

## **SUFISTIC COUNSELLING PROGRAM: IMPROVING STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY THROUGH NEUROSCIENCE-BASED NATURE *TADABBUR***

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### **Abstract**

This research designed and developed a Sufistic counseling program to improve psychological flexibility through neuroscience-based nature *tadabbur* in metropolitan city students. This study used the design-based research (DBR) method using four steps, namely needs analysis, design planning, development, and reflection on the results of use. In the needs analysis stage, the psychological flexibility instrument was distributed to 168 students, and then at the product development stage, it was validated by three expert validators. Data collection was carried out through the results of interviews, observations, literature studies, and documentation. The results of the study showed that the development of the Sufistic counseling program was in the very adequate category in developing students' psychological flexibility because this program integrated the concepts of Sufistic counseling and neuroscience involving elements of the medial prefrontal cortex, the limbic system, the hormones dopamine and oxytocin, amygdala, neuroplasticity, visual cortex, as well as theta and alpha brain waves. This Sufistic counseling program could be an alternative that makes it easier for university counselors or academic advisors to develop students' psychological flexibility through neuroscience-based nature *tadabbur*.

Keywords: Metropolitan city students, Neuroscience, Psychological flexibility, Sufistic counselling program, *Tadabbur* nature.

## 1. Introduction

The psychological flexibility of metropolitan city students is important to develop because they are often faced with various pressures that come from academic demands to the complexity of social life [1-3]. This stress, when not balanced with psychological flexibility, can lead to emotional disorders such as stress, anxiety, and even depression [4, 5].

Table 1 shows several studies reported on the use of counselling programs to develop psychological flexibility. Unfortunately, there is no Sufistic counselling program to improve psychological flexibility through neuroscience-based *tadabbur* nature, which combines spiritual reflection with scientific observation. Through the Sufistic counselling program, it is hoped that students can learn to think more flexibly and creatively in solving problems.

**Table 1. Previous research on counselling programs to develop psychological flexibility.**

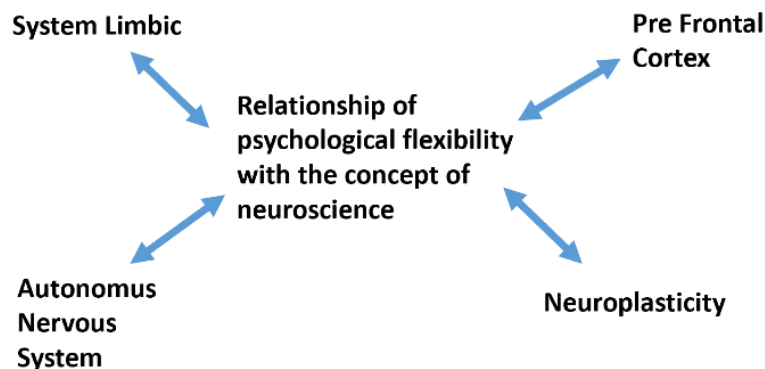
| No. | Title                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Ref. |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1   | The effectiveness of accepted and commitment group therapy on psychological flexibility and family communication patterns in women with type 2 diabetes                                                                  | [6]  |
| 2   | Effectiveness of compassion-focused therapy on psychological flexibility recovery and self-criticism decrease in mothers with mentally retarded children                                                                 | [7]  |
| 3   | Effectiveness of counselling of cognitive behavioural on students' resilience abilities                                                                                                                                  | [8]  |
| 4   | Evaluation of a program for training psychologists in an acceptance and commitment therapy resilience intervention for people with multiple sclerosis: a single-arm longitudinal design with a nested qualitative study. | [9]  |
| 5   | The effects of cognitive behavioural psychological group counselling program on the psychological resilience and emotional flexibility of adolescents                                                                    | [10] |
| 6   | The impact of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in enhancing psychological resilience among basic education teachers in Oman: longitudinal study                                                                       | [11] |

Therefore, this study designed and developed a Sufistic counselling program through neuroscience-based natural *tadabbur* in developing the psychological flexibility of students in metropolitan cities. The methods were design-based research (DBR). The novelties of this study were: (i) the combination of the concept of Sufistic counselling and neuroscience to improve the psychological flexibility of students in metropolitan cities; (ii) the use of neuroscience-based natural *tadabbur* methods that scientifically explain how these spiritual activities affect the brain and emotions; and (iii) this research not only introduces new approaches in religious and spiritual-based counselling but also supports the context education and mental well-being.

## 2. Literature Review

Psychological flexibility or resilience refers to an individual's ability to bounce back from difficult, stressful, or traumatic situations, and adapt to the challenges faced [12, 13]. Psychological flexibility involves internal factors such as emotional control, self-regulation, and external factors such as social support [14, 15].

Figure 1 shows the relationship of psychological flexibility with the concept of neuroscience [16, 17]. The link between neuroscience and psychological flexibility lies in understanding how the brain responds to stress, trauma, and challenges, as well as how those capacities can be strengthened through specific interventions [18, 19]. The part of the brain related to emotions, namely the role of the limbic system [20, 21], prefrontal cortex [22, 23], autonomic nervous system [24, 25], and neuroplasticity [26, 27].



**Fig. 1. Relationship of psychological flexibility with the concept of neuroscience.**

The efforts offered in this study in developing the psychological flexibility of metropolitan city students are through a Sufistic counselling program with natural *tadabbur* based on neuroscience. Sufistic counselling is a spiritual approach based on the values of Sufism in Islam, in Al Ghazali's view the approach is oriented towards purifying the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), getting closer to God, and finding the meaning of life. This approach includes spiritual practices such as *tafakkur* (reflection), *muhasabah* (self-evaluation), and faith strengthening to achieve emotional and mental balance [28, 29]. *Tadabbur* nature is a reflective approach that invites individuals to reflect on God's greatness through natural phenomena and science [30]. Natural *tadabbur* has a positive impact on mental health because it helps individuals find order, greatness, and meaning in life [31]. This process of reflection creates harmony between scientific knowledge and spirituality, which is the source of psychological strength.

## 3. Method

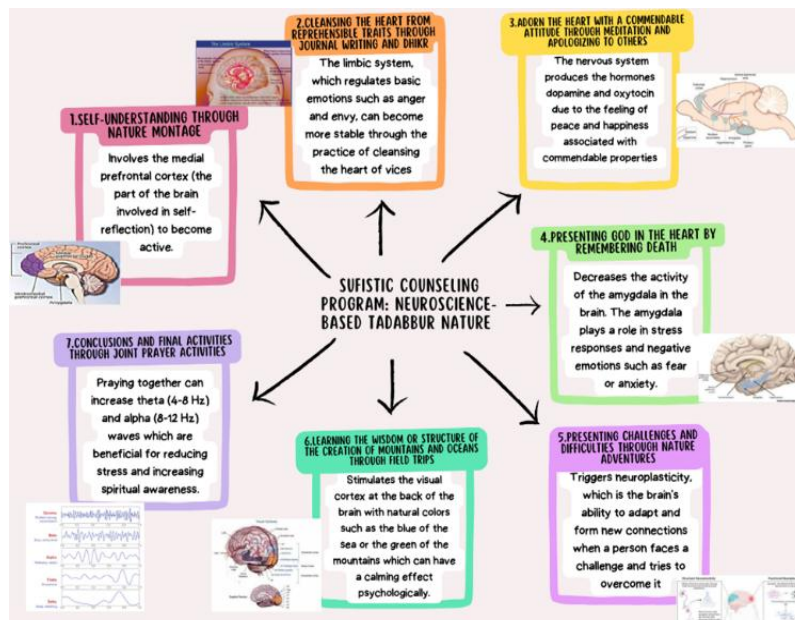
This research used a DBR method which includes analysis, design, development, and reflection. At the analysis stage, we employed 168 students from one of the campuses in Jakarta. We identified them as related to the condition of psychological

flexibility. More information related to this psychological flexibility instrument was published in our previous studies [32]. The development stage involved three validators using validation sheets as instruments. The evaluation of the success of the use of the Sufistic counselling program with neuroscience-based natural tadabbur was carried out at the reflection stage.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The results of the needs analysis showed that the majority of students in this study had a level of psychological flexibility that was in the medium category, based on gender, semester, and class type. Based on data by gender, 64% of men and 69% of women are in the medium category, with women being slightly more dominant. Therefore, innovative, relevant, and applicable programs are needed to help metropolitan students develop their psychological flexibility at a better level. The program designed is Sufistic counselling with natural tadabbur based on neuroscience.

Figure 2 shows seven stages of a Sufistic counselling program to improve students' psychological flexibility through neuroscience-based natural tadabbur which involves neuroscience activities that include the medial prefrontal cortex, limbic system, neurotransmitters (dopamine and oxytocin), amygdala, neuroplasticity, visual cortex, theta, and alpha brain waves.



**Fig. 2. Stages of the Sufistic counselling program to develop flexibility psychologically through natural *tadabbur* based on neuroscience.**

Based on the results of expert validation of three validators, it was found that the Sufistic counselling program with natural neuroscience-based tadabbur was in the very adequate category. The pre-test scores of 6 students before being given a Sufistic counselling program with a neuroscience-based natural

tadabbur were in the low category with a score of  $\leq 141$ . After students get a Sufistic counselling program, there is a change in the post-test score. The score results obtained by 6 students increased from a low level to a medium level with a post-test score of  $\geq 155$ .

We recommend the use of a Sufistic counselling program through a neuroscience-based natural tadabbur that integrates the concepts of religion, psychology, and science to strengthen students' character related to psychological flexibility. Through an easy-to-use method, this Sufistic counselling program is an intervention design that is easy to implement at the university level. In addition, this program can be a medium to strengthen spirituality as one of the pillars of strengthening students' psychological flexibility, especially in urban areas that tend to be materialistic. This research also makes a new contribution to the world of higher education. This study adds new information regarding Islamic education as reported elsewhere [32-37].

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of the research is to design and develop a Sufistic counselling program that is intended to increase psychological flexibility through a neuroscience-based natural *tadabbur* approach for students in metropolitan areas. This study used the DBR method. The results of the study showed that the Sufistic counselling program is very adequate in developing students' psychological flexibility.

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