

The Reconfiguration of *Tibbun Nabawi* as the Standard of Sufi Health: A Manifestation of Holistic Health

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to reconfigure *tibbun nabawi* as a standard of health from a Sufi perspective by highlighting the shift in meaning from mere medical practice to a spiritual-holistic paradigm. The main problem examined is that *tibbun nabawi* has been largely understood as an empirical traditional healing system, while its epistemological and spiritual dimensions within the Sufi tradition have rarely been studied in depth. Using qualitative methods through literature review and content analysis of texts related to Sufi perspectives, this study retraces how Sufis have understood the relationship between body, soul, and God in health practices. The results of this study indicate that in the context of Sufism, *tibbun nabawi* encompasses not only medical aspects but also the principles of self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and ontological balance through rituals such as prayer, fasting, and *dhikr*. These practices form a spiritual health system that positions the body as a medium for spiritual transformation, not merely a biological object. Thus, this article offers a new reading of *tibbun nabawi* as a Sufi holistic health paradigm that reconfigures the boundaries between the medical, spiritual, and metaphysical, an attempt to understand health as the unity of body, soul, and closeness to God.

Keywords: Holistic approach; Sufi health; Sufi perspective; *tibbun nabawi*.

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preventive and healing efforts for diseases. Various treatment systems have emerged as alternative healing models, trying to compete with the greatness and efficacy of the increasingly sophisticated and expensive medical field. There are various alternative treatments with various methods, such as herbal medicine, holistic medicine, spiritual medicine, Sufi healing, traditional medicine, and others (Syukur, 2012). However, amidst the proliferation of “alternative medicine” discourse, *tibbun nabawi* (prophetic medicine) is often reductively understood as merely a traditional practice, without considering the depth of its spiritual meaning.

INTRODUCTION

Lately, there has been an interesting phenomenon in the health sector, related to

The primary issue examined in this article is how *tibbun nabawi* can be reconfigured from a merely empirical medical system into a holistic health paradigm rooted in Sufi epistemology. In other words, this research seeks to re-examine how Sufis understand the relationship between body, soul, and God within the framework of health, and how this understanding can broaden the conceptual horizons of *tibbun nabawi* within contemporary health discourse.

Tibbun nabawi as traditional medicine is the prophet's way of dealing with health or treatment. This traditional treatment is often considered as an alternative medicine, which means there is a saturation of existing conventional medicine. It is quite unique, because on the one hand it is the return of modern awareness to what it has alienated itself, and on the other hand there are still efforts to place traditional medicine as a secondary step, namely when conventional medicine is no longer possible.

Sufism as a spiritual formula in Islam occupies a unique position in dealing with the spiritual or mental elements of humans. The paradigm shift of modern health science to holistic health has made Sufism looked at by health practitioners. However, as reported by Fazlur Rahman (1999), actually the Sufis conceptually do not have formulas related to health that are understood conventionally, because the Sufis are more oriented towards healing the broken relationship between a servant and God. If the broken relationship has been reconnected, then that is what is called health. This health is not just conventional physical health, but spiritual health, transcendental health, and even cosmic health, because it can lead to a harmonious life.

In relation to Sufi health standards, *tibbun nabawi* is in line with the principles of Sufism that emphasize harmony between body, mind, and soul. In this respect, the

phrase "Sufi health" is understood not only as a spiritual practice or a form of alternative medicine, but as an epistemological paradigm that combines three dimensions, namely spirituality, religious psychology, and existential ethics. Spiritually, health is seen as the result of divine awareness that guides individuals to achieve inner balance (Riaz, 1996). From a religious psychological perspective, Sufism offers a process of spiritual therapy through self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), which functions to organize emotions, intentions, and behavior to align with divine values. Ethically, Sufi health is rooted in a moral orientation toward God and others, where body and soul are cared for not only for personal well-being but also as part of an ethical responsibility toward life as a whole.

Sufism views health not merely as the absence of disease, but also as a peaceful inner condition connected to God. Sufi practices such as prayer, fasting, *dhikr*, meditation, and controlling lust are considered to support spiritual health that has an impact on physical health. Thus, the integration of *tibbun nabawi* and Sufism offers a holistic approach that not only heals the body, but also cleanses the heart from spiritual diseases, such as *hasad*, envy, and hatred.

Furthermore, *tibbun nabawi* teaches the importance of prevention through a healthy lifestyle which is also the core of Sufi practices. A simple diet, habits of maintaining cleanliness, and discipline in worship create a balance that supports holistic health. In the view of Sufism, health is a mandate that must be maintained so that humans can worship optimally and live as caliphs on earth. Therefore, treatment that is combined with faith and spirituality is considered more effective and meaningful in that it touches on the physical and metaphysical aspects simultaneously (Nurjamilah et al., 2024).

Examining the significance of *tibbun nabawi* and its relation to Sufi health standards is important to understand how Islam offers a holistic view of health. The very goal of this study is not only to provide insight into traditional Islamic medicine but also to propose and strengthen the relevance of a spiritual approach in modern health practice. By making Sufi values and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad as a foundation, Muslims can find health solutions that are more humane, value-based, and in accordance with religious guidance. This study also opens up opportunities to enrich the global health discourse through a unique and profound Islamic perspective.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative, library-based study aimed at reinterpreting the concept of *tibbun nabawi* through a contemporary Sufi perspective (Zeid, 2008). The approach used is thematic content analysis, which allows the researcher to identify and reconstruct conceptual meanings hidden in academic and reflective texts on Islamic medicine and Sufi spirituality. The data sources for this study consist of contemporary literature in the form of books, journal articles, and research reports published in the last three decades (1990–2020). This period was selected based on the consideration that the last thirty years have marked a surge in academic interest in Islamic spirituality and holistic health, particularly in the postmodern context. Source selection criteria included: (1) works explicitly discussing *tibbun nabawi*, Sufism, or Islamic spiritual health; (2) literature published by reputable academic institutions or scientific journals; and (3) research incorporating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as theology, psychology, and health studies.

The analysis was conducted in three stages (Suprayogo, 2001). *First*, the literature

was collected and organized based on key themes, such as body and soul, spiritual healing, and the concept of balance in Sufism. *Second*, thematic coding of key ideas related to the concept of holistic health and the epistemological reconstruction of *tibbun nabawi*. *Third*, an interpretive synthesis was conducted to generate a new conceptual framework that demonstrates how *tibbun nabawi* can be reconfigured as a standard for Sufi health within the context of modern Islamic thought. To maintain the validity of the interpretation, this study employed source triangulation by comparing various views from Muslim and non-Muslim authors in the study of Islamic spirituality and medicine, and cross-verifying thematic meanings across the literature. This approach not only strengthened the consistency of the findings but also enabled a critical reading of the position of *tibbun nabawi* within the modern medical paradigm, Sufi spirituality, and contemporary holistic health concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of *Tibbun Nabawi*

Tibbun nabawi refers to the actions and words of the Prophet Muhammad regarding illness, treatment, and cleanliness. Conceptually, *tibbun nabawi* is everything mentioned in the Quran and Hadith related to medicine or health sciences, both preventively and curatively. *Tibbun nabawi* can be said to be the treatment of the Prophet Muhammad, namely everything he said, practiced, determined, and permitted related to treatment, healing efforts, and health. In addition, the meaning of *tibbun nabawi* refers to the writings of traditional Muslim scholars. The terminology “*tibbun nabawi*” emerged around the thirteenth century by Muslim doctors to explain medical sciences within the framework of faith in Allah (Iqbal, 2007).

According to Ibn Qayyim (2006: 269), there are two types of illness, namely physical

illness or bodily illness and spiritual illness or illness of the heart. Physical illness is usually treated by medical treatment, while spiritual illness is often treated by religious tradition. In addition to spreading the truth and peace, religion is present on earth to be a place for its followers to rely on, and of course health problems are included though this cannot be interpreted that revelation is the reference in matters of treatment.

If a Muslim is sick, he or she is aware that he or she must treat his or her illness, usually physically, but often spiritually, in order to be cured (or more precisely, to ask God to grant him a cure). However, there is another side to the belief in determinism, submission to the *status quo* and the will of God within theological and religious doctrine itself. This passive attitude also finds its contradiction with several hadiths that advocate activism and endeavor (Rahman, 1999: 51-52).

Prophet Muhammad was once visited by some Bedouins, who asked, “O Messenger of Allah, should we seek medical treatment?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, O servants of Allah. Seek medical treatment, for Allah does not create a disease but also creates a cure for it, except for one disease, i.e. aging” (al-Jauziyyah, 2006: 270). According to Ibn Qayyim (2006: 271), God has determined cause and effect. In various authentic hadiths, the command to seek treatment is highlighted. According to Ibn Qayyim, this does not contradict the principle of *tawwakul*.

The popularly accepted saying of the Prophet is, “Allah always provides a cure for every disease,” or “There is a cure for every disease. If the medicine given is appropriate to the disease, healing will be obtained by Allah’s permission.” This Hadith has important theological value that medicines are effective by God’s permission (Rahman, 1999: 57).

There are many such hadiths with various forms of wording. There are also hadiths that recommend eating and drinking. According to Fazlur Rahman (1999: 58), this was an important principle in the health care of the pre-Islamic Arabs. For example, a number of hadiths contain recommendations not to eat too much or not to eat too close to the previous meal. Cleanliness is also an important part. Even performing ablution before prayer includes the act of regularly cleaning the hands, face, and feet. Another hadith says, “A person’s body has rights that must be fulfilled.”

It is noteworthy that this approach positions *tibbun nabawi* not as a medical system competing with biomedicine, but as a system of meaning that interprets health within a spiritual and moral framework. Thus, *tibbun nabawi* should be read as a discourse that challenges the reduction of health to mere biological functions and emphasizes the importance of the dimensions of consciousness, intention, and transcendental relationships in the healing process. This perspective opens up space for epistemic dialogue between Islamic spiritual heritage and contemporary health science, which is now beginning to recognize the importance of mind-body connection, emotional balance, and spiritual well-being in holistic health theory (Nagamia, 2010).

Within the framework of *tibbun nabawi* and Sufism, healing is not only aimed at restoring physical bodily functions, but also at re-establishing spiritual harmony between humans and their divine source. This differs fundamentally from the biomedical paradigm, which views the body as a biological system autonomous from spiritual reality (AlRawi & Feters, 2012). In this regard, the concept and practice of *tibbun nabawi* are not merely a traditional medical system, but alternative epistemology about the body and healing. Thus, divine healing is positioned not as an

antithesis to empirical medicine, but rather as a discourse that broadens the horizons of modern medical knowledge through spiritual ethics and Islamic cosmology, which emphasize the interconnectedness of the physical, spiritual, and divine.

Prophetic medicine is sometimes only an alternative way. In fact, the prophetic medicine could be an efficacious and preventive treatment method. In addition to its efficacy which comes directly based on the revelation received by the Prophet, prophetic medicine does not use chemical or pharmaceutical drugs whose certainty is not like the certainty obtained based on the prophetic tradition. In relation to healing from illness, it is forbidden to rely solely on certain treatments. It must be believed as a secondary factor only, since the primary factor is the will of Allah to heal it (al-Jauziyyah, 2006).

Fazlur Rahman (1999: 57) groups the hadiths of the Prophet regarding treatment into three categories. *First*, hadiths that encourage the practice of healing diseases and health principles in general. *Second*, hadiths that contain the advice of the Prophet regarding disease and health problems and actions to cure them, either medically or spiritually. *Third*, hadiths related to the Prophet's medical science.

The Prophet Muhammad is indeed a role model. Muslims are encouraged to follow him in terms of health inasmuch as he is a great example in the guidance of medicine, as well as in protecting themselves from various diseases and treating themselves with food, plants, and natural (traditional) medicines or a mixture of the two. There was never in the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad or in the guidance of his companions about the use of multiple medicines as in Western pharmacology. The way of the Prophet Muhammad is the way the nerves become one central point in the brain. Such treatment is widely used by Arabs, Turks, Indians, and the

Bedouin. Doctors also agree that if treatment is possible with food, then there is no need for medicine. If it is also possible in a simple way, then there is no need for a multiple way (Ali Mu'nis, 1991: 57).

One of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad is a healthy lifestyle. He was only sick twice in his life, when he was poisoned by a Jewish woman and when he was nearing the end of his life. Once upon a time, a doctor sent by the Roman Emperor came. The doctor was surprised because it was difficult to find sick patients in Medina. Then the doctor asked the Prophet Muhammad about the secret of Muslims who rarely got sick (Kholis, 2022).

In his diet, the Prophet only ate food that was *halal* and good (*tayyib*). In the morning, he had breakfast with a glass of water mixed with a spoonful of honey. In addition to maintaining the body's immune system, honey can also be a cure for various diseases. Viewed from the health sciences, honey can clean the stomach, cure constipation, hemorrhoids, inflammation, and activate the intestines. The Prophet made this kind of diet routine, and he warned to "eat before you are hungry and stop before you are full" (Muflih, 2013: 40-42).

In terms of treatment, it is *sunnah* to do cupping when someone has been infected with a disease. Cupping is a treatment technique by sucking out clotted blood to smooth blood flow. This cupping technique is known to have existed since the time of the Prophet Job. In addition, there is one treatment that has been known since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, namely *ruqyah*. This method is done by reading the sura al-Fatihah in front of water and pouring it on the sick person. This *ruqyah* can also be done by reading other Quranic verses and mixing soil with saliva to be applied to the sore part (Sasongko, 2017).

Preventing illness is better than treating illness. Health is indeed expensive. Therefore, the Prophet always maintained his health by, as mentioned above, maintaining a healthy diet. In addition, he also maintained a sleeping and waking pattern. The most important thing is to be pious to God. As His servant and messenger, the Prophet always performed worship totally. In terms of this piety, he often gave an example of frequently performing supererogatory prayers and fasting. It is undeniable that the activity of worshipping God has an effect not only on spiritual health, but also physical health. The benefits of supererogatory prayer and fasting are certainly the secret of health in the contemporary world (Kholis, 2022).

Sufi Perspective on Health

The definition of Sufism is indeed diverse, but the essence of these various definitions is very well displayed in a definition formulated by Shaikh Zakariya Ansari, that is, sufism teaches how to purify oneself, improve morals and build physical and spiritual life in order to achieve eternal happiness. This kind of definition is in line with that expressed by Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri. He considers Sufism as a purity (*shafa*), namely the purity of physical and spiritual life (Valiuddin, 1977).

The main element of Sufism is the purification of the soul and its ultimate goal is to achieve eternal happiness and salvation. The happiness of life for Sufis is their closeness to God. Al-Ghazali maintains that happiness is a reflection of a person's spiritual health. Human happiness is very dependent on their spirituality. In other words, whether or not a person is happy is due to the cleanliness of their heart (Rofiq, 2016: 110). The Prophet said:

“Mark, in man there is a lump of flesh, if it is kept wholesome the whole body remains in a healthy condition and if it

is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted, mark, it is the heart” (Valiuddin, 1977: 1).

There are two hearts according to al-Ghazali. *First*, the physical heart is located on the left side of the chest, which is special flesh and inside it there is a hole, and in the hole there is black blood, which is the source of life. This kind of heart also exists in animals, even in dead people, not just living humans. *Second*, it is the heart with its subtle meaning, *rabbaniyah* (divinity), and spirituality. It has a connection with the physical heart. This subtle heart is the essence of every human, which is capable of feeling, knowing, grasping, and being ill. This heart is the judge of all his behavior. This subtle heart is related to the physical heart. In fact, the connection is similar to commendable manners with the body (Masyhudi, 2003: 42-43).

So, as the Prophet said, if a lump of flesh is maintained, then the body as a whole will be healthy, and so will the soul. If the subtle or spiritual heart is maintained, then the whole soul will remain healthy. According to al-Ghazali, the spiritual heart is related to the physical heart. In terms of health or psychology, it is called psychosomatic. Then, how is it related to *tibbun nabawi*? Then we will explore it by linking worship that is performed physically (in physical and visible movements) and spiritually (i.e. sincerely and devoutly), such as prayer and fasting which can have an effect on maintaining both hearts, namely both the physical and spiritual hearts.

From a Sufi perspective, health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of harmony between the physical, spiritual, and spiritual dimensions. Nevertheless, to ensure this view is not merely theological, it needs to be placed within a conceptual framework comparable to modern psychological theory. Several studies in transpersonal psychology, for example, show that the spiritual dimension

is strongly correlated with psychological well-being and the ability to regulate emotions (Koenig, 2018; Pargament, 2007). Meanwhile, contemporary Islamic mental health theory, as discussed by Haque et al (2016), offers an integrative approach that combines cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects within a model of mental health. In this context, *tibbun nabawi* and the Sufi view of health can be read as an epistemology that affirms a dynamic balance between spiritual awareness and psychic well-being, not merely moral advice or religious practices.

Furthermore, the concept of spiritual health in Sufism can be translated into empirical indicators through categories such as *tuma'ninah* (inner peace), *ikhlas* (purity of intention), and *dhikrullah* (awareness of the divine presence), all of which have equivalents in positive psychology literature, such as mindfulness, emotional balance, and self-transcendence (Fry & Kriger, 2009). In modern research, these indicators can be measured through spiritual well-being surveys, religious coping measurement instruments, or spirituality-based quality of life evaluations. Thus, the Sufi view of health can be conceptualized as a multidimensional model of well-being that bridges the spiritual and empirical realms, while also offering an alternative paradigm for the development of Islamic health sciences that are more rooted in religious epistemology.

***Tibbun Nabawi* as the Standard of Sufi Health**

Sufism is essentially an effort aimed at improving morals and cleansing the inner heart. This means that Sufism is a tool to protect a person from the possibility of slipping into the mud of evil and inner defilement. Sufism is not a goal but only a tool. The goal is only to lead to God alone. Meanwhile, inner health is a state where there is no disease or dirt in oneself. To build this

state is to follow the ways of life exemplified by the Prophet as the ideal epitome (Q.S. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21).

Therefore, the Sufis seek as much as possible to replicate the behavior of the Prophet, especially in terms of worship, because the Sufis are more concerned with or prioritize their spiritual health. We will take two relevant samples of *tibbun nabawi* as the health standard. The Sufi health standard here is intended as a routine of worship—which is spiritual in nature—that has an effect on physical health. “Excessive worry can cause physical illness in a person,” says a Hadith that alludes to psychosomatic phenomena (Rahman, 1999: 57).

The phrase “the standard of Sufi health” cannot be understood simply as ethical norms or moral teachings, but rather as a set of epistemological and practical principles that integrate the balance of body, soul, and spirituality within an empirical and theological framework. Determining this “standard” can be formulated through an integrative approach between prophetic medicine and modern health science. As explained by Fadhlina et al (2025), *tibbun nabawi* has the scientific potential to be part of integrative medicine, a health model that combines biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions in a complementary manner. Through a bibliometric analysis of scientific literature, they demonstrate that the Prophet’s medical principles are not only religious but also have empirical relevance that can be operationalized as health parameters, such as metabolic balance, psychological calm, and spiritual stability. Thus, the standard of Sufi health in this context can be understood as an effort to develop a scientific paradigm that assesses health not only through medical indicators, but also through the quality of a person’s spiritual relationship with God and the moral order that shapes inner well-being.

1. Prayer

Maintaining physical health to always be fit and healthy has been indicated by the Prophet Muhammad. Physical cleanliness is closely related to the practice of prayer and ablution. Cleanliness is the main basis of health. Therefore, Islam requires everyone who wants to pray to clean their body first (Wijayakusuma, 1997: 67). In terms of spiritual worship, there is a close relationship with physical cleansing. Physical cleansing by means of ablution or bathing is not just about removing physical dirt but also has a spiritual secret as an equilibrium of spiritual-physical health.

The main element of Sufism is the purification of the soul, and its ultimate goal is to achieve eternal happiness and salvation. The happiness of life for Sufis is closeness to God. God has promised happiness in life through prayer. Put differently, prayer is the key to the happiness of human life in this world and the hereafter. Prayer according to the prophetic saying is *mi'raj al-mu'minin*. In prayer, a Muslim ascends to God. This is a reminder that the essence of prayer is very special in the sight of God (Wijayakusuma, 1997: 115).

Sufis are people who always practice obligatory and *sunnah* practices. One of them is prayer, both obligatory and supererogatory prayers. According to Ali Aziz (2012: 191), all prayer movements are health movements. In fact, Prayer not only maintains health but also restores healthy life from various diseases. Prayer is like a radium mine that channels light and gives birth to self-strength. Besides, it is a holy meditation in which the practitioner feels the presence of God, like feeling the heat of sunlight.

In terms of neurology when someone performs prayer movements such as standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting, it will cause several changes in both physiology and blood

fluid distribution. Physiological changes are mainly changes in the heart. The position of the heart is below the head when we stand and sit. It changes to be parallel to the head when bowing, and the heart is positioned slightly higher than the head when prostrating. Some body fluids will flow to the legs or parts of the body that have not been drained when sitting or lying down (Sholeh, 2008: 207).

Movements in prayer can smooth blood circulation and the process of balancing blood circulation. If the blood is smooth, then a person's body will be healthy. Hence, when someone stands upright in prayer, all nerves become one center point in the brain. The heart, lungs, waist, and all organs of the body work normally, and the spine is straight. When a person stands, both feet are upright, so that the soles of the feet are in an acupuncture position that is very beneficial for human health (Sholeh, 2008: 206).

Prostration in the Sufi tradition is not simply a ritual gesture, but also a symbol of total surrender (*khudu'*) and self-emptying before God. From a theological perspective, this position symbolizes *tawadu'*, that is, human existential humility before the absolute source of life. However, physiologically, several studies have shown that prostration position can affect blood circulation and autonomic nervous system activity, although clinical evidence regarding the prevention of heart disease is still limited and inconclusive. Experimental studies such as those conducted by Doufesh et al. (2013) found changes in heart rate and blood pressure in various prayer positions, including prostration, suggesting homeostatic regulation of the body during this practice. Similar findings were also reported by Rufa'i et al. (2013) who noted a mild cardiovascular response in the head-down crooked position (*sujud*).

This means that this posture can be understood not as a "medical therapy" in the clinical sense, but as a form of embodied

spirituality, a connection between body, consciousness, and theological silence that implicitly supports physiological and psychological balance. In sum, prostration is the best way to channel blood and oxygen to the brain and other body parts in the head. Bending the body forward and placing the forehead on the ground is a massage process for the stomach and digestive tract, thus helping the digestive process (Sholeh, 2008: 212).

2. Fasting

One of the leading health experts, Mac Fadone, once said, “Everyone actually needs to fast even if he or she is not sick, because the toxins that come from the food and medicines consumed collect in the body, making the body feel sick, not energetic, and have reduced stamina. If he or she fasts, his or her weight will decrease and the toxins that previously nested in the body will disappear. As a result, the person’s body becomes completely sterile” (Salim, 2007: 97).

Fasting is not just a religious worship but also has a unique position as a health preservation or healing therapy for diseases. It is said that Christian priests in the Middle Ages made fasting a useful treatment step to cure various nervous diseases. Ibn Sina, in many cases of the disease he treated, required his patients to fast for three weeks (Salim, 2007: 94-95).

Fasting can reduce blood circulation as a balance to prevent sweat and steam from coming out through the pores of the skin and urinary tract without having to replace it. The decrease in cardiac output in circulating blood throughout the blood vessels will cause blood circulation to decrease, giving the heart muscle a chance to rest after working hard for a year. Fasting will give the heart muscle a chance to improve the vitality and strength of its cells. In addition, fasting gives the digestive tract a chance to rest after working

hard all year long. The stomach and intestines rest for a few hours from their activities while also giving body the opportunity to heal existing infections and wounds so that they can close tightly. The process of food absorption also stops, so that ammonia, glucose, and salt do not enter the intestines. Thus, intestinal cells are no longer able to create glycogen, protein, and cholesterol compositions (Sholeh & Musbikin, 2005: 243).

The Prophet said, “Fasting is half of patience; patience is half of faith” (Al-Ghazali, 1997: 11-12). In conjunction to patience, fasting also acts preventively on a person’s psyche. Through fasting, various mental states can be suppressed, such as anxiety, irritability, impatience, and explosive emotions. When someone is angry, the body produces compounds called catecholamines. These compounds make blood vessels tense, the heart beats fast, and blood pressure increases. As a result, the quality of the heart declines or becomes fragile. In this case, fasting can prevent such diseases by increasing patience (Sholeh & Musbikin, 2005: 244-245).

The Prophet said, “We are a people who do not eat before we are hungry, and when we eat, we stop before we are full” (Mu’nis, 1991: 6). Even in matters outside of fasting, the Prophet called on his people to refrain from consuming food and drink excessively. Furthermore, the Prophet said, “The worst thing for a person is to fill his stomach. By eating food until his ribs are erect, even though there is still room for food. Let him give one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for himself.” An excessive person is someone who exceeds the limits of what God has set. Therefore, eating a little is one of the noble actions, while eating a lot is a despicable action (Sya’rawi, 2006). God also warns against this so that humans do not overdo it (QS. Al-A’raf [7]: 31).

3. *Dhikr*

The word *dhikr* literally means remembering. In Islamic religious life, *dhikr* means remembering God. *Dhikr* is actually bringing the heart to remember God (Syukur, 2012: 72-73). Prayer is a form of worship performed by both Sufis and lay people. Nonetheless, the worship that differentiates Sufis from lay people is *dhikr*. According to the Sufis, the Prophet Muhammad really appreciates those who performed *dhikr*, saying, “Whoever remembers God in the midst of a people who forget is like a soldier in the midst of a fleeing army, like a green branch in the midst of dry trees” (Schimmel, 2011: 168).

In the beginning, the purpose of remembering God is to focus attention. In other words, remembering God means erasing the mind of everything other than God (Nurbakhsy, 2016: 28). *Dhikr* is the first step on the path of love. If someone is in love, he or she would like to mention the name of the beloved and always remember the beloved. The interesting aspect of *dhikr* is that it can be carried out anywhere, at any time, without being limited to prayer times or special holy places (Schimmel, 2011).

Many Quranic verses and the sayings of the Prophet indicate that *dhikr* is the most valuable worship. *Dhikr* is the most superior way to unite the personality and make one's consciousness clean and purified, thereby the curtain of illusion being revealed. According to Ibn 'Attaillah (2011: 30-34), in terms of physical health, *dhikr* also functions to remove excess deposits in the body caused by overeating and consuming forbidden goods. When the dirty deposits are burned so that only the good ones survive, then one can hear *dhikr* from all organs of one's own body.

The Sufis believe that during *dhikr*, one should forget not only the world and the hereafter, but also oneself. Thus, *dhikr* for

Sufis is like an overflow that gradually eliminates selfishness and radiates divine qualities in the heart of the person who does *dhikr* (Nurbakhsy, 2016: 28). This certainly makes *dhikr* a person's social health, since *dhikr* can destroy narcissism and build altruism. Moreover, *dhikr* can also destroy animalistic traits, seeking profit, and the like, transforming them into generous, helpful, sincere, and loving traits because of the instillation of divine qualities.

If *dhikr* is recited from a pure heart, then the universe will welcome it with all the energy flows on its surface. This energy will flow through the heart and create harmony. With this energy, all life's problems will not be something worrying and threatening. *Dhikr* can be likened to radioactive which contains a source of energy that is luminous and awakening. When someone is doing *dhikr*, it means that he or she is adding his or her limited energy by returning to the limitless source of energy, i.e. God. Put differently, *dhikr* is a connection to the driving force that moves the universe. Viewed from a psychological perspective, *dhikr* has a great influence on the development of the psyche and makes the human soul calm (az-Zumaro, 2011: 133-134).

God guarantees that those who remember Him will have a peaceful heart (Q.S. Al-Ra'd [13]: 28). With the peace obtained, the body will return to balance. The latest medical science and doctors are now increasingly convinced that the human body, if its balance is maintained, will not be struck by disease. The balance in the body caused by the peace of the soul or heart can further move an internal mechanism in the body to cure various diseases (Sholeh & Musbikin, 2005: 14-16).

Herbert Benson, a medical expert from Harvard, conducted research for years and found that a person's mental strength plays a very big role in helping someone recover.

Benson asserts that *dhikr* has the effect of curing various diseases, especially high blood pressure and heart disease (Benson, 1986: 4–6). In addition, *dhikr* is not limited to curing high blood pressure and preventing heart disease, but to the point of being able to eliminate pain (Sholeh & Musbikin, 2005).

In terms of *dhikr*, the relationship between theological and medical dimensions can be bridged through the concepts of stress regulation and spiritual homeostasis. Sufi tradition views *dhikr* as an effort to calm the heart (Q.S. al-Ra'd [13]: 28), while in modern medical terminology this practice can be understood as a form of self-regulation similar to mindfulness techniques or paced breathing, which play a role in reducing physiological stress levels. Research by Mat-Nor et al. (2020) shows that listening to Quranic recitation and practicing *dhikr* can produce calming physiological effects, such as lowering blood pressure and increasing heart rate stability, which are empirically related to a state of relaxation and balance in the autonomic nervous system. Thus, *dhikr* can be read as a meeting point between Islamic theology and modern psychophysiology: an analytical bridge that brings together the concept of spiritual tranquility in Sufism with a scientific understanding of the body's mechanisms for dealing with stress.

In short, true health in Sufi tradition encompasses four dimensions: physiological balance, emotional control, spiritual purification, and sincerity of intention. These dimensions can be used as assessment categories in understanding the standard of Sufi health, where Sufi practices such as prayer, fasting, and *dhikr* function as therapeutic mechanisms to balance psychosomatic aspects. This conceptualization aligns with the studies which show a significant correlation between spiritual engagement and improvements in

mental health indicators and the immunological system (Koenig et al., 2024). Thus, *tibbun nabawi* within the Sufi framework is not merely a moral narrative, but an epistemic system that can be studied analytically, bridging religious revelation and empiricism to produce a new understanding of health that is integrative and transcendental.

CONCLUSION

Tibbun nabawi refers not only to the Prophet's treatment of illness, but most importantly also to maintaining health or living a healthy lifestyle like the Prophet by means of maintaining food and performing worship. Worship itself, such as prayer, fasting, and *dhikr*, has a strong influence on a person's physical aspects, especially one's health. In this regard, the inner aspect of a person is closely related to his or her physical aspect. Hence, cultivating the inner self can help a person maintain his or her physiobiological health. In this respect, Sufis are those who follow the Prophet in all things, especially supererogatory worship. Thus, *tibbun nabawi* can be said to be the standard of Sufi health even though Sufis do not directly focus on physical health, but rather on the status of servanthood before God. However, Sufi practices show an ideal health standard that relies on the Prophet as the main role model.

Conceptually, this article contributes to the integration of Islamic epistemology and the modern holistic health paradigm by positioning *tibbun nabawi* not merely as a traditional medical system but as a framework of knowledge that connects theological, psychological, and biological aspects of human life. Through this approach, health is understood as a harmony between body, soul, and spirituality, which theoretically broadens the definition of well-being in modern health science. Empirically, this research seeks to

open up space for further studies examining the effectiveness of Sufi spiritual practices—such as prayer, fasting, and *dhikr*—on mental and physiological health indicators using an interdisciplinary approach. Meanwhile, practically, the concept of the standard of Sufi health can be implemented in health education, spiritual counseling, and integrative therapy programs oriented towards holistic balance, thus producing a more inclusive, humanistic, and transcendent health model.

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