

# **MUJAHADATUN NAFS AND RIYADHATUN NAFS PRACTICES IN FORMING THE RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**Abstract:** Social problems involving university students have shown that some Muslim students still have a low level of religious personality. Based on the study, low level of religious personality will drag Muslim individuals to be involved with negative behaviour, while Muslim individuals with good religious personality will give birth to a Muslim community with noble morals and high level of religious appreciation. According to al-Ghazali, self-improvement and the construction of religious personality can be done through the process of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification) by applying the concept of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) in daily practice. This study aims to look at the impact of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) practices on religious personality and the needs of these two concepts on forming religious personality among university students. Library research through content analysis method has been used in this study. Findings revealed that the concept of *mujahadatun nafs* (al-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) can contribute to behavioural changes, shaping of morals and religious personality among Muslim. The implementation of these two concepts is needed as a solution and recovery to moral malfunctions and social problems involving students in university. The findings can be used as a guide for the university in developing human development programmes especially in the moral, spiritual aspect and strengthening religious personalities of the students.

**Keywords:** *Mujahadatun Nafs, Riyadhatun Nafs*, religious personality, university students

## **1. Introduction**

This article discusses the conceptual practice of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) in the construction of religious personalities and the impact of these two concepts in forming the religious personality among university students. *Mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) means to fight or remove vile things from personal and spiritual, while *Riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) means to adorn personal and spiritual things with good things. The practice of these two concepts is very much liked by Allah SWT and Rasulullah SAW as mentioned in a hadith of Rasulullah SAW which means: "Indeed, Allah SWT loves things (morals) that are high and noble and Allah SWT hates things (morals) which are vile" (Narrated by at-Tabarani). This shows that the concept of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) are important to be used as a practice to produce individuals with noble personalities and in turn to produce a brilliant universal ummah in this world and the hereafter.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This study is a qualitative descriptive research using content analysis methods. This method is relevant to this study because it aims to describe the concept of religious personality and its relationship with the concept of *mujahadah al-nafs* and *riyadhah al-nafs*. It is also used to describe problems involving university students and the need of *riyadhah al-nafs* and *mujahadah al-nafs* practices in forming the religious personalities. This study applied qualitative inductive technique as data analysis and the methods for data analysis and interpretation are according to three steps: data reduction, data display and conclusive. The use of this method of analysis aims to provide a descriptive explanation of all the concepts that are conducted by the author in the research field.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 *Religious personality from the Islamic perspectives***

Personality refers to the Arabic word 'personality' or 'morality' possessed by a person (Nurwahidah Ab Ghani et al., 2013). According to Zulfahmi Syamsuddin and Wan Hasmah Wan Mamat (2014), individuals with good personalities refer to individuals with praiseworthy morals (mahmudah) but on the other hand individuals with bad personalities refer to individuals with vile morals (mazmumah). This study has also formulated the meaning of morality to the four main relationships, namely the moral relationship to God, the moral relationship to oneself, the moral relationship to society and also the moral relationship to the environment. Meanwhile, the psycho-spiritual personality model Ummatic Personality Inventory (UPI) (Nooraini Othman, 2011) has three main constructs namely worship, trust and knowledge. These three constructs are also seen focusing on the construction of worship to the relationship with Allah SWT, the construction of trust to the relationship between human beings and nature and the construction of knowledge to the relationship with oneself.

There are several studies related to religious personalities among students as well as the Muslim community in general. A study done by Mohamad Izzat Mohamad Ghani and Nik Yusri Musa (2018) found that the level of religious personality of mosque toilet users is at a moderate level. Therefore, this research suggests having a more comprehensive religious practice to generate a society that acts more rationally, first-class minded, high-level and rational in dealing with life's challenges. Syafiqah Solehah Ahmad and Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim (2018) found that teachers with religious personality of Islamic education background have significant relationship towards formation of student's morale. This was supported by research done by Solahuddin Abdul Hamid and Nor Azzuwal Kila (2018) which stated that individual's personality affects the efficiency of the work performed. Thus, the religious personality of Islamic education teachers is very influential in the success of the education presented. The same goes to a research done by Nooraini Othman (2009) which looks at the importance of academic balance as well as the religious personality of students to produce excellent human capital. Results found from previous researches shown that individuals with good religious personality will form or create excellent Muslim or Islamic society. Similarly, the practice of comprehensive Islamic teachings is very important and has a significant relationship in enhancing the religious personality of the Muslim community.

### **3.2 *The impact of religious practices on religious personalities***

Several studies have shown that strong religious practices of an individual are mainly the result of good relationship with Allah SWT, among human beings, nature as well as within themselves (Steven Eric Krauss et al., 2005; Nooraini Othman, 2011). There are also studies indicating that a high level of commitment and compliance to religious practice has a significant impact in developing an individual with good morals and religious standings. A study conducted by Mohd Khusyairie Marzuki et al. (2019) showed that a student who has been obediently following Islamic practices especially performing prayer is associated with having noble personality, as compared to those who are consistently neglecting it. This coincided with the findings conducted by Arnila Maya Putri (2019), which showed a significant link between performing prayer and good personal formation. Furthermore, a study by Mohamad Zaid

Mohd Zin et al. (2018) stated that one's professionalism is the result of appreciation of religious practices through *infiradi* practices and *ijtima'i* practices, which then form the formation of individual professionalism towards Allah SWT (habluminallah) and against society (habluminannas). This is in contrast to the research conducted by Mustafa Tekke et al. (2018) which found that the elements of trustworthiness are stronger in relation to the implementation of responsibilities among human beings than responsibilities towards Allah SWT. In essence, these studies showed that there is a significant impact to a person's religious practices and well being when there is a good connection and relationships with Allah SWT and between human beings.

### **3.3 The needs of forming religious personality among university students**

Efforts and focus towards shaping morals and religious personalities among students especially in higher learning institutions should be given serious attention by all parties. This is because they are the future leaders who will contribute to the development of human capital and subsequently take over the country's leadership. Hence, issues related to moral malfunctions and social problems involving students in higher learning institutions are being taken seriously. Although the statistics involving these uncalled behaviours is relatively small as compared to the overall number of students, it remains alarming and needs to be addressed accordingly (Zainuddin Abu et al., 2008). Based on several studies conducted, the results indicated a low level of religious personality and practices among the student population. The study by Khaidzir Ismail et al. (2010) among IPTA students showed alarming results when it found that 793 people or around 79.3 percent of the 1,000 respondents were potential and had a tendency to engage in substance abuse activities such as drugs and alcohol. Similarly, a report from Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan (AADK) in 2019 showed the continuous increase of annual cases involving highly educated individuals, with a total of 655 cases in 2019 as compared to 582 cases in 2018 (<https://www.adk.gov.my/orang-awam/statistik-dadah/>).

Besides drugs, university students were also found to be involved in other social problems. Based on the study by Nahriyatun Na'imah et al. (2016), problems involving university students are social emergency issues, gender discrimination, bullying and family conflicts. The issue of bullying among university students, for example, has led to the murder of a student of the National Defence University of Malaysia (NDUM) named Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain in 2017 (Siti Nurazlinee Azmi & Farah Mashitah Abdul Fatah, 2017) and to this day the murder case is still in court hearings. A study by Khairul Hamimah Mohd Jodi and Khairul (2006) found that university students were involved in free sex and illegal activities such as illegal racing and gambling. A study by Mazlin Mohamad Mokthar entitled Sex In Campus aimed to identify sexual habits and activities among students aged 18 to 25 from four public and private universities which showed that 50% of university students in Malaysia are sexually active (Farahwahida Mohd Yusof & Norazila Sugiman, 2011). Hence, a study by Farahwahida Mohd Yusof and Norazila Sugiman (2011) has suggested that it is crucial for the necessary parties in the university to take immediate action to overcome social problems especially free sex among students to avoid inculcating acceptance of the immoral free sex or sexual intercourse before marriage as a new norms.

The involvement of students in various problems is related to a lack of religious foundation and appreciation (Muhammad & Omar, 2017; Siti Aishah Yahya & Sidar Nasrun, 2016; Asmak Ali, 2006; Mohamad Abu Bakar, 2011). This is indirectly related to the level of appreciation of Islamic morality (Mohd Khusyairie Marzuki et al., 2019) as well as religious personality level among students (Mohamad Izzat Mohamad Ghani & Nik Yusri Musa, 2018). Therefore, several studies have suggested that studies relating to the elements and factors that drive and assist in improving the appreciation of religious life and religious personalities are implemented to help the university plan and improve student development programmes accordingly (Mohd Khusyairie Marzuki et al., 2019; Ahmad Firdaus Mohd Noor et al., 2016; Nazneen Ismail et al., 2019; Rohana Tan & Norhasni Zainal Abiddin, 2016).

### **3.4 The concept of Tazkiyah al-Nafs (self-purification)**

According to al-Ghazali (1988), religious personalities for a Muslim can be formed through *tazkiyyah al-nafs* by purification of the heart that can be implemented through *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli). The concept of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) is a practice

that fights against all uncalled for and bad activities prohibited by Allah SWT. However, the concept of *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) is supported by the *mujahadatun nafs* where it refers to implementation of good practices and behaviours or mahmudah (Fariza Md Sham et al., 2013). Practicing these *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) concepts will produce a noble Muslim community. This is in line with the study of Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir and Muhammad Azizan Sabjan (2014) which indicated that the formation of noble morals is highly related to religious aspects, where religion becomes the most important aspect in establishing individuals with strong values, attitude and character. Numerous studies were conducted on religious appreciation and good moral formation from school level to university (Suhardi Mat Jusoh et al., 2018; Norul Huda Bakar & Mariam Abd Majid, 2016; Rohana Tan & Norhasni Zainal Abiddin, 2016; Ahmad Firdaus Mohd Noor et al., 2016). Hence, the concept of consensus of *mujahadatun nafs* (at-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) are seen to assist in increasing religious personality among students and thus helping in producing excellent human capital.

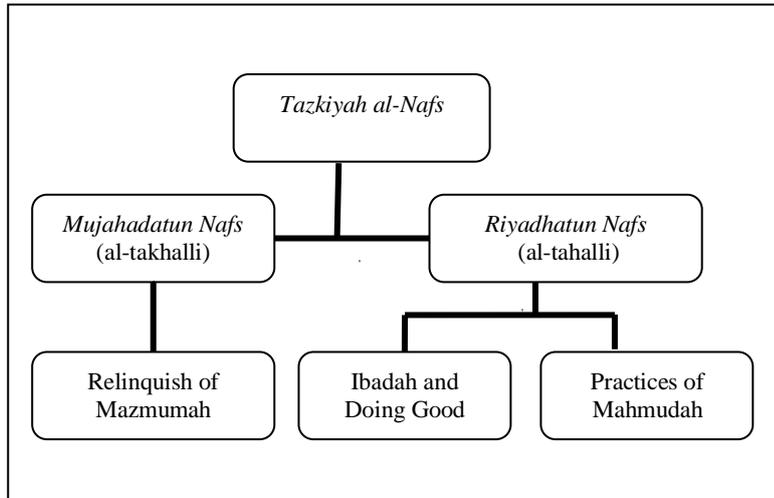
### 3.5 The practice of *Mujahadatun Nafs* And *Riyadhatun Nafs* in shaping a religious personality

Individual personality includes the whole individual comprising physical (external) and spiritual (internal) aspects (al-Ghazali, 1988). These two aspects are interrelated, where the internal aspects of a person consisting of emotions, attitudes, motivation can influence external behaviour, and ultimately influence the spiritual aspects of an individual (Fariza Md Sham et al., 2013). However, the spiritual aspect is seen as more influential in one's personality behaviour because it evolves internally from the heart (al-Ghazali, 1988).

Hence, in ensuring that the personality of a Muslim is formed from the submission and compliance to the commandments of Allah SWT and the Prophet PBUH, the process of purification of the heart (*tazkiyyah al-nafs*) should be done. According to al-Ghazali (1988), the *tazkiyyah al-nafs* process must go through two more processes known as *mujahadatun nafs* (al-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli). *Mujahadatun nafs* (al-takhalli) means striving hard (*mujahadah*) to combat against *mazmumah* traits such as jealousy, love of the world (*hub al-dunya*), *riya'*, arrogant etc. *Riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) is a process of managing and training to start doing good deeds gradually until what was considered difficult can finally be carried out easily (Fariza Md Sham et al., 2013). According to Sa'id Hawwa (1997), the element of *tazkiyah al-nafs* which involves *mujahadah al-nafs* and *riyadhah al-nafs* is a necessity for a person to hold and gain a spiritual *dawrah* to improve his spiritual quality so that his heart moves from one state to another.

The practice of *Mujahadah al-nafs* and *riyadhah al-nafs* can train the soul, *nafs*, *qalb* and mind to submit to Allah SWT absolutely without a doubt. Spiritual purity will lead to a preserved outward appearance. Therefore, the development of human and religious personality in Islam must emphasize the balancing between spiritual and physical development. Failure to maintain this balance will give birth to human capital that is morally and religiously lame. This is because a Muslim does not only need to maintain the relationship with Allah SWT but also the relationship amongst mankind (Faizatul Najihah, 2016).

Both concepts, *mujahadatun nafs* (al-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) complement each other in the development of Muslim personalities, where *mujahadatun nafs* steers away the attributes and practices of *mazmumah* (vile), while *riyadhatun nafs* develops good traits and practices of *mahmudah* (admirable) in a person. The summary of this process is shown in Figure 1 as below:



Source: Fariza Md Sham et al. (2013)

**Figure 1:** Al-Ghazali Personality Building Model

A study by Supriyadi and Miftahol Jannah (2019) used *al-takhalli* and *at-tahalli* approach by Hamka in his character education. Like al-Ghazali (1988), Hamka presented the concept of the tasawuf trilogy which are *takhalli*, *tahalli*, and *tajalli*. This shows that Hamka sees the importance of a close relationship with Allah SWT through *muraqabah* practices in the formation of religious personalities. Based on the study of Shahrizal Mahpol et al. (2020), al-Qushairi is a scholar who has successfully adopted tasawwuf values through good understanding of *at-takhalli* concept by looking at the similarities of the terminology used and the similarities of the meaning in both contexts. The results showed that a good understanding of the concept of *at-takhalli* can produce individuals who are balanced physically and spiritually. The study done by Sugianto (2018) is related to the implementation of *at-tahalli*, *at-takhalli* and *at-tajalli* concepts with stress management. The study found that the concept of *at-takhalli*, *at-tahalli* and *at-tajalli* can serve as a cure for human psychology by building physical, spiritual and mental strength during mental and stress situations. Similarly, a study by Wan Yusnee Abdullah et al. (2017) placed the scope of *tazkiyah al-nafs* which includes two dimensions; the first definition of instruction that refers to the concept of *at-takhalli* and the second definition of prohibition that refers to the concept of *al-tahalli* as an important element in developing of Islamic moral among students. These studies showed that the concept of *mujahadatun nafs* (al-takhalli) and *riyadhatun nafs* (al-tahalli) can contribute to behavioural changes and shaping of morals and religious personality.

#### 4. Conclusion

Allah SWT says: "Whoever does good (as big as a dzarrah seed), he will see it. And whoever does evil (as big as a dzarrah seed), he will see it anyway" (Az-Zalzalah: 7-8). Obviously in this verse the priority in leaving matters of munkar and vile and also practicing matters of makruf and admirable because of every kindness and evil done even as big as the dzarrah seeds (mustard) will be rewarded by Allah SWT. Hence, rather than just prevent wickedness (*mujahadah al-nafs*), every Muslim is also obliged to do good practice (*riyadhah al-nafs*). Based on the previous research, the practice that prioritizes these two elements have shown good impacts in producing Muslims with good religious personalities. Therefore, it is highly hoped by applying the elements of *riyadhah al-nafs* and *mujahadah al-nafs*, the result/outcome of this research will help the university to overcome the problems among university students. Good spiritual development will produce good moral students. The social problems that are happening in universities today demand universities to take immediate action to curb them from getting worse. The findings of this study can be used as a guide for the university in looking for the priority of spirituality elements and planning the best student development activities especially in developing moral and spiritual aspect and strengthening religious personalities

of the students. This also can be a guide to a further field of study to see how these two concepts affect the construction of religious personalities significantly among university students.

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