with the informants' consent) and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data were then analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Dzikir Program at the Elderly Boarding School of Madrasah Ibnu Ma'ud

The implementation of *dzikir* at the Elderly Boarding School of Madrasah Ibnu Ma'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia, is carried out regularly and collectively. The *dzikir* activities in this madrasah can be classified into three forms: *dzikir* after obligatory prayers, morning and evening *dzikir*, and flexible *dzikir* conducted after celebratory events (*haflah*) held on certain special occasions. The *dzikir* performed after the five daily obligatory prayers is a consistent activity for the elderly residents. This form of *dzikir* is guided by the prayer imam. The following are the *dzikir* routines performed after each obligatory prayer.

Table. Dhikr Activities After Prayer at Madrasah Ibnu Ma'ud, Segamat, Malaysia

No	Type of Dhikr	Volume	Time
1.	Istighfar	3-7 times	After obligatory prayers
2.	Tauhid dhikr	3-11 times	After obligatory prayers
3.	Dhikr for protection from hell	3-7 times	After obligatory prayers
4.	Opening dhikr	1 time	After obligatory prayers
5.	Ayat al-Kursi dhikr	1 time	After obligatory prayers
6.	Tasbih (glorifying Allah)	33 times	After obligatory prayers
7.	Tahmid (praising Allah)	33 times	After obligatory prayers
8.	Takbir (exalting Allah)	33 times	After obligatory prayers
9.	Closing supplication (Do'a)	1 time	After obligatory prayers
10.	Sufi dhikr	3 times	After finishing the Qiyamullail salam

The second routine dhikr activity performed by the elderly at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia is the morning and evening dhikr. The reference for the morning and evening dhikr at this madrasah is the "al-Matsurat," which is a collection of morning and evening dhikr compiled by Imam Hasan al-Banna. On Friday mornings, the elderly read Surah al-Kahfi, and on Monday evenings, they specifically recite the ruqyah dhikr, a traditional healing method that treats and cures mental, spiritual, moral, or physical illnesses through guidance from the Qur'an and Sunnah Sunnah (Sya'roni & Khotimah, 2018). This activity is performed after the obligatory Fajr (dawn) prayer and after the obligatory Asr (afternoon) prayer, led by an ustadz (usually led directly by the prayer imam). The dhikr recitation is done together, aloud, with calmness and deep devotion. It is also common for the elderly to bring water to the dhikr gathering and place it in the middle of the group (majlis) in an

open container. This water is then drunk by the participants as a form of water therapy to bring peace to the human soul.

The third form of dhikr is dhikr performed flexibly. Flexible in the sense that the dhikr is recited only when needed and at certain specific times. This dhikr is usually carried out during celebration events (haflah) such as Islamic holidays, Qur'an completion ceremonies (khatam al-Qur'an), or certain thanksgiving gatherings (majelis syukuran). The dhikr is done collectively, loudly (al-jahr). This method is chosen based on the belief that something recited aloud will penetrate the heart deeply. Naturally, this leaves a lasting impression on the heart, influences the emotions of the reciters, and is expected to affect the cognition, emotions, behavior, and spirituality of the elderly. These special celebration moments are often concluded with a food



feast, either provided by the madrasah's administrators themselves or by donors who deliver food and drinks to Madrasah Ibnu Ma'ud. Activities like these not only foster a clean and peaceful soul for the elderly but also strengthen the close relationships between the elderly and the madrasah's administrators.

Picture. Participation in the Elderly Dhikr Assembly at Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud

The Meaning of Dhikr as a Psychospiritual Therapy for the Elderly

Based on in-depth interviews and observations of five elderly informants at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia, five main themes were identified that represent their subjective experiences in practicing dhikr as psychospiritual therapy:

1. Inner Peace and Anxiety Reduction

The majority of informants expressed that the morning and evening dhikr brings a sense of calm, reduces fear of death, and frees them from prolonged anxiety. Dhikr becomes an inner space to settle emotions that previously dominated their lives in old age. This is reflected in the statement of Informant 01, Abdul Rozak bin Ahmad Marzuki (aged 62), as follows:

“After every morning dhikr, my heart becomes calmer. I feel regretful if I miss even one dhikr session at this madrasah. Whenever my wife and I return home for a short while, my heart longs to quickly return to this madrasah.” (I-01)

This statement shows that the practice of morning dhikr has a significant psychological impact in creating inner peace for the elderly. Dhikr is not only a religious ritual but also functions as psychospiritual therapy that forms an emotional attachment to the spiritual environment (the madrasah). Mr. Rozak feels a loss of meaning and calmness when he misses the dhikr, indicating a deep spiritual need and internalization of worship values. His strong desire to return immediately to the madrasah reflects that the madrasah has become a primary source of psychological and spiritual comfort.

2. Spiritual Connection and Meaning of Life

The second theme from the interviews regarding dhikr as psychospiritual therapy for the elderly is spiritual connection and meaning of life. The practice of dhikr at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia helps the elderly feel closer to Allah SWT, so they no longer feel life is empty or lonely. Dhikr becomes a way to rediscover the meaning of life after experiencing the loss of social and family roles. This is reflected in the statement of Informant 03, Mohd. Fadil Idris (aged 69):

“I used to often feel lonely. Since being at this madrasah, I have participated in every dhikr activity. I feel close to Allah. I also feel accepted here because of the presence of friends my age. I feel happy and my soul feels calm after finishing dhikr.” (I-03)

This statement reflects a transformation in the psychological and spiritual condition of the elderly, from loneliness to peace and happiness. Dhikr acts as psychospiritual therapy that not only strengthens the vertical relationship with Allah but also rebuilds horizontal social relationships with fellow elderly in the madrasah community. Elderly individuals who initially felt lonely now experience a deep spiritual connection, seen in their feeling of closeness to Allah after dhikr. They also feel accepted in the madrasah, marked by having friends their own age who make them feel valued and not alone. Moreover, there is an inner change with the emergence of happiness and tranquility after dhikr.

3. Strengthening Emotional Regulation

Dhikr greatly influences the emotional control of the elderly. They feel more patient, less easily angered, and more open-hearted. This shows that dhikr plays a role in forming psychological stability in old age. This theme can be understood from the statement of Informant 02, Mr. Saleh bin Jamain (aged 70), as follows:

“I feel that dhikr is very important for humans. After dhikr, I often introspect myself. Many mistakes and sins, old age, and nothing else to hope for except to seek peace in this life. I feel more patient and less quick to anger after regularly practicing dhikr.” (I-02)

This statement shows that dhikr serves as a means of self-reflection and an effective spiritual therapy for the elderly, especially in facing awareness of the limitations of age and the remaining lifetime. Dhikr is not only a routine form of worship but also a medium for muhasabah (introspection) and calming the soul. The elderly realize that worldly life is nearly over, and the need to seek peace, forgiveness, and inner tranquility becomes a top priority. Dhikr in this context can foster spiritual and moral awareness (introspection of sins and mistakes),

strengthen emotional regulation (becoming more patient and less easily angered), and fulfill inner needs in old age, replacing worldly hopes with spiritual calmness.

4. Reactualization of Self-Worth

Several informants revealed that dhikr gives them a sense of usefulness and self-worth, even though they are no longer economically or socially productive. This feeling of being useful strengthens their self-confidence in old age. This is illustrated in the statement by Informant 05, Abdul Somad bin Baba (age 65), as follows:

“I am a retired police officer. When I was officially retired from my duties, I felt anxious that I might no longer be of any use or benefit to others. After I started participating in the regular dhikr activities at this madrasah, my spirit returned. It turns out that being useful can happen at any time, regardless of one's profession or condition. Even though I am retired from duty and no longer young, I can still be of benefit to others—even if it's something small.” (I-05).

This statement describes the process of reactualizing self-worth and reinterpreting personal existence after entering retirement. The anxiety stemming from the loss of social roles and professional identity in old age is gradually replaced by spiritual awareness and renewed motivation through engagement in dhikr activities at the madrasah. Dhikr acts as a psychospiritual stimulus that revives life enthusiasm and fosters self-confidence to continue contributing, even without a formal role as in their working years.

5. Therapy for Spiritual Loneliness

Dhikr provides a personal relational experience with God that cultivates a feeling of being “accompanied.” Informants no longer feel lonely, as if they have a “divine companion” who is always present through joy and sorrow. This can be seen in the statement by Informant 04, Ruqyah binti Md. Saleh (age 84), who said:

“The dhikr I regularly participate in brings peace to my heart. You see, I live all alone—my husband is gone, and I have no children. I live completely on my own. However, through dhikr, I find strength. I don't feel alone; I feel that Allah is with me. Even though there's no one else beside me, I truly believe that Allah will never abandon His servant. It feels as if I have someone to talk to.” (I-04)

This statement expresses that dhikr serves as a primary source of spiritual and emotional strength for elderly individuals who experience social isolation and live alone. The deep loneliness caused by the absence of a spouse or children is gradually replaced with a profound spiritual closeness through the practice of dhikr. For the informant, dhikr is not just a form of worship but a medium for inner communication with Allah, creating feelings of companionship, care, and divine love. In this context, dhikr functions as a spiritual therapy for existential loneliness commonly experienced in old age.

Discussion

This study reveals that *dhikr* is not merely a ritual act of worship, but has transformed into a significant psychospiritual therapy for the elderly. Based on a phenomenological approach to the subjective experiences of five informants, five interrelated main themes were identified, forming a holistic picture of the role of *dhikr* in supporting the psychological and spiritual well-

being of older adults. *Dhikr* serves as a therapy for inner peace and the reduction of anxiety. The findings indicate that *dhikr* has a direct impact on the emotional calmness of the elderly. Morning and evening *dhikr* become reflective moments capable of soothing anxiety, including fears of death and feelings of loss that commonly accompany old age. This aligns with the theory of spiritual well-being, which states that regular spiritual practices enhance emotional stability and reduce psychological distress (Pargament, 1997).

Dhikr also provides a sense of connection and meaning in life for the elderly, functioning as a pathway for them to find purpose after retirement or after the loss of loved ones. Through vertical relationships with Allah and horizontal connections within the madrasah community, the elderly not only feel spiritually close to God (Allah SWT) but also socially acknowledged. This demonstrates that *dhikr* aids in both social and spiritual reintegration for the elderly. It corresponds with the theory of logotherapy, which asserts that humans need meaning to overcome suffering (Wong, 2005). In this context, *dhikr* offers new meaning for older adults. Through the practice of *dhikr*, they regain a sense of happiness because they no longer feel alone. They find meaning in life, realizing that the ultimate purpose of human existence is to remain close to Allah SWT. This is also in line with the words of Allah SWT in the Qur'an, Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 28 (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019) :

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۖ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ۖ ٢٨

"Those who believe and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Surely, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured (Qoran Surah ar-Ra'd, verse 28).

In addition, *dhikr* has been shown to strengthen the emotional regulation abilities of the elderly. It helps older adults become more patient, less easily angered, and more accepting of life's realities. The practice of *dhikr* allows the elderly to engage in *muhasabah* (self-reflection), which fosters spiritual awareness and emotional maturity. In this sense, *dhikr* functions as a form of spiritual self-regulation, similar to mindfulness techniques in Western psychology. *Dhikr* as a method of emotional regulation aligns with the concept of Self-Determination Theory. This theory, developed by Decy & M.Ryan (2012), emphasizes that human beings have three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these three needs are fulfilled, individuals are more intrinsically motivated, feel empowered, and are capable of managing their lives and behaviors effectively (Moller et al., 2006; Cherry, 2024).

Moreover, *dhikr* can serve as a therapeutic tool for restoring a sense of self-worth among the elderly. Those who feel no longer useful after retirement often rediscover their dignity and sense of purpose through the practice of *dhikr*. This highlights the importance of spiritual resources in helping the elderly find new meaning in their existence. *Dhikr* acts as a stimulus for psychological revival, renewing their enthusiasm for life and opening opportunities for continued contribution in other meaningful ways. This reinforces the Psychosocial Stages Theory, which states that in the stage of ego integrity vs. despair, older adults need to find meaning and purpose in life to avoid feelings of hopelessness (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Finally, *dhikr* can also serve as a spiritual remedy for loneliness in old age. Loneliness is a major challenge for many elderly individuals, especially those living alone. This study finds that *dhikr* acts as an inner companion, forming a deeply personal and spiritual relationship. Through *dhikr*, the elderly feel accompanied, heard, and loved by Allah, which significantly reduces

existential loneliness. Self-determination theory also explains that the need for relatedness can be fulfilled through a spiritual connection with Allah SWT. Ultimately, this study is expected to fill the existing gap in geriatric psychology research, particularly in examining traditional religious practices within the context of psychospiritual therapy. Furthermore, it provides a novel contribution to the understanding of *dhikr*—not merely as a ritual act of worship, but as a natural psychological intervention rooted in religion and culture that is accessible, affordable, and profoundly meaningful.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reinforce the understanding that the practice of *dhikr* can be integrated as part of a holistic approach to elderly care, particularly within Muslim communities. *Madrasahs* and religious institutions can play a vital role as spiritual spaces that are conducive to the psychological and emotional therapy of older adults. Therefore, it is recommended that group *dhikr* programs and spiritual development activities—such as those implemented at the boarding school of Madrasah Ibnu Mas'ud, Segamat, Johor, Malaysia—be further developed, researched, and replicated in various communities as meaningful and accessible forms of non-medical intervention. This study also opens opportunities for further research linking *dhikr* with physiological, neuropsychological, or broader aspects of social well-being in the elderly. Such efforts are important to ensure that spiritual practices like *dhikr* are not only viewed from a religious perspective, but also recognized for their contributions to psychology, mental health, and faith-based social services.

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