

The Integration of Dhikr and Reflection as a Coping Strategy for Managing Anxiety Symptoms

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of anxiety symptoms among modern individuals continues to rise due to psychological pressure, social expectations, and the increasing complexity of daily life. This condition demands coping strategies that address not only rational-cognitive aspects but also the spiritual dimension of human experience. This study examines the integration of dhikr (remembrance) and fikir (reflective thinking) as a holistic coping mechanism for managing anxiety symptoms. Employing a library research method, this study reviews psychological literature, Islamic scholarship, and empirical studies related to coping mechanisms. The findings indicate that dhikr functions as an emotional regulator that reduces physiological arousal associated with anxiety, while dhikr facilitates more adaptive cognitive appraisal of stressors. The synergy between these practices fosters inner tranquility and strengthens cognitive regulation, thus enhancing individual resilience against anxiety. This study highlights the relevance of spiritual-cognitive approaches as complementary strategies within contemporary psychological interventions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a psychological phenomenon increasingly experienced by individuals in the modern era. Rapidly occurring social, cultural, and technological changes create an environment full of uncertainty and stress. This situation leaves many people hypervigilant, struggling to manage their thoughts, and experiencing constant emotional tension. Unlike in the past, when life's pressures were simpler, the current digital era presents new challenges

such as unlimited exposure to information, social comparisons in online media, high performance demands, and economic instability. The combination of these factors can increase the risk of developing anxiety symptoms, ranging from mild to clinical [1].

Anxiety has two sides: adaptive and maladaptive. At the adaptive level, anxiety functions as a biological mechanism that prepares the body for threats. However, at the maladaptive level, anxiety actually reduces the ability to think clearly, disrupts sleep quality, affects social relationships, and

hinders productivity. Therefore, coping strategies are needed that not only aim to alleviate temporary symptoms but also foster long-term psychological resilience (Azmi and Salsabilah, 2024).

Based on modern psychology, coping strategies often focus on cognitive and behavioral management, such as cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused coping. While these approaches have proven effective, not all individuals find them comprehensive in meeting their spiritual needs. This suggests a gap in integrating spiritual approaches into anxiety management, particularly in communities with strong religious roots, such as Muslims [2].

In Islamic tradition, the balance between reason and spirituality is a fundamental principle in achieving inner peace and mental stability. Two key concepts that play a significant role are *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and thought (thinking). *Dhikr* is a form of self-remembrance of God that involves both emotional and spiritual aspects. This practice can create a sense of calm, reduce stress levels, and alleviate inner turmoil through connecting with the ultimate source of tranquility. Thought is a rational and reflective process that encourages individuals to understand the cause and effect of events, interpret stressors logically, and restore a more adaptive perspective on life. These two concepts are described in the Quran as characteristics of intelligent humans, those who constantly remember God while contemplating His creation [2].

The integration of *dhikr* and thought is not simply a combination of separate spiritual and cognitive activities, but rather a holistic mechanism that connects inner calm with clarity of thought. *Dhikr* forms the foundation for emotional stability, while thought strengthens cognitive capacity to assess, confront, and resolve problems. In other words, *dhikr* calms the heart, thought calms the mind, and the two work together to create a balanced psychological state. This approach has the potential to be a more

comprehensive coping strategy for individuals experiencing anxiety, particularly in Muslim communities [3].

Given the relevance and urgency of this issue, this study seeks to explore in depth how the integration of *dhikr* (remembrance) and thought can function as a coping mechanism in dealing with anxiety symptoms. Using a library research approach, the study analyzes psychological literature, Islamic studies, and empirical findings regarding human responses to stress. The study focuses on how the integration of spiritual and cognitive aspects can create stronger mental resilience than either approach alone (Azmi and Salsabilah, 2024).

This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of spiritual-cognitive coping models and provide practical insights for individuals, educational institutions, counselors, and mental health practitioners. Given the high prevalence of anxiety among young people and adults, an integrative approach like this is essential to address the needs of the times while maintaining mental and spiritual balance. Therefore, this research serves not only as a scientific endeavor but also as a contribution to the development of mental health that aligns with religious values and the social context of Indonesian society [4].

2. METHODS

The research method used in this study is library research, employing a qualitative-descriptive approach. The study was conducted by reviewing and analyzing various relevant sources of literature, including modern psychological literature, Islamic studies, and empirical research findings related to coping mechanisms for anxiety. Data were collected through a search of scientific journals, books, and academic publications discussing the concepts of *dhikr*, cognitive reflection, and mental health, and were then systematically analyzed to identify conceptual links between spiritual and cognitive dimensions in addressing anxiety symptoms.

Subsequently, data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, which involve identifying, categorizing, and interpreting findings from various sources to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework. The analysis focused on how the integration of dzikir and reflective thinking can function as a holistic coping mechanism. The results of this literature synthesis were then used to formulate a conceptual model explaining the synergistic role of emotional regulation through dzikir and cognitive appraisal through reflection in enhancing an individual's resilience to anxiety.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Concept of Dhikr as Emotional Regulation in Overcoming Anxiety

Dhikr is a spiritual practice that holds a central place in Islamic tradition, particularly in efforts to calm the heart and strengthen one's psychological state. Terminologically, dhikr means bringing remembrance and awareness to God through speech, contemplation, and submission. In the context of a coping mechanism, dhikr functions as an emotional regulator that stabilizes physiological responses when individuals experience anxiety symptoms such as muscle tension, rapid breathing, chaotic thoughts, and feelings of excessive fear [5].

The theological basis for the role of dhikr in calming the heart is directly emphasized in the Qur'an through Allah's words:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Remember, only by remembering Allah will the heart be at peace."(QS. Ar-Ra'd: 28)

This verse shows that tranquility is not only the result of cognitive processes, but also stems from a spiritual connection between humans and God. In Islamic psychology, a state of calm (ath-thuma'ninah) is the opposite of anxiety (al-qalaq), making dhikr a primary instrument in restoring one's

emotional stability. The practice of dhikr influences the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for slowing the heart rate, reducing muscle tension, and triggering a relaxation response (Fathyka, 2025). When someone focuses on reciting dhikr phrases such as "Subhanallah", "Alhamdulillah", "Lailahailallah" or "Allahu Akbar," the body enters a state of calm that inhibits the increase in stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. Dhikr is not only a verbal form of worship, but also a highly effective psychophysiological therapy [1].

Dhikr has a corrective effect on negative perceptions. Anxious individuals tend to perceive events in an exaggerated and irrational manner. Dhikr helps refocus the mind from worry to submission and trust in Allah's sovereignty over all affairs. This aligns with Allah's words:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

"Whoever puts his trust in Allah, Allah will provide for him."(QS. Ath-Thalaaq: 3)

The trust born of dhikr (remembrance of God) makes individuals feel less alone in facing stress, significantly reducing anxiety symptoms. The feeling of "being sufficient by God" acts as a psychological buffer that protects individuals from overthinking and disproportionate fear. The practice of dhikr can also improve self-awareness. When individuals regulate their breathing while reciting dhikr repeatedly, awareness of their body and mind increases. This is similar to mindfulness techniques in modern psychology, but has a much deeper spiritual dimension. Dhikr guides one to recognize one's own weaknesses while simultaneously bringing forth external strength, namely God's help. This combination creates a more stable and resilient psychological state [4].

Dhikr serves not only as a religious ritual but also as an integrative, spiritually-based coping mechanism. Dhikr's power to calm the heart, reduce emotional turmoil, improve perception, and regulate the nervous system makes it a highly effective tool for

individuals experiencing anxiety. This sub-chapter establishes the foundation that managing anxiety requires a balance between the inner, mental, and physiological aspects, all of which can be achieved through dhikr [6].

3.2 The Role of Thinking (Cognitive Reflection) in Assessing and Managing Stressors

Thinking, or reflective thinking, is a cognitive process that plays a crucial role in assessing, understanding, and responding to various life events. As a coping mechanism, thinking helps individuals manage anxiety through a rational assessment of the stressors they face. Many anxiety symptoms arise not only from real threats but also from erroneous, exaggerated, or irrational perceptions of a situation. Therefore, a healthy thinking process is an essential foundation for reducing anxiety [7]. In Islam, thinking is not merely an intellectual process but also an act of worship that connects reason, heart, and faith. Allah repeatedly commands humans to use reason to understand the signs of His greatness. Allah says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ
جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are signs for men of understanding, namely those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth.”(QS. Ali Imran: 190–191)

This verse emphasizes that the depth of faith is not only built through dhikr (remembrance of God), but also through the process of thought. Thought is a means for humans to clearly assess reality so as not to become trapped in negative perceptions that trigger anxiety. In modern psychology, adaptive thought processes align with the concept of cognitive appraisal, namely a person's ability to assess whether a situation

is truly threatening or merely perceived as such. Individuals who possess reflective thinking skills tend to be able to analyze problems coherently, distinguish between assumptions and facts, and make decisions based on logic. This process helps control the negative thought spiral that is often the primary trigger for anxiety [5].

Furthermore, thinking serves as an internal mechanism to rationalize fear. For example, when someone feels anxious about an exam, work, or family problem, thinking helps reorganize their perception: is the situation truly dangerous, is there a solution, and what the most feasible course of action is. This rationalization significantly reduces the intensity of anxiety because the individual no longer feels overwhelmed by unstructured thoughts. In Islamic spirituality, thinking also helps strengthen the belief that everything happens according to God's destiny and will. This is emphasized in His Word:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ

“No calamity befalls except with Allah's permission; and whoever believes in Allah, Allah will surely guide his heart.”(QS. At-Taghabun: 11)

This verse demonstrates that thinking accompanied by faith will lead the heart to tranquility. Individuals no longer view stressors as absolute threats, but instead recognize that every difficulty contains wisdom and room for growth. This perspective makes psychological responses more stable and mature. Thinking requires individuals to practice self-reflection, assessing the causes of anxiety, understanding negative thought patterns, and seeking new, more constructive perspectives. This process is similar to cognitive restructuring in cognitive-behavioral therapy, but with a spiritual dimension that strengthens faith and the meaning of life. In this light, thinking not only corrects logic but also strengthens an individual's spiritual orientation. The role of thinking as a coping mechanism is strengthened when combined with dhikr (remembrance of God). While

dhikr calms the heart, thinking clarifies the mind. Dhikr calms emotional turmoil, while thinking rationally unravels the root causes of anxiety. These two elements work synergistically to form a more complete psycho-spiritual defense mechanism [7].

3.3 Integration of Dhikr and Thought as a Holistic Coping Mechanism for Facing Anxiety

The integration of dhikr (remembrance of God) and fiqh (thought) is a crucial concept in Islamic psychology, as both practices combine spiritual and rational strengths in a balanced way. Facing anxiety requires not only emotional calm but also clarity of thought. Dhikr operates in the affective and spiritual realms, while thought operates in the cognitive realm. When the two are combined, a holistic, comprehensive, and more effective coping mechanism is formed in responding to complex anxiety symptoms. Dhikr provides immediate and profound inner peace. This effect is crucial as a first step in reducing emotional tension, which is often the primary trigger of anxiety. However, calmness alone is not enough; individuals still need reflective thinking skills to understand the root of the problem, interpret the situation proportionately, and determine appropriate resolution steps. This is where the role of fiqh (thought) becomes complementary to dhikr [5].

This integration is emphasized in the Qur'an through the pairing of these two activities in one series of worship. Allah says:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“(Namely) those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth.” (QS. Ali Imran: 191)

This verse clearly illustrates that ideally, a believer should not only fill his soul with dhikr but also use his mind to think and reflect on the realities of life. The combination of the two creates a psycho-spiritual balance that is highly relevant in dealing with anxiety.

From a contemporary psychological perspective, this integration aligns with the bio-psycho-social approach, which emphasizes the importance of balancing emotions, thoughts, and behavior. Dhikr activates the body's relaxation system, slowing the heart rate and reducing stress hormones. Meanwhile, thought helps organize information, reduce cognitive distortions, and facilitate an objective assessment of threats. The synergy between the two creates a more stable adaptive response, enabling individuals to face stressors without becoming trapped in a cycle of anxiety [4].

The integration of dhikr and thought provides a framework for meaning-making for individuals. Many studies show that anxiety often worsens conditions when someone loses direction in life, loses control, or feels meaningless [8]. Dhikr fosters a sense of dependence on God, while thought guides individuals to understand the wisdom, cause, and purpose of every event. Awareness that everything happens according to God's will makes individuals more able to accept circumstances without giving up or becoming discouraged. This is in accordance with God's word:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“Indeed, with difficulty there is ease.” (QS. Al-Insyirah: 6)

This verse emphasizes that every difficulty is always accompanied by an opportunity for resolution. Integrating dhikr and thought strengthens this belief, preventing individuals from being easily swept away by excessive fear. Practical implications: Someone experiencing anxiety can begin coping by reciting dhikr to calm their emotional system, then continue with rational thought processes to analyze the root of the problem, anticipate solutions, and plan actions. For example, a student anxious about an exam can improve their emotional state by first reciting dhikr. Once calm, they engage in cognitive reflection to develop learning

strategies, identify weaknesses, and plan concrete steps [9].

The combination of the two not only relieves anxiety but also increases adaptability and productivity. The integration of dhikr and thought is a value-rich, comprehensive, spiritual-cognitive coping mechanism. This approach is not only effective in addressing anxiety individually but can also be applied in counseling, mental education, and Islamic spiritual therapy. Simultaneously strengthening the inner and rational aspects makes individuals more resilient, calmer, and better prepared to face the challenges of life [8].

3.4 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Dhikr-Fikir Integration as a Coping Strategy for Anxiety Symptoms

Evaluating the effectiveness of integrating dhikr and thought as a coping strategy for anxiety requires observing three main indicators: changes in physiological responses, emotional stability, and consistency of reflective behavior. This approach examines how spiritual practices (dhikr) combined with cognitive activities (thinking) actually influence the reduction of anxiety symptoms in both the short and long term [10].

Physiologically, dhikr has been shown to reduce muscle tension, slow the heart rate, and stabilize breathing. This response aligns with the relaxation mechanism that stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. When someone repeats certain phrases, such as *subhanallah*, *alhamdulillah*, or "There is no god but Allah," the body enters a state of calm that minimizes fight-or-flight activation. This significantly reduces anxiety symptoms such as restlessness, shortness of breath, and heart palpitations. In this context, dhikr functions as an emotion-focused coping method that directly intervenes with psychological tension [3].

Then, from an emotional and cognitive perspective, the combination of dhikr and thought helps change how a person

interprets the source of their anxiety. Thought in this context involves in-depth reasoning processes such as self-evaluation, strengthening the meaning of *tawakkul* (relief in trust), and identifying irrational thought patterns that exacerbate anxiety. When an individual reflects on their own limitations and the greatness of Allah, they develop a more adaptive cognitive reframing. This perspective reinforces the belief that problems can be addressed gradually and do not require excessive imagining. This aligns with Allah's command not to be overcome by fear and sadness, as stated in His Word:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Remember, only by remembering Allah will the heart be at peace." (QS. Ar-Ra'd: 28)

This verse provides the basis for the belief that dhikr (remembrance of God) functions as a calming force, while thought (*fikir*) keeps the mind focused and prevents it from becoming lost in disproportionate anxiety. Behaviorally, the integration of dhikr and thought appears to encourage more productive action in facing problems. Once emotionally stable, individuals are better able to engage in problem-focused coping, such as developing plans, seeking social support, or improving lifestyles. Spirituality not only soothes but also motivates constructive action [10]. This aligns with the Islamic principle that serenity must be accompanied by concrete effort, as stated in the Prophet's prayer: "Tie your camel, then put your trust in Allah." This means that spiritual belief does not replace action, but rather strengthens it.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of this integration also looked at the consistency of practice. Individuals who regularly practice dhikr and thought practice exhibit greater emotional stability than those who do so only occasionally. Repeated patterns of worship create stronger emotional regulation habits, as cognitive and emotional structures are formed through repetition (Purnama, 2016). This demonstrates that dhikr and thought integration is not merely a temporary technique but a sustainable coping

mechanism that maintains mental balance across various situations. Evaluations indicate that dhikr and thought integration effectively reduces anxiety symptoms through three pathways: physiological, emotional, and behavioral. Spiritual practices calm the body's systems, while reflective thinking activities strengthen rationality and enhance life's meaning. Both form a comprehensive and relevant coping strategy for individuals facing psychological stress in the modern era [9].

4. CONCLUSION

The integration of dhikr and thinking as a coping mechanism for dealing with anxiety symptoms demonstrates that spiritual and cognitive approaches can work synergistically to reduce psychological distress. Dhikr functions as an emotional stabilizer and physiological calmer, reducing the body's response to stress, while thinking helps direct the thought process to be more rational, realistic, and problem-solving oriented. The combination of the two creates an anxiety management mechanism that not only reduces immediate symptoms but also strengthens an individual's mental resilience in the long term.

Understanding the verses of the Quran and the values of monotheism reinforces the presence of meaning, hope, and the belief that every problem can be faced with calm and planning. This practice aligns with Allah's word in Surah Ar-Ra'd: 28, which emphasizes that peace of mind is rooted in constant remembrance of Him. The integration of dhikr and thought not only provides therapeutic effects emotionally but also fosters an adaptive mindset when facing life's pressures.

The results of the discussion indicate that this strategy is effective through three main pathways: reducing physiological activation, regulating emotions, and developing more constructive behaviors. Individuals who consistently practice it tend to have better self-control, a calmer mindset, and an increased ability to manage problems. Therefore, the integration of dhikr and thought can be viewed as a relevant holistic approach to strengthening mental health, particularly in the context of the increasing anxiety experienced by modern society. This approach is worthy of consideration as a supporting intervention in the fields of psychology, counseling, and spiritual-based character education.

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