



# The Implementation of Individual Islamic Counseling in Developing the Spiritual Intelligence of Client 'X'

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## ABSTRACT

This research is titled The Implementation of Individual Counseling Based on Islamic Principles in Developing the Spiritual Intelligence of Client 'X'. The background of this study lies in the importance of developing spiritual intelligence for converts to Islam (*muallaf*) who are undergoing a transitional phase in their faith, especially in facing emotional, social, and spiritual challenges. Client 'X' is a 40-year-old man who recently embraced Islam and is experiencing various crises, such as family conflict, psychological pressure, and doubts about living his new life as a Muslim. This study explores how implementing individual counseling based on Islamic principles can develop the spiritual intelligence of client 'X'. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that individual counseling based on Islamic values, integrating teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith, is highly effective in enhancing the client's spiritual intelligence. The client developed greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, a sense of life purpose, and attitudes of patience, empathy, and acceptance of Allah's decree. Spiritual activities such as prayer and dhikr became more structured and meaningful in the client's daily life. This study concludes that implementing Islamic-based individual counseling positively assists converts in facing life's challenges and developing their spiritual intelligence. The results can serve as a reference for counselors, educators, and Islamic guidance practitioners in providing more holistic and meaningful support to converts.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The spiritual journey of a *muallaf* (convert to Islam) is not merely a matter of changing religious affiliation, but a profound transformation of identity that touches the individual's cognitive, affective, social, and even existential dimensions. This process involves a shift in beliefs and worship practices and a reconfiguration of one's self-perception, relationships with family and society, and connection with God. In practice, many *muallaf* experience a kind of spiritual "culture shock," identity crisis, and social alienation, especially when they do not

receive adequate psychological or spiritual support (Rahmawati & Ratri, 2019; Farida, 2022).

In this context, spiritual intelligence, or *spiritual quotient* (SQ), becomes a crucial aspect that must be nurtured in every *mualaf*. SQ is the individual's ability to align their life with values of purpose and transcendence, going beyond worldly rationality and rooted in a deep relationship with the Divine (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). A person with strong SQ can find meaning in suffering, face life's trials with patience and trust in God, and maintain high moral and religious awareness. This aligns with the Qur'anic message in Surah An-Nahl (16:78), where Allah affirms that He grants humans hearing, sight, and hearts to be grateful, a foundational principle in developing spiritual intelligence (Shihab, 2007). This study is based on the case of "Client X," a 39-year-old male *Muslim* from Palembang who converted to Islam one month before the research. The client was facing various simultaneous stressors: estrangement from his family, homelessness, financial hardship, and health complications due to a mild stroke. Psychologically and spiritually, the client showed signs of anxiety, confusion, isolation, and existential doubt. Preliminary observations indicated low spiritual intelligence, including difficulty finding meaning in life, poor resilience to adversity, and a lack of internalized Islamic values in daily life (Solihin, 2025). Such a phenomenon underlines that *Muslims* need more than religious instruction; they require systematic spiritual and psychological guidance. Unfortunately, many Islamic institutions and da'wah organizations still rely on cognitive, one-directional approaches in their *mualaf* education programs. These methods often fail to address the existential struggles *mualaf* experience, such as feelings of loss, guilt, or fear of the future. Therefore, a more humanistic, comprehensive, and transformative method is needed through individual Islamic counseling.

Islamic counseling is an approach that not only addresses psychological problems but also strengthens the foundations of faith, character, and spiritual awareness. This counseling model is based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, and principles of Islamic psychology, aiming to integrate both spiritual and mental dimensions in overcoming life crises (Mubarak, 2015; Musnamar, 2013). It involves a personal, empathic, and compassionate process where the client is guided to discover their identity, recognize their Creator, and transform life's trials into a path of spiritual growth.

Previous studies have shown that Islamic counseling effectively enhances spiritual intelligence across various groups. Muhajir (2017) found that Islamic counseling significantly improved students' spiritual and moral awareness in a Madrasah context. Tamami and Mijianti (2018) revealed that structured Islamic counseling helped junior high school students develop resilience and positive character. Zulkifli (2019) demonstrated that Qur'anic counseling effectively fostered a sense of purpose and inner peace among university students. However, research that explores explicitly individual Islamic counseling for *mualaf* with their unique psychosocial and spiritual challenges remains limited. This research aims to fill that gap by thoroughly exploring the process of implementing individual Islamic counseling to develop spiritual intelligence in a *mualaf* client, starting from rapport building and techniques used to the measurable changes observed after the intervention. This study also integrates theological, psychological, and Islamic da'wah values into a holistic conceptual framework.

Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for counselors, *dai* (Islamic preachers), and Islamic outreach workers in providing more personal and empathic guidance to *mualaf*. Theoretically, it contributes to the academic discourse on Islamic guidance and counseling, strengthening spiritual intelligence as a foundation for transformative and sustainable faith development.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive phenomenological method. The qualitative design was chosen to deeply explore the subjective experiences of a

*mualaf* (Muslim convert), particularly regarding the development of spiritual intelligence through individual Islamic counseling. A phenomenological approach allows the researcher to uncover the essence of the client's lived experiences during the transition to Islam, emphasizing meaning, emotional processes, and spiritual awareness. The study did not rely on numerical data or statistical procedures but focused on understanding the inner reality of the participant. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, engaging with the participant relationally and reflectively throughout the counseling process.

### Data Collection

Data were collected using three primary techniques: non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted systematically to record the client's behavior, emotional expressions, and verbal and non-verbal responses during counseling sessions. This observation was guided by structured field notes focusing on indicators of spiritual intelligence such as resilience, life purpose, and emotional regulation. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to explore the client's thoughts, feelings, religious beliefs, and perceived changes following the counseling sessions. Additionally, supporting documentation such as counseling session notes, photographs, and field records was gathered to strengthen the validity of observations and interviews. Data triangulation was applied to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings across multiple data sources.

### Participants and Procedure

The procedure began with an initial assessment through observation and exploratory interviews to understand the client's spiritual and emotional condition. Subsequently, a structured Islamic individual counseling program was implemented over six sessions, each lasting 60 to 90 minutes, conducted weekly. The sessions were designed to enhance the client's spiritual intelligence by incorporating core Islamic counseling principles such as *tawhid* (monotheism), *tazkiyatun nafs* (spiritual purification), *muhasabah* (self-reflection), and the development of patience, gratitude, and a meaningful life purpose grounded in Islamic values.

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The counseling sessions were conducted in a safe and private setting to ensure comfort and confidentiality. After each session, the client's progress was monitored through behavioral observations, emotional responses, and in-depth interviews. A final evaluation assessed changes in the client's spiritual understanding, emotional resilience, and ability to connect with Allah SWT. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and establishing a supportive counselor-client relationship, were strictly observed throughout the research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This study aimed to describe the application of individual Islamic counseling in developing the spiritual intelligence of a *mualaf* client. The research subject was a 39-year-old adult male *Muslim* (Client "X") who had converted to Islam one month prior to the counseling sessions. The client was experiencing various spiritual, social, and psychological challenges, including uncertainty in faith, fear of practicing Islamic teachings, anxiety about the future, as well as financial limitations and

health issues due to a mild stroke. The counseling process was conducted over five main sessions. Each session brought significant changes in the development of the client's spiritual intelligence, which can be outlined as follows:

#### **Session I – Establishing the Counseling Relationship and Exploring Initial Issues:**

In the initial session, the client expressed doubt, fear, and high levels of anxiety about the future, as well as a lack of knowledge on how to practice Islamic teachings. However, after receiving an explanation of the fundamental concepts of *tawhid* (oneness of God), divine destiny (*qadar*), and the meaning of life in Islam, the client began to understand the importance of surrendering his affairs to Allah SWT (*tawakkul*).

#### **Session II – Deepening Spiritual Values:**

In this session, the client began to disclose his inner struggles as a *mualaf*, especially concerning family rejection, social isolation, and a sense of losing direction. Through reflection on verses of the Qur'an, stories of the Prophet's companions, and discussions on the wisdom behind life's trials, the client demonstrated a shift in perspective toward his Problems. He acknowledged that these trials were part of Allah's plan to strengthen his faith.

#### **Session III – Developing Worship Practices:**

The client was introduced to practical forms of worship such as performing ablution (*wudhu*), prayer (*shalat*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and reading the Qur'an. The client admitted that after consistently performing the five daily prayers and engaging in daily *dhikr*, he felt calmer, more patient, and more capable of managing his emotions and anger.

#### **Session IV – Designing a Personal Spiritual Plan:**

The client was guided to develop a realistic personal spiritual development plan (life action plan), including goals such as deepening Qur'anic recitation, actively attending mosque study circles (*pengajian*), and expanding his Muslim social network. In this session, the client began to show optimism, courage in decision-making, and readiness to embrace his new life as a Muslim with confidence and conviction.

#### **Session V – Evaluating Change and Planning Ahead:**

In the final session, the client articulated the spiritual changes he had experienced, such as increased self-awareness as a servant of Allah, a more positive outlook on life, resilience in facing life's tests, and greater emotional control. He also felt more accepted in the mosque community and expressed a renewed motivation to restore his relationship with his family.

### **Discussion**

The results of this study demonstrate that the systematic and structured application of individual Islamic counseling is practical in developing the spiritual intelligence of a *mualaf* client. This finding aligns with [Zohar and Marshall's \(2000\)](#) view that spiritual intelligence is a foundational capacity for addressing life's challenges through meaningful and religiously grounded approaches. In the case of Client "X," spiritual intelligence was shown to improve across several key indicators, including resilience in facing life's trials, self-awareness as a creation of Allah, deeper life meaning, and enhanced quality of worship.

The client's transformation also affirms the relevance of the Islamic counseling approach, which harmoniously integrates psychological and religious dimensions. This supports Al-Ghazali's concept that the ultimate goal of Islamic counseling is *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), which guides individuals toward divine consciousness and inner peace. In this study, the client

exhibited an increased ability to manage stress, fear, and environmental pressures, thanks to a new understanding of the Islamic values of patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and trust in God (*tawakkal*).

These findings are consistent with previous research by [Muhajir \(2017\)](#) and [Tamami & Mijianti \(2018\)](#), which emphasized that Islamic counseling can enhance spiritual intelligence, particularly in areas such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and strengthening one's relationship with God. However, unlike prior studies focused on adolescent students, the present research highlights the experience of an adult *Muslim* who faces more complex challenges, including social pressure, economic hardship, and identity crises.

The individual Islamic counseling approach proved effective due to its comprehensive nature encompasses cognitive aspects (understanding Islamic values), affective aspects (strengthening motivation and self-confidence), and psychomotor aspects (habitual practice of worship). Through this process, the client was able to internalize spiritual values into daily behaviors, including consistent worship, increased patience, and openness to building healthy social relationships within his new environment.

Thus, individual Islamic counseling helps clients resolve immediate problems and fosters new patterns of thinking, attitudes, and behaviors that align more with Islamic teachings. This approach is highly relevant for *Muslims* who are in the process of constructing their spiritual identity, especially amid the social pressures and limitations they often encounter.

### Implication

The findings of this study carry significant implications in theoretical, practical, and socio-religious domains. Theoretically, this research enriches the body of knowledge in Islamic guidance and counseling by demonstrating that the systematic application of individual Islamic counseling can holistically develop the spiritual intelligence of *mualaf*. This approach effectively addresses three main dimensions: the cognitive (understanding of Islamic teachings and values), the affective (emotional and spiritual motivation), and the psychomotor (habituation of worship and Islamic behavior). These findings are consistent with the theory of spiritual intelligence proposed by [Zohar and Marshall](#) and also support Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul) as the central aim of spiritual healing in Islamic tradition. Therefore, Islamic counseling can serve as an integrative intervention model for strengthening personal faith and spiritual growth, particularly for *Muslims* who are in the early stages of building their religious identity.

Practically, the study contributes to developing counseling services within mosques, da'wah institutions, and Islamic communities. *Mualaf* support programs are often one-directional, focusing mainly on lectures or formal religious classes. The findings of this study show that individual Islamic counseling, which is personal, reflective, and gradual, can facilitate more meaningful inner transformation. Hence, there is a need to integrate counseling services into *mualaf* development programs to ensure that religious education is accompanied by spiritual recovery and identity reinforcement. Additionally, this approach has important implications in the context of contemporary da'wah, which should place greater emphasis on humanity and spiritual resilience. Da'wah efforts toward *mualaf* should not stop at formal adherence to Islamic law but must also offer psychosocial support and sustainable spiritual empowerment. Islamic counseling offers a suitable method for addressing these challenges, as it is dialogical, empathetic, and grounded in deeply rooted values of *tawhid*.

### Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study has several limitations. First, it involved only one participant, making the findings non-generalizable. Future studies should adopt a multi-case approach to yield more representative

and comparative results. Second, the short duration of the counseling (five sessions over one month) is insufficient to assess long-term effects.

Therefore, future research should consider using a longitudinal design with post-intervention evaluations to examine the sustainability of the outcomes. Third, the study focused solely on spiritual intelligence without incorporating broader psychological measurements such as stress levels or mental well-being. It is recommended that future research combine both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain more comprehensive findings. Fourth, the influence of the social environment was not explored in depth. Further research should take into account the roles of family, community, and religious institutions as supportive factors that may contribute to the effectiveness of the counseling process.

Accordingly, future studies are expected to develop a more comprehensive, contextual, and sustainable Islamic counseling model to support the spiritual development of *mualaf* clients holistically.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that individual Islamic counseling is a practical approach for developing the spiritual intelligence of *mualaf* clients. Through five structured counseling sessions, the client experienced significant improvements in life meaning, resilience in facing trials, connection with Allah SWT, quality of worship, and social relationships. Integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in the counseling process effectively facilitated *tazkiyatun nafs* and gradually formed a solid Islamic identity.

These findings highlight the importance of Islamic counseling that addresses not only psychological but also spiritual dimensions, particularly for *mualaf* who are vulnerable to social pressures and identity crises. With an empathetic, reflective, and *tawhid*-centered approach, Islamic counseling can serve as a relevant intervention model for religious institutions and *da'wah* communities in guiding *mualaf* through their spiritual journey and Islamic development in a sustainable manner.

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