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ISLAMIC GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FOR ENHANCING RELIGIOUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG OLDER ADULTS: A COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTION AT MUHAMMADIYAH SENIOR CARE, PROBOLINGGO, INDONESIA

Benny Prasetiya[1], Ahsan Hakim[2]
[1,2] Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo
*prasetiyabenny@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling to enhance the religious and psychological well-being of older adults at Muhammadiyah Senior Care (MSC), Probolinggo, Indonesia. The study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach combined with a one-group pretest-posttest evaluation. All 17 MSC residents participated through total sampling. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, an Islamic-context religious well-being questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, reflection sessions, and facilitator field notes. The intervention followed four PAR stages: participatory assessment, action planning, implementation, and reflection and evaluation. Activities included Islamic guidance, reflective religious discussions, individual and group counseling, Qur'anic learning, guided dhikr and prayer reflection, discussions of meaning in life and ageing, coping with loss and loneliness, interpersonal support, and preparation for later life. The findings indicate positive changes in religious engagement, enthusiasm for activities, Qur'anic learning, participation in worship, emotional expression, interpersonal reflection, and perceptions of ageing. The participatory approach and individualized attention made the counseling more contextual and responsive to participants' needs. The study concludes that Islamic Guidance and Counseling has potential as a culturally embedded psychosocial intervention integrating religious, psychological, social, and existential dimensions of well-being among older adults in institutional care.
Keyword : *Islamic Guidance and Counseling; religious well-being; psychological well-being; older adults; Participatory Action Research*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis penerapan *Islamic Guidance and Counseling* dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan religius dan psikologis lanjut usia di Muhammadiyah Senior Care (MSC), Probolinggo, Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) yang dipadukan dengan evaluasi *one-group pretest-posttest*. Seluruh 17 penghuni MSC dilibatkan melalui *total sampling*. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner terstruktur, WHO-5 Well-Being Index, kuesioner kesejahteraan religius yang diadaptasi dalam konteks Islam, wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi partisipatif, sesi refleksi, dan catatan lapangan fasilitator. Intervensi dilaksanakan melalui empat tahap PAR, yaitu asesmen partisipatif, perencanaan tindakan, implementasi, serta refleksi dan evaluasi. Kegiatan mencakup bimbingan keislaman, diskusi reflektif, konseling individual dan kelompok, pembelajaran Al-Qur'an, dzikir dan refleksi doa, pembahasan makna hidup dan masa tua, pengelolaan kehilangan dan kesepian, dukungan interpersonal, serta persiapan kehidupan akhir. Hasil menunjukkan perubahan positif pada keterlibatan keagamaan, antusiasme mengikuti kegiatan, kemampuan membaca Al-Qur'an, partisipasi dalam ibadah, ekspresi emosional, refleksi perilaku interpersonal, dan pemaknaan terhadap masa tua. Pendekatan partisipatif dan perhatian individual membuat bimbingan lebih kontekstual serta responsif terhadap kebutuhan peserta. Temuan ini memperlihatkan bahwa layanan dialogis memperkuat ketenangan, harapan, keterhubungan sosial, dan kesiapan spiritual peserta secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa *Islamic Guidance and Counseling* berpotensi menjadi intervensi psikososial berbasis budaya yang mengintegrasikan kesejahteraan religius, psikologis, sosial, dan makna kehidupan pada lanjut usia.
Kata kunci: *Islamic Guidance and Counseling*; kesejahteraan religius; kesejahteraan psikologis; lanjut usia; *Participatory Action Research*

INTRODUCTION

Population ageing has become an increasingly important global concern because longer life expectancy is accompanied by complex psychological, social, and existential challenges that cannot be addressed adequately through physical health services alone (Nocentini et al., 2022). Depression, loneliness, social isolation, anxiety, and diminished meaning in life are among the psychosocial challenges that may compromise the well-being of older adults, particularly those living in residential or institutional care settings (Hu et al., 2022; Rusciano et al., 2022). Within this context, spirituality and religiosity have increasingly been recognized as potentially important resources for helping older adults interpret ageing, cope with loss, manage existential concerns, and maintain psychological equilibrium (Coelho-Júnior et al., 2022). Religious and spiritual engagement may provide older adults with meaning, social connectedness, emotional regulation, and a sense of belonging, thereby positioning religious well-being as an important dimension of healthy ageing (Buja et al., 2024). For Muslim older adults, these dimensions may be particularly meaningful because religious beliefs and practices can become integrated into everyday processes of coping, interpersonal relationships, moral reflection, and preparation for later life (Daher-Nashif et al., 2021). Consequently, Islamic guidance and counseling has the potential to function not merely as religious instruction but as a culturally congruent psychosocial resource that supports both religious and psychological well-being among older adults.

Recent international evidence provides substantial support for the relationship between religiosity, spirituality, and later-life psychological outcomes. A systematic review and meta-analysis involving 102 studies and 79,918 older adults found that higher levels of religiosity and spirituality were associated with lower anxiety and depressive symptoms and with greater life satisfaction, meaning in life, social relationships, and psychological well-being (Coelho-Júnior et al., 2022). Evidence from Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic similarly demonstrated that spiritual well-being and religious coping were closely connected with older adults' experiences of death anxiety, highlighting the potential protective role of religion when individuals face existential uncertainty (Rababa et al., 2021). Research among older adults in Turkey has further shown that religious coping is related to the adaptation difficulties experienced during ageing, suggesting that religious coping can become an important mechanism through which older adults respond to developmental transitions (Kulakçı-Altıntaş & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2020). In the United States, longitudinal evidence has also indicated that religious participation is associated with subsequent psychological outcomes, reinforcing the relevance of religious engagement to mental health in later life (Hua, 2025). More directly relevant to intervention research, a systematic review and meta-analysis of 12 studies involving Iranian older adults demonstrated that religious-spiritual education and care significantly improved quality of life, indicating that structured spiritual interventions can move beyond correlation toward measurable changes in older adults' well-being (Faraji et al., 2023).

Despite these advances, an important research gap remains. Much of the international literature has established associations between religiosity or spirituality and mental health, but comparatively fewer studies have examined structured Islamic guidance and counseling as a deliberately designed, community-based intervention that simultaneously targets religious well-being and psychological well-being among older adults (Coelho-Júnior et al., 2022; Faraji et al., 2023). Existing studies have also frequently focused on religious attendance, religious coping, spiritual care, or general spiritual education rather than on a systematic counseling process in which religious meaning, emotional concerns, interpersonal relationships, worship practices, and existential issues are addressed within an integrated framework (Daher-Nashif et al., 2021; Ilmi et al., 2024). This distinction is important because religious participation does not automatically constitute counseling, and religious coping may have different consequences depending on whether it is adaptive, supportive, or associated with negative religious interpretations (Coelho-Júnior et al., 2022). Furthermore, existing intervention evidence is geographically concentrated in particular cultural settings, especially Iran and other Middle Eastern contexts, while evidence concerning Islamic counseling within Southeast Asian older-adult care institutions remains comparatively limited (Faraji et al., 2023; Daher-Nashif et al., 2021). The gap is therefore not simply a lack of studies on religion and ageing, but a lack of empirically grounded, culturally situated intervention models that connect Islamic counseling processes with measurable religious and psychological outcomes among institutionalized older adults.

The present study addresses this gap by developing and implementing Islamic Guidance and Counseling as a community-based intervention at Muhammadiyah Senior Care, Probolinggo, Indonesia, with religious well-being and psychological well-being positioned as complementary outcomes rather than isolated constructs. This approach is consistent with contemporary evidence showing that interventions for older adults are more promising when they address multiple dimensions of social, emotional, and psychological functioning rather than relying on a single therapeutic component (Hoang et al., 2022). The novelty lies operationally in integrating Islamic spiritual resources—such as religious reflection, worship-oriented guidance, meaning-making, coping with ageing and loss, interpersonal connectedness, and compassionate counseling—into a structured community-based counseling process designed specifically for older adults. This orientation also responds to evidence that Islamic beliefs and texts can shape how Muslim families and communities understand ageing, mental health, caregiving, and dignity in later life (Daher-Nashif et al., 2021). Rather than treating religiosity as a static personal characteristic, the study conceptualizes religious well-being as an outcome that can potentially be strengthened through intentional counseling while simultaneously supporting psychological well-being. Such an intervention-oriented and culturally embedded perspective offers a more practically meaningful contribution to the growing literature on spirituality, ageing, and mental health.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how Islamic Guidance and Counseling can enhance religious and psychological well-being among older adults participating in Muhammadiyah Senior Care, Probolinggo, Indonesia, while generating empirical evidence for culturally responsive community-based approaches to later-life well-being. The study is guided by the following research question: How does Islamic Guidance and Counseling enhance the religious and psychological well-being of older adults at Muhammadiyah Senior Care, Probolinggo, Indonesia? The question is particularly important because existing evidence indicates that religious-spiritual interventions can improve quality of life, while broader evidence associates religiosity and spirituality with lower psychological distress and greater meaning and well-being among older adults (Faraji et al., 2023; Coelho-Júnior et al., 2022). By examining these processes within an Indonesian Muhammadiyah-based elderly care context, the study seeks to contribute evidence that connects international scholarship on spirituality and ageing with an Islamic counseling model rooted in the social and religious realities of Muslim older adults.

METHOD

This community-engagement study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach combined with a one-group pretest–posttest evaluation to examine changes in religious and psychological well-being following an Islamic Guidance and Counseling intervention among older adults. PAR was selected because it positions older adults not merely as research subjects but as active participants in identifying needs, implementing actions, reflecting on experiences, and developing contextually meaningful solutions. Evidence from gerontological research indicates that PAR can facilitate co-learning, community participation, empowerment, and social transformation among older adults (Corrado et al., 2020).

The intervention was conducted at Muhammadiyah Senior Care (MSC), Jalan Sukarno Hatta No. 94B, Probolinggo, Indonesia, a residential care setting for older adults, involving all 17 residents available during the intervention period. Total sampling was employed because the accessible population consisted of only 17 residents, thereby allowing the intervention and evaluation to involve the entire eligible population rather than selecting a subsample. Community-based participation of older adults is particularly appropriate for interventions intended to address psychosocial and spiritual dimensions of later life (Hand et al., 2024).

Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered before and after the intervention, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, reflection sessions, and facilitator field notes. Psychological well-being was assessed using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, a brief measure of subjective psychological well-being that has demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties across culturally diverse populations (Perera et al., 2020). Religious well-being was assessed using a structured religious-well-being questionnaire adapted to the Islamic context, covering perceived closeness to God, meaning derived from

religious belief, religious coping, worship engagement, and perceived spiritual peace; this operationalization was informed by evidence that religious-spiritual interventions can improve well-being and quality of life among older adults (Faraji et al., 2023). Before administration, the adapted instrument was reviewed for language clarity and cultural appropriateness by experts in Islamic counseling and psychology, while participants were assisted when visual, literacy, or comprehension difficulties occurred.

The PAR process consisted of four iterative stages**:** (1) participatory assessment, (2) action planning, (3) implementation, and (4) reflection and evaluation. The initial assessment identified participants' religious, emotional, interpersonal, and existential concerns through observation and group discussion, after which the facilitators and residents jointly formulated the counseling activities. The intervention incorporated Islamic guidance, reflective religious discussion, individual and group counseling, Qur'anic and prophetic meaning-making, guided dhikr and prayer reflection, discussion of ageing and life purpose, coping with loss and loneliness, interpersonal support, and positive preparation for later life. This intervention structure was informed by evidence that spiritual-based interventions can improve spiritual well-being and life satisfaction while reducing depressive symptoms and perceived stress among older adults (Al-Nasa'h, 2022). Following the intervention, participants engaged in collective reflection to identify perceived changes, remaining difficulties, and recommendations for subsequent activities, consistent with the reflective and transformative principles of PAR (Corrado et al., 2020).

Impact and Changes Following the Islamic Guidance and Counseling Intervention

The implementation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling at Muhammadiyah Senior Care (MSC), Probolinggo, generated observable changes in the religious, psychological, and interpersonal experiences of the older adults. The intervention was implemented through a participatory approach that recognized older adults as active participants rather than passive recipients of religious instruction. The counseling process was adapted to participants' educational backgrounds, cognitive capacities, emotional conditions, and everyday religious experiences. Rather than imposing a uniform instructional model, facilitators continuously adjusted the content and communication strategies according to participants' responses, questions, and expressed needs. This participatory orientation was particularly important because the residents demonstrated different levels of religious knowledge and different abilities to engage with Qur'anic reading and religious discussion.

The first major change concerned the effectiveness of group-based Islamic spiritual guidance**.** Group sessions provided a supportive interpersonal environment in which participants could discuss religious issues, ask questions, share experiences, and reflect on their lives collectively. The principal topics included *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlak*, and the history and exemplary character of the Prophet and other prophets. Religious materials were presented using simple language and concrete examples that could be understood by older participants

with relatively limited formal educational backgrounds. The facilitators also employed an informal and warm communication style, including appropriate humor, to reduce psychological distance and prevent participants from experiencing religious sessions as rigid or overly instructional. This approach created a more comfortable learning atmosphere and encouraged participants to participate actively in discussion. The observed enthusiasm during the sessions suggests that religious guidance became not only a source of religious knowledge but also a social space through which older adults could experience attention, companionship, and emotional acceptance.

The second change emerged through **individual Islamic guidance and counseling**, particularly in Qur'anic reading and question-and-answer sessions. Individual sessions allowed facilitators to respond directly to participants' specific needs and learning difficulties. In Qur'anic learning, the facilitator modeled the pronunciation of verses or words and invited each participant to repeat the reading directly. This face-to-face process enabled more careful correction of *makhraj* and *tajwid* and provided participants with immediate feedback. Such individualized assistance was particularly relevant for residents who had not previously acquired basic Qur'anic literacy or who experienced difficulty following a rapid instructional pace. The individual counseling component also provided a psychologically safer setting in which participants could express questions that they might hesitate to raise in a group. Participants were given broad opportunities to ask questions concerning religious practice, moral behavior, interpersonal relationships, ageing, and other issues relevant to their everyday lives. The absence of rigid boundaries around questions enabled counseling to respond to actual concerns emerging from participants rather than relying exclusively on predetermined instructional materials.

The third area of change was related to religious and existential well-being. The *aqidah*-oriented sessions emphasized the attributes of Allah as *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*, thereby presenting religious belief as a source of hope, security, and emotional reassurance rather than fear. Discussions concerning faith, divine mercy, destiny, and preparation for the hereafter encouraged participants to reinterpret old age as a meaningful stage of life rather than merely a period characterized by physical decline. The intervention also emphasized worship practices,

particularly prayer, remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), fasting, and congregational prayer. These activities provided opportunities for participants to transform religious knowledge into everyday religious practice. In this respect, the intervention sought to strengthen not only cognitive understanding of religious teachings but also participants' perceived closeness to God, religious meaning, and sense of spiritual preparedness for later life.

The fourth area of change involved **interpersonal behavior and social harmony among residents**. Before and during the intervention, interpersonal disagreements and verbal conflicts occasionally emerged among residents. Consequently, *akhlak* became an important counseling theme, emphasizing mutual respect, forgiveness, restraint from mocking or gossiping, compassion, and peaceful coexistence. Religious discussion was connected directly to situations experienced by participants in their daily interactions. For example, questions concerning the religious status of mocking and gossiping became opportunities to discuss ethical responsibility, forgiveness, emotional self-control, and reconciliation. This contextualization enabled religious teachings to function as practical resources for managing interpersonal tensions rather than remaining abstract theological concepts. The resulting discussions encouraged participants to reflect on their own behavior and consider more constructive ways of responding to interpersonal disagreements.

The fifth change concerned the participants' **psychological experience of ageing and preparation for later life**. Islamic guidance was deliberately framed in a manner that emphasized dignity, acceptance, hope, gratitude, and meaningful preparation for the future. Participants were encouraged to understand old age not as a stage of abandonment or helplessness but as an opportunity to deepen spiritual awareness and strengthen relationships with God and others. Discussions about death were consequently approached through compassion and religious hope rather than through fear. The emphasis on divine mercy, worship, forgiveness, and *husnul khatimah* provided participants with a framework for understanding mortality as part of the human life course. This religious meaning-making process is particularly important in later life because existential concerns can become increasingly salient as individuals experience physical decline, loss of significant others, and awareness of mortality.

Overall, the PAR process demonstrated that Islamic Guidance and Counseling at MSC was most effective when religious intervention was delivered through **participation, individualized attention, contextualized religious content, and emotionally supportive communication**. The intervention did not treat older adults as a homogeneous group; instead, facilitators responded to differences in religious literacy, educational background, learning capacity, and personal concerns. The participants' enthusiasm, willingness to ask questions, engagement in Qur'anic learning, participation in religious activities, and reflection on interpersonal behavior constituted important qualitative indicators of change. These findings suggest that Islamic counseling in an elderly-care setting should extend beyond conventional

religious teaching and incorporate psychological support, interpersonal mediation, existential meaning-making, and opportunities for social connectedness.

From the perspective of Participatory Action Research, the principal impact of the program was therefore not limited to the acquisition of religious knowledge. The intervention created an iterative process in which participants' experiences generated questions, questions informed counseling content, counseling encouraged reflection, and reflection contributed to subsequent behavioral and relational changes. Islamic Guidance and Counseling consequently functioned as a culturally and religiously congruent psychosocial intervention that connected **religious well-being with psychological and social well-being**. The experience at Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo indicates the potential of community-based Islamic counseling to support older adults in experiencing later life with greater religious meaning, emotional reassurance, interpersonal harmony, and a stronger sense of preparedness for the future.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this community-based intervention indicate that Islamic Guidance and Counseling at Muhammadiyah Senior Care (MSC), Probolinggo, contributed to changes in the religious, psychological, and interpersonal experiences of older adults. The changes observed in participants' enthusiasm for religious activities, willingness to ask questions, engagement in Qur'anic learning, participation in congregational worship, and reflection on interpersonal behavior suggest that the intervention operated through more than the transfer of religious knowledge. Rather, it created a process of meaning-making, emotional support, social interaction, and religious engagement. This interpretation is consistent with the systematic review and meta-analysis of Coelho-Júnior et al. (2022), which found that religiosity and spirituality among older adults were associated with lower anxiety and depressive symptoms and with greater life satisfaction, meaning in life, social relationships, and psychological well-being. Thus, the changes observed at MSC can be interpreted within a broader theoretical understanding in which religion functions as a psychological and social resource in later life rather than merely as a domain of religious knowledge.

From the perspective of **Pargament's theory of religious coping**, the findings suggest that Islamic Guidance and Counseling provided participants with a framework for interpreting and responding to challenges associated with ageing. Religious coping theory proposes that individuals use religious beliefs, practices, and relationships to understand stressful circumstances and construct meaning from difficult experiences. This mechanism is particularly relevant to older adults who may encounter declining physical capacity, loneliness, loss of significant others, dependency, and awareness of mortality. In the MSC intervention, concepts such as divine mercy, *tawakkul*, forgiveness, prayer, *dhikr*, and preparation for the hereafter offered participants religiously meaningful ways to interpret these experiences. Importantly, the counseling did not emphasize fear of death; instead, discussions about ageing

and mortality were framed through God's mercy, repentance, worship, and *husnul khatimah*. This orientation potentially transformed existential anxiety into a more constructive form of religious meaning-making. Contemporary evidence supports this interpretation, as religious and spiritual resources have been associated with psychological well-being and better mental-health outcomes among older adults.

The findings can also be interpreted through **Park's meaning-making perspective**, which conceptualizes religion as an important meaning system through which individuals reconcile stressful experiences with broader beliefs, values, and purposes. The intervention's emphasis on *aqidah* was particularly relevant because participants were encouraged to understand old age not simply as a period of physical decline but as a meaningful stage of human development. The explanation of Allah's attributes as *Ar-Rahman* and *Ar-Rahim*, for example, provided an interpretive framework through which participants could understand vulnerability and mortality without necessarily experiencing them as threats to personal worth. This is consistent with research showing that meaning in life is positively related to life satisfaction and psychological adjustment and that meaning can function as an important mechanism linking life circumstances with well-being. In this sense, Islamic counseling worked by reconstructing the meaning of ageing: participants were not positioned merely as elderly individuals waiting for the end of life, but as individuals who still possess opportunities for worship, learning, interpersonal contribution, forgiveness, and spiritual growth.

The results are further relevant to **Erikson's psychosocial theory of development**, particularly the developmental tension between integrity and despair in later adulthood. Although Erikson's original formulation predates the contemporary literature used in this article, its conceptual relevance remains substantial. The elderly person's psychological task involves integrating life experiences into a coherent sense of meaning and acceptance rather than becoming overwhelmed by regret, loss, or fear of death. The Islamic counseling activities provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their lives, discuss religious values, ask questions about death and the hereafter, and identify meaningful ways to use their remaining years. Religious narratives concerning the Prophet and exemplary figures also provided models through which participants could evaluate their own lives and identify possibilities for continued moral and spiritual development. Consequently, the intervention can be understood as facilitating movement toward psychological integrity by helping participants interpret their life histories within a coherent Islamic worldview.

The **theory of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff** also provides an important framework for interpreting the findings. Psychological well-being is not restricted to the absence of psychological distress but encompasses dimensions such as purpose in life, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, and personal growth. Several components of the MSC intervention directly correspond to these dimensions. The discussion of religious purpose and preparation for the hereafter relates to purpose in life; group

religious activities and reconciliation relate to positive relations; individual counseling creates opportunities for self-reflection and self-acceptance; and Qur'anic learning and religious practice provide opportunities for personal growth. Therefore, the observed changes in participants' religious engagement should not be interpreted as an isolated religious outcome. They may represent a broader process through which religious resources support several dimensions of psychological functioning.

The findings concerning **interpersonal conflict and moral behavior** are particularly important when interpreted through socioemotional theories of ageing. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory proposes that as people perceive their remaining lifetime as increasingly limited, emotionally meaningful relationships and experiences become increasingly important. Contemporary research applying this theoretical perspective has demonstrated the importance of social satisfaction and close social relationships for successful ageing. At MSC, the *akhlak* component of counseling directly addressed interpersonal problems such as mocking, gossiping, disagreement, and emotional conflict. Rather than treating these conflicts simply as behavioral violations, the counseling reframed them as opportunities for moral reflection, forgiveness, empathy, and maintaining harmonious relationships. The intervention therefore created conditions in which religious values and socioemotional needs converged: participants were encouraged to preserve emotionally meaningful relationships while simultaneously strengthening their religious commitment.

The **individual counseling component** can also be explained through principles of person-centered and developmental counseling. Older adults differ considerably in educational background, religious literacy, cognitive ability, emotional needs, and life history. Consequently, a uniform group-based intervention may not adequately respond to individual differences. The face-to-face Qur'anic learning process at MSC enabled the facilitator to adjust the pace of instruction according to each participant's ability. Participants who had difficulty recognizing Arabic letters or following rapid recitation received additional individualized support. Similarly, the open question-and-answer sessions provided psychological space for participants to express concerns without fear of judgment. This individualized process is consistent with the central principle of culturally responsive helping: effective intervention should be adapted to the individual's developmental, social, cultural, and belief context rather than imposing a standardized intervention without contextual modification.

The **Islamic cultural framework** is another important explanation for the observed changes. Daher-Nashif et al. (2021) demonstrated that Islamic texts, beliefs, and religious practices can shape how Muslim communities understand ageing, mental health, caregiving, and responses to psychological difficulties. Their findings show that religious texts can become translated into practical caregiving and coping practices, particularly through compassion, respect for older adults, Qur'anic recitation, prayer, and religiously informed interpretations of ageing and illness. This theoretical-cultural perspective is highly relevant to MSC because

Islamic counseling was not introduced as an external psychological technique detached from participants' everyday lives. Instead, it used a symbolic and religious language that was already meaningful to the participants. The intervention therefore achieved cultural congruence by connecting psychological support with familiar Islamic beliefs and practices.

The **Participatory Action Research perspective** provides another important interpretation of the findings. PAR emphasizes participation, co-learning, reflection, and transformation rather than positioning community members merely as passive recipients of an intervention. However, Corrado et al. (2020), in their critical synthesis of PAR with older adults, warned that many studies claiming to use PAR still position older adults primarily as research participants rather than equitable partners. In the present intervention, the strongest PAR element emerged from the way participants' questions and everyday problems influenced the counseling content. Religious material was not rigidly predetermined; rather, questions raised by residents became entry points for broader discussions about worship, morality, interpersonal relationships, ageing, and death. This process demonstrates an important transition from a teacher-centered model toward a participatory model in which participants' lived experiences help determine the direction of the intervention.

The findings also support the proposition that **religious well-being and psychological well-being should not be treated as completely separate outcomes**. The religious activities implemented at MSC—Qur'anic learning, prayer, *dhikr*, religious reflection, discussion of faith, and Islamic moral guidance—simultaneously created opportunities for emotional regulation, social interaction, meaning construction, and interpersonal support. Coelho-Júnior et al. (2022) similarly reported positive relationships between religiosity/spirituality and psychological well-being, social relationships, life satisfaction, and meaning in life among older adults. Research among chronically ill older adults has also indicated that spirituality and resilience can play important roles in the relationship between anxiety and life satisfaction. Therefore, the intervention's impact can be conceptualized as a multidimensional process in which religious engagement provides psychological and social resources that help older adults adapt to the developmental challenges of later life.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. The observed changes represent evidence of **community-level and experiential transformation**, but they should not automatically be interpreted as definitive causal evidence that Islamic counseling produced statistically significant improvements unless supported by pretest-posttest quantitative data. The sample consisted of the 17 residents of MSC, making total participation possible but limiting the generalizability of the findings to older adults in other institutional or cultural settings. The strength of the intervention therefore lies primarily in its contextual depth, participatory character, cultural congruence, and integration of religious and psychological dimensions. Future studies should strengthen this evidence through longitudinal designs,

validated measures of religious and psychological well-being, larger multisite samples, and comparison groups.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Islamic Guidance and Counseling can be understood as a **culturally embedded psychosocial intervention for later life**. Its contribution does not lie merely in increasing participants' knowledge of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlak*, or Islamic history, but in transforming religious knowledge into psychological resources for meaning, emotional reassurance, interpersonal harmony, and preparation for later life. The intervention illustrates how psychological education, religious guidance, and participatory community practice can intersect in supporting older adults. In the context of Muhammadiyah Senior Care Probolinggo, Islamic counseling consequently became a medium through which participants could learn, reflect, interact, cope, and reconstruct the meaning of ageing within an Islamic worldview. This provides a theoretically grounded basis for considering Islamic Guidance and Counseling as a promising community-based approach to strengthening both religious and psychological well-being among Muslim older adults.

CONCLUSION

This community-based intervention demonstrates that Islamic Guidance and Counseling can provide a meaningful approach to strengthening the religious and psychological well-being of older adults at Muhammadiyah Senior Care, Probolinggo, Indonesia. The intervention showed that religious guidance becomes more meaningful when it is delivered through direct interaction, individualized attention, participatory discussion, and activities that are closely connected to the everyday experiences of older adults. The integration of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, *akhlak*, Qur'anic learning, religious reflection, and discussions concerning ageing and mortality enabled participants to engage with religion not only as a body of knowledge but also as a source of meaning, emotional reassurance, and interpersonal support.

The findings indicate that the religious dimension of ageing is closely connected with psychological and social dimensions. Discussions concerning Allah's mercy, prayer, *dhikr*, forgiveness, patience, and *husnul khatimah* provided participants with religious frameworks for understanding ageing, loss, interpersonal difficulties, and mortality. At the same time, group interaction and individual counseling created opportunities for social connectedness, self-reflection, emotional expression, and personal growth. These findings support the view that religious well-being and psychological well-being should be approached as interconnected dimensions of later-life development rather than as independent domains.

A distinctive contribution of this study is the application of **Participatory Action Research (PAR)** to an Islamic Guidance and Counseling intervention for older adults. Participants' questions, learning difficulties, interpersonal experiences, and religious concerns were incorporated into the intervention process, allowing the counseling content to develop in response to their lived experiences. This participatory process transformed religious guidance from a predominantly instructor-centered activity into a more dialogical and reflective form of

learning and counseling. The approach also demonstrates the importance of cultural and religious congruence when developing psychosocial interventions for Muslim older adults.

Despite these contributions, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study's limitations. The intervention involved all 17 residents of a single Muhammadiyah Senior Care facility, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized directly to older adults in different institutional, cultural, or religious settings. Furthermore, the absence of a control or comparison group limits causal interpretation of the observed changes. Future studies should therefore employ larger multisite samples, longitudinal follow-up, validated measures of religious and psychological well-being, and quasi-experimental or controlled designs to examine the sustainability and mechanisms of the intervention.

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