

Original Research Article

Reconceptualization of Sufi Psychotherapy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from Al-Ghazali's Perspective

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Abstract: Post-traumatic stress disorder for short, is a disorder involving the mind, soul, and spirit that creates a gap in social relationships. Patients suffering must receive attention, especially from Muslim individuals, as a social responsibility. The completeness of Islam is very important in terms of the mind and soul, placing both on the list of al-sarodiya *al-khams*, namely the demands of care and maintenance of al-'Aql and al-Nafs. This study, Al-Ghazali's perspective is a theory of the soul that is also included in the area of Sufism. Gaining an understanding of the indications and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in the soul, so that the reconceptualization of Sufi psychotherapy from Al-Ghazali's perspective Based on the results of the above research, Al-Ghazali's concept of the soul and Islamic education related to the concept of Sufi psychotherapy would be ideal if implemented in an integral educational program. This concept will produce a balance between mental education (spirituality and morality) and intellectuality, because basically Al-Ghazali's concepts.

Keywords: Post-Traumatic Disorder, Al Ghazali Sufi's Therapy.

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Sufism psychotherapy aims to provide spiritual and moral support to achieve balance between the physical and spiritual dimensions. It also aims to explore and develop essential human potential and guide individuals toward positive changes in their personality and work ethic. Furthermore, Sufism (Andrean :2025) psychotherapy focuses on improving the quality of faith and monotheism in daily life and deepening understanding of the relationship between the self and God through the perspective of psychology.

Through Sufism, al-Ghazali taught the importance of mastering and training the soul in order to attain the highest knowledge, which can only be experienced (Anjum :2025) through inner experience (dhauq). This knowledge is not acquired through theoretical learning, but through the radiance of Divine light that shines directly into the human heart when it has achieved perfect purity and clarity, like a mirror reflecting everything before it.

This study has produced a theoretical formulation and systematic application of Al-Ghazali's Sufi psychotherapy in the Middle Ages. Fourth, this study also aims to demonstrate the relevance of Al-Ghazali's Sufi psychotherapy to the concept of the soul, its theory, and its application in several therapy modules, which can serve as a representation of contemporary psychotherapy approaches.

Observing the phenomenon of post-traumatic (Liu, *et al.*, 2025) stress disorder and the development of psychotherapy in the medieval Islamic world, the researcher is interested in formulating a systematic and systematic approach to psychotherapy within the Islamic tradition, particularly in relation to the concept and application of Sufi psychotherapy developed by Al-Ghazali. Similarly, with psychotherapy, although a newly popularized discipline, this practice of healing the soul has actually been a part of Sufism since its inception. The urgency of Sufism psychotherapy is growing, given its relevance and significance in addressing the various problems faced by modern humans. This is because

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Sufism offers balance, provides inner peace, while simultaneously maintaining Islamic discipline.

Psychotherapy is an effort to treat mental and psychological symptoms that stem from various factors. The Quran itself addresses various forms of psychological pathology, and Sufism (Musto: 2025), as a practice that aims to utilize the Quran's teachings as a guide for life, has a profound connection to healing the human psyche.

II. OBJECTIVE

Research Question of this study was how does al-Ghazali's Sufi psychotherapy work on post-traumatic stress disorder? So the objective this study to find Al-Ghazali's Sufi psychotherapy work on post-traumatic stress disorder.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

When an individual feels hurt, it can have an extraordinary impact in the form of pain. Physically, the pain can be fleeting. However, psychologically, even mild physical pain can linger for years. This symptom (Feng; 2025) is often referred to as trauma. Trauma is defined as something more than an injury that can leave a lasting scar on an individual. The majority of people already understand the psychological definition of trauma. If a child experiences abuse from their parents, such as being hit, the child will always remember this treatment and situation as a very painful experience in their life. This is what is called trauma. Moreover, in today's world, where all aspects of life are available instantly and with various demands and pressures, individuals can easily experience stress and excessive anxiety. This can be due to environmental factors, work, organizational factors, or even the individual themselves. While most individuals will adapt and cope with these conditions, some individuals will experience several disorders, including acute stress disorder (acute stress disorder), which occurs after experiencing a stressful situation; post-traumatic (Hou, Lulu, Shi, Wendian.; 2025) stress disorder (post-traumatic stress disorder), which occurs after intense pressure and stress; and adjustment disorder, which occurs when stressors arise from changes in the individual's life circumstances.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a state of anxiety caused by a traumatic condition which is often experienced by war veterans or individuals affected by natural disasters and if it lasts more than six months, the individual can be diagnosed as experiencing it. It is an attack on a traumatic event, during which the individual feels fear, helplessness, and even horror. The victim then feels like they are experiencing this condition based on the memories and nightmares they experience. Victims typically exhibit self-limiting behaviors, which can be described as numbing their emotional responses (Ma, Hongfe, *et al.*, 2025). This can disrupt interpersonal

relationships. Victims often lack the ability to recall all aspects of the events that occurred to them.

They may consciously attempt to avoid emotional experiences, such as panic disorder, because the constant replay of emotions reminds them of the trauma they experienced. Victims often feel over aroused or experience sudden shock, leading to rapid anger.

Signs of post- traumatic stress disorder include the involuntary recurrence of traumatic events in the form of intrusive dreams or images that can lead to sudden breakthroughs in consciousness or flashbacks. This is often triggered by various substances that serve as reminders of the traumatic event. Other symptoms or signs include increased arousal, manifested by severe anxiety, irritability, insomnia or disturbed sleep patterns, and impaired concentration. Anxiety can have severe consequences when flashbacks occur.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a content analysis method, which addresses problems by analyzing data systematically and objectively. This method involves simplifying the data to make it more understandable and readable, making it easier for researchers to explore the meaning, patterns, and themes contained within the data. Content Analysis Steps (Neuendorf:2017). Data Preparation: Collect and organize content with the same theme that will become the research variables to be analyzed. Coding: categorize data that have the same meaning to unify and create a comprehensive understanding of the selected research variables.

Categories: unify all similar themes to narrow down the discussion and refine the data (such as the experience of 15 cases on Tabel 1). Analysis: Examine the data to find similar and connected patterns. Validation: ensure reliability by double-checking the coding process or using multiple coders. (Elo & Kyngäs: 2008) Refine the data and relate it to each other to strengthen and find the validity of the data. Reporting: Choose a form of data exploration in tables, graphs, or verbal expressions that align with the problem formulation. Present findings in a structured format, such as tables, graphs, or narrative (Krippendorff: 2018). Content analysis (Weber, 1990) is a research method used to analyze, categorize, and interpret communication content in a systematic and replicable manner. Content analysis involves breaking down material such as text and images into manageable data categories, often to identify underlying trends, patterns, or themes. Systematic Approach: Content analysis involves clearly defined rules and procedures to ensure consistency and replicability. Flexible Data Sources: Content analysis can analyze various types of content, including written documents from al-Ghazali's thought and related, indirectly related, legal texts. Dual Purpose: Content analysis serves both qualitative (understanding themes)

and quantitative (measuring frequency or volume) purposes.

V. FINDING

The finding of this research is that the treatment of post-traumatic disorder can follow Al Ghazali's Sufi approach (Al Gazali:2004).

Table 1: Psychological characteristics of post- traumatic stress disorder

Aspect	Y	Case
Decline in Interest	X	1,2
Negative emotional feelings	X	3,4
Difficulty expressing positive emotions	X	5,6,
Difficulty concentrating	X	7,8
Sensitivity to emotions (irritability)	X	9,10
Over-caution	X	14,15
Risky behavior	X	13,2

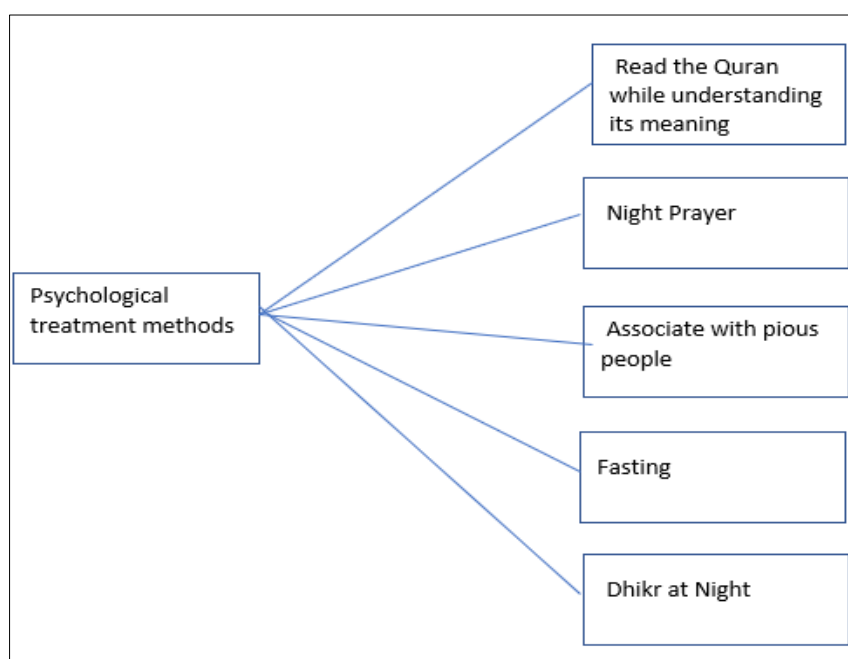


Figure 1: Al-Ghazali's Sufi psychotherapy work on post-traumatic stress disorder

Table 2: Al-Ghazali's sufi psychotherapy techniques

Al-ghazali's sufi psychotherapy techniques	Cases of post-traumatic stress disorder
<i>al-Qissah (Story telling)</i>	Serious accident (case 1)
<i>sama' (listening/music therapy)</i>	Accidents that result in physical or mental injury Case 2)
<i>Qiraah al-Quran (Bibliotherapy)</i>	Due to the behavior of other individuals (case 3)
<i>Ta'rif al-'uyub al-Nafsi (Identification of Self weaknesses)</i>	Natural disasters (case 4)
<i>Murabathah (Self perseverance)</i>	Mental injury (case 5)
<i>Murabathah (Self perseverance)</i>	Physical or sexual violence (case 6)
<i>Musharathah (Self provision)</i>	War and conflict (case 7 & case 8)
<i>Muraqabah (Self control)</i>	Abuse (case 9), including childhood abuse (case 10) or domestic violence (case 11)
<i>Mu'aqabah (Self Punishing)</i>	Death of someone close (case 12)
<i>Muhasabah (Self accounting)</i>	The experience of giving birth, such as losing a baby case 13)
<i>Mujahadah (Self striving)</i>	Torture (case 14)
<i>Mu'atabah (Self reproach)</i>	Frequent nightmares (case 15)

VI. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In carrying out behavioral improvements (tahzib al-akhlaq) to treat negative behavior, al-Ghazali

uses the mudhaddah bi al-dafah technique and the mudhaddah bi al-tadrij technique. Al-Ghazali's main idea about behavior modification is to involve the aspects of:

Knowledge, Psychological state and action. Table 2 Some cases can be more than one and can require more than one treatment.

According to al-Ghazali, these three patterns and processes are highly effective in modifying behavior (tahzib al-akhlaq). This is because by involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, individuals can recognize the negative aspects (Zabag, *et al.*, 2025) of bad behavior as well as the positive aspects and benefits of good behavior. Furthermore, they need to understand the importance of working to improve their behavior. Al-Ghazali often uses these three components together to modify negative behavior or character traits.

One of the techniques applied by al-Ghazali in modifying behavior is the Mudhaddah technique or counter-action, namely by providing an opposite response. The techniques are divided into two categories: first, Mudhaddah bi al-amal (Counter-action with action), and second, Mudhaddah bi al-ilmi (Counter-action with knowledge), along with their respective sub-techniques.

The above description demonstrates the importance of these three Sufi developments for humans to implement in their lives, improving themselves to become better and more complete individuals as the perfect human being. (Ribeiro & Lindsay: 2025).

The Muhasabah method is called a method of self-introspection, in the view of unphysical psychology (Zhang, *et al.*, 2025) as an endeavor which is an exercise that has the aim of encouraging humans to love Allah more in an effort to become better so that humans are able to achieve a more meaningful life. There are six stages in muhasabah according to al-Ghazali, including: first is mujualhah (setting conditions), second is muraqabah (supervising), third is muhasabah (self-introspection), fourth is mu'aqabah, fifth is mujahadah (being serious), and sixth is mu'atabah (self-reproach).

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of Sufistic psychotherapy is an effort to control (Andersson: 2025) the passion for anger, which always leads to evil with mujahadah, riyadhah, an attitude of piety, and refers to the benefits of being an individual who is khaira ummah. A heart that radiates God's inayah is a form of individual effort to empty the heart (takhalli) of anything that pollutes it until it becomes clean, then they try to perfect their repentance, especially regarding sins related to humans (haq adami). So a therapist for a client here has two functions: (1) doctor (from a scientific perspective), (2) religious scholar (from a spiritual perspective: worship). Recommendations for all of Al Ghazali's Sufi techniques can be applied alternately according to the cases experienced by a person.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declare no conflict of interest exists

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