

Gambling Disorder: A Preliminary Study of the Integration of Psychology and Islam

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Submitted: September 4, 2025 Accepted: 11 December 2025 Published: 19 December 2025

Abstract

Online gambling is increasingly prevalent in the digital era and impacts psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. Gambling disorder is categorized as an impulse control disorder associated with impulsivity, anxiety, depression, and cognitive biases. From an Islamic perspective, maysir is strictly prohibited because it damages reason, property, and social order, and contradicts the maqasid al-shariah. This study used descriptive qualitative methods through library research and content analysis of psychological literature and Islamic texts. The results indicate that gambling causes financial loss, family conflict, social isolation, and a decline in mental-spiritual health. Islam views the prohibition of gambling as a protective mechanism for the soul, mind, and morals. The study recommends an Islamic psychospiritual rehabilitation model that integrates Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with the practices of tazkiyah al-nafs, dhikr, and strengthening faith, as well as the importance of public policy and Islamic counseling programs in educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools, and clinical services.

Keywords

Gambling disorder; psychology; psychological perspective; islamic perspective; Islam

Introduction

Gambling is a form of addictive behavior that has received considerable attention in contemporary psychological studies and from a religious perspective, especially in Islam (Dahiru & Nasidi, 2025; Elbanna et al., 2025) In the development of modern society, gambling is no longer synonymous with conventional activities such as betting at racetracks or casinos, but has metamorphosed into a digital activity that is hidden, easily accessible, and increasingly widespread across all levels of society (Hemdani, 2025; Vigh et al., 2024) In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, the phenomenon of digital gambling is a serious concern because it categorically violates religious norms, law, and social morals. Surveys show that online gambling, particularly slot machines, is increasingly popular in Indonesia. The Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK) recorded that online gambling transactions reached IDR 327 trillion in 2023, with 2.37 million people involved, mostly from the lower-middle economic class. The turnover of money from online gambling even approaches 10% of the total state budget (Grehenson, 2024).

This phenomenon raises an important question: why, despite clear legal and religious prohibitions, does gambling persist? This suggests that gambling is not merely a violation of the law, but also a complex psychological phenomenon that must be understood from various

dimensions: biological, social, cognitive, and spiritual. In psychological studies, gambling disorder has been classified as a mental disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5) by the American Psychiatric Association (2022). This disorder is characterized by an irresistible urge to gamble, an increased tolerance for the sensation of gambling, and negative emotional symptoms such as anxiety and restlessness when trying to stop (American Psychiatric Association, 2022) Several studies such as those conducted by Armoor et al (Armoor, Griffiths, et al., 2023b), Sharma et al(Sharma & Weinstein, 2025), Wang et al (2023), Lopes et al (2024) found that this disorder is highly correlated with anxiety, depression, and impulsivity, and often co-occurs with other personality disorders.

In Islam, gambling is known as *maisir* and is explicitly prohibited in the Koran. Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 219 and Al-Ma'idah [5]: 90–91 explain that gambling is an act of Satan that can cause hostility, hatred, and keep people away from praying and remembering Allah. This prohibition is not merely a formal law, but is a form of Islamic concern for the benefit of life, property and social life of mankind. Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi even place the prohibition on gambling within the framework of *maqasid al-shariah*, namely the main goal of Islamic law in protecting religion, reason, property and offspring (Rasito & Mahendra, 2022b)

However, approaches to treating gambling disorders so far have largely focused on secular interventions, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (R. A. Pfund, Forman, et al., 2023), pharmacotherapy, (Farkouh et al., 2024), (Mestre-Bach & Potenza, 2024) or other behavioral therapies that have not comprehensively considered the individual's spiritual dimension or other psychological variables related to gambling disorder. However, several studies have shown that integrating psychological and religious approaches can produce more effective results.

Bouwhuis-Van Keulen et al (2024) Sonbol et al (2025) found that spirituality-based therapy combined with CBT has been shown to increase recovery effectiveness in addiction and other psychological disorders. This opens up significant opportunities for developing intervention approaches that combine Islamic values with clinical psychology principles in treating gambling disorders.

In a scientific context, studies integrating psychological and Islamic perspectives to understand gambling disorder are still very limited. Most Islamic studies emphasize normative aspects, such as the prohibitions on gambling in the Quran and Hadith. Meanwhile, psychological studies focus on clinical symptoms, biological factors, and behavioral therapy strategies. Research by Bensaid et al., (2021a), Hamjah et al (2022b), attempts to develop a psychotherapy approach based on *tazkiyah al-nafs* for addiction, but it has not yet been specifically directed at the context of gambling disorder. Therefore, there is an important research gap that needs to be filled, namely through research that not only examines gambling disorder from a clinical perspective but also integrates Islamic spirituality as a basis for psychological intervention.

This gap becomes even more relevant when linked to the social reality of Indonesian Muslim society. On the one hand, society still upholds Islamic values as a moral foundation. However, on the other hand, the flow of globalization, a permissive lifestyle, and easy access to digital gambling make society especially the younger generation—increasingly vulnerable

to this deviant behavior. Without an understanding and treatment approach that aligns with the psychosocial and Islamic characteristics of Indonesian society, preventive and curative efforts to address this problem will tend to be ineffective.

This research aims to bridge the gap between psychology and Islamic spirituality in understanding and treating gambling disorders. Specifically, it aims to explore the psychological and spiritual factors influencing Muslim individuals experiencing gambling disorders and to formulate a basic concept for psychospiritual interventions based on Islamic values and other psychological variables related to gambling disorders. Using an exploratory-qualitative approach, this research will delve deeply into the experiences of individuals who gamble, their religious perceptions, and the psychological dynamics that accompany them.

The uniqueness and novelty of this research lies in the integration of two disciplines that have rarely been methodologically integrated: clinical psychology and Islamic psychology. In much of the literature, this integrative approach remains a relatively new and underdeveloped area, particularly in the context of treating gambling disorders. Therefore, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of new approaches to Islamic counseling and psychotherapy services that are contextual, applicable, and based on the real needs of the community.

This research is designed as a medium-term project consisting of three stages (a roadmap) over three years: Year One (Conceptual Exploration): Focuses on identifying psychological and spiritual factors that influence gambling disorder, as well as Muslim individuals' perceptions of this behavior. The results of this stage will serve as the theoretical foundation for intervention development. Year Two (Model Development): Based on the findings of the first year, an Islamic psychospiritual intervention model will be formulated and designed, as well as based on model testing of research variables related to psychology. This will then be tested on a limited scale using an experimental counseling approach on small groups or other related variables. Year Three (Implementation and Evaluation): The developed and tested model will be implemented on a broader scale through collaborations with counseling institutions, rehabilitation Islamic boarding schools, Islamic outreach communities, and theoretical contributions to the field of psychology. Evaluation of its effectiveness and impact can be conducted using quantitative and qualitative approaches after completing a review of various available research resources.

Thus, this research aims not only to generate theoretical understanding but also to produce a practical product in the form of a design for an Islamic psychospiritual intervention model that can be directly applied in clinical counseling and psychotherapy services. It is hoped that this approach can provide a contextual solution to address the challenges of Indonesian society in the digital era, particularly in aligning the research topic with the vision and mission of the Psychology study program at the Islamic University of Riau as a center for psychological intervention at the national and international levels.

Method

This research is a qualitative research with the type of library research (Mann, 2023). This is a study conducted by reviewing written sources such as books, scientific articles, psychology and Islamic journals, tafsir books, and other official documents relevant to the topic

of gambling disorder. This approach is used to understand the phenomenon of gambling disorder conceptually and theoretically through two perspectives: psychological and Islamic.

The data search procedure to produce research participants defined here as selected textual sources that meet the required criteria was carried out through a structured documentation process. Researchers began by formulating inclusion criteria based on relevance to the topic, credibility of the source, and alignment with psychological and Islamic perspectives. Sources were selected if they explicitly discussed gambling behavior, its psychological classification, and Islamic legal and moral interpretations. The search was conducted iteratively, starting from general references and narrowing down to specialized texts. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journals, classical Islamic texts, and authoritative psychological manuals.

Primary data sources in this study consists of:

1. Clinical psychology and abnormal psychology books that discuss gambling disorders.
2. Islamic literature such as the Qur'an, hadith, books of interpretation (e.g. Tafsir Al-Misbah, Tafsir Ibn Katsir), and works of scholars related to the prohibition of gambling.
3. International scientific journal articles from databases such as Scopus, Science Direct, JSTOR, and DOAJ.

Secondary data sources in this study consist of:

1. Encyclopedia of psychology,
2. WHO or APA reports on addictive behavior disorders,
3. Literature discussing Islamic therapeutic approaches to deviant behavior.

Keyword combinations used to access primary and secondary data sources included: “gambling disorder,” “pathological gambling,” “addictive behavior,” “Islamic view on gambling,” “maysir in Qur'an,” “Islamic therapy for addiction,” “DSM-5 gambling criteria,” “tafsir gambling prohibition,” and “Islamic psychology.” These keywords were applied across multiple databases and digital repositories to ensure comprehensive coverage. Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were used to refine search results and filter relevant documents.

The technique used is documentation (May, 2022) namely the process of identifying, recording, and collecting information from various relevant written documents. Researchers will do the following:

1. A review of psychological theories about gambling disorder (DSM-5, Cognitive Behavioral Theory, etc.),
2. Normative review of the verses of the Qur'an and hadith regarding gambling (maysir),
3. A synthetic study of psychological and Islamic healing approaches.

Documentation techniques are the main tool. Data analysis is carried out using the content analysis method. Kyngäs (2020) namely a technique for analyzing the meaning, themes, and relationships of texts or documents. Researchers classify data into certain themes, for example:

1. Definition and classification of gambling disorder in psychology,
2. Moral and legal aspects of gambling in Islam,
3. Handling and rehabilitation strategies from both perspectives.

The analysis technique used is content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative research technique used to analyze data in the form of texts, documents, and media by identifying themes, meanings, and patterns contained within. The goal is to understand the content of communication systematically, objectively, and in-depth (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2019).

Results

This study produces conceptual findings that integrate modern psychological perspectives and Islamic values in understanding gambling disorder. Through content analysis of psychological literature, Islamic texts, and the results of a literature review, this study provides three main results: (1) identification of psychological factors underlying gambling behavior, (2) the consequences of gambling disorder on the mental, social, and spiritual aspects of individuals, and (3) rehabilitation strategies based on an Islamic psychospiritual approach.

A. Psychological Factors Underlying Gambling Behavior

An analysis of recent psychological literature shows that gambling disorder is classified as an addictive behavior characterized by loss of control, impaired regulation, and strong psychological dependence (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Recent empirical studies have demonstrated a strong association between gambling disorder, impulsivity, depression, and anxiety. Tan and Tam (2024) found that impulsivity significantly predicts problematic gambling behavior, mediated by distorted gambling-related cognitions and low cognitive reappraisal ability. Similarly, Blanco-Morata et al. (2023) identified that individuals with high impulsivity and comorbid affective symptoms (depression and anxiety) are more likely to develop severe gambling problems due to emotional dysregulation and maladaptive coping.

In addition, individuals suffering from gambling disorder are at high risk of suicidal behavior as a result of uncontrollable gambling urges, financial distress, and emotional instability (Armoon, Karimy, et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Furthermore, the three-pathway model of psychopathology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding gambling disorder, emphasizing three main etiological routes: biological vulnerability, emotional-cognitive vulnerability, and socio-cultural influences (F. L. Lopes & Tavares, 2024a; Wood & Hodge, 2023). Recent research supports this model, showing that genetic and psychosocial interactions contribute to gambling severity (Blanco-Morata et al., 2023), while impulsivity and emotional dysregulation form distinct psychological subtypes (Wood & Hodge, 2023). This framework is particularly relevant to the current surge of online gambling in Indonesian society, where the increasing accessibility of technology, social media influence, and permissive peer environments act as socio-cultural triggers that intensify gambling involvement.

B. Consequences of Gambling Disorder

Gambling disorder not only affects psychological well-being but also damages the quality of an individual's social and spiritual relationships. Recent studies have shown that gambling disorder is often accompanied by multiple comorbidities such as antisocial personality disorder and substance use, which further aggravate interpersonal dysfunction and

emotional instability (Sharma & Weinstein, 2025). Research by Macía et al. (2021) revealed that individuals with gambling disorder tend to experience lower couple satisfaction due to emotional dysregulation and poor communication, leading to family conflict and social withdrawal. Similarly, Bickl et al. (2024) found that lower perceived social support significantly predicts higher gambling severity among young adult male gamblers, highlighting the role of social isolation as both a cause and a consequence of gambling problems.

Furthermore, Singer (2025) emphasized that social stigma toward individuals with gambling disorder particularly on social media platforms intensifies self-stigma and reduces help-seeking behavior, thereby worsening their social and emotional isolation. From a motivational standpoint, the meta-analysis by Binde (2024) demonstrated that escapism is one of the strongest predictors of problem gambling, as individuals gamble to avoid negative emotions, anxiety, or existential distress. This pattern of avoidance not only disrupts social functioning but also reflects a weakening of moral and spiritual self-regulation.

From an Islamic perspective, gambling (maysir) is regarded as an act that incites hostility, hatred, and distracts humans from worship, as stated in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Mā'idah 90–91). Classical tafsir literature interprets the prohibition of gambling not merely as a moral injunction but as a divine safeguard for the mind, property, and soul (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah). In this regard, Hamjah (2022a) highlights the importance of tazkiyah al-nafs (purification of the soul) in addressing addictive behaviors, arguing that gambling not only weakens self-control but also damages a person's spiritual relationship with Allah SWT.

C. Islamic Psychospiritual Rehabilitation Strategy

Recent analyses indicate that conventional psychotherapy methods, particularly Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), remain one of the most effective approaches in assisting individuals to overcome gambling disorder by restructuring maladaptive thoughts and improving impulse control (R. A. Pfund, Chalmers, et al., 2023). Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that therapeutic outcomes are enhanced when CBT is integrated with spirituality-based interventions. A recent meta-analysis by Bouwhuis-Van Keulen et al. (2024) demonstrated that religion- and spirituality-oriented therapies exert a significant positive influence on the recovery process of individuals with mental health disorders, including behavioral and substance addictions.

In the Islamic context, rehabilitation strategies for gambling disorder can be strengthened by emphasizing the spiritual dimension as an essential component of psychological healing. This can be achieved through several approaches. First, the Qur'anic and Hadith-based approach, which involves reinterpreting the prohibition of gambling (maysir) as a form of self-protection and promoting the practices of dhikr and prayer to help regulate impulses and emotional distress. Second, Islamic psychotherapy grounded in Tazkiyah al-Nafs, as conceptualized by Bensaid et al. (2021), which focuses on the purification of the soul through self-reflection, reinforcement of faith, and cultivation of Islamic virtues. Third, the integration of CBT with Islamic spirituality, as demonstrated by Sonbol et al. (2025), has proven to enhance resilience, self-esteem, and motivation among individuals struggling with addiction. This integrative therapeutic framework not only facilitates behavioral regulation but also fosters religious consciousness, thereby strengthening an individual's internal drive toward sustained recovery.

D. Synthesis of Psychology and Islam in the Indonesian Context

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to addressing gambling disorders, particularly in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim country. On one hand, modern psychology provides a scientific framework for understanding symptoms, risk factors, and behavioral therapy strategies. On the other hand, Islamic teachings offer a normative and spiritual foundation that functions both as a preventive measure and a therapeutic mechanism.

The integration of these two perspectives has led to the formulation of an Islamic psychospiritual rehabilitation model, which can be implemented in counseling centers, Islamic rehabilitation boarding schools and Islamic outreach communities. This model is designed to address not only the behavioral dimensions of gambling addiction but also the spiritual and moral dimensions, which are often overlooked in conventional treatment approaches.

This integrative model aligns with the findings of Al-Krenawi and Graham (2000), who emphasized the effectiveness of culturally and religiously sensitive mental health interventions in Muslim communities. Similarly, a study by Amer and Jalal (2012) highlighted the importance of incorporating Islamic values in psychotherapy to enhance treatment outcomes among Muslim clients.

In the context of Indonesia, where online gambling is increasingly prevalent due to digital technology, this model offers a culturally grounded and spiritually resonant alternative. It combines cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques with Islamic spiritual practices such as repentance (taubah), remembrance (dhikr), and religious counseling (nasihat). This dual approach targets both the psychological triggers of gambling behavior and the individual's spiritual consciousness, fostering long-term behavioral change and moral resilience.

Moreover, this model supports the broader goal of community-based rehabilitation, as advocated by the World Health Organization (2014), which emphasizes the role of local cultural and religious institutions in mental health recovery. By embedding treatment within familiar religious frameworks, the model enhances accessibility, reduces stigma, and promotes sustainable recovery.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that gambling disorder is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires an integrative understanding through the perspectives of modern psychology and Islamic values. From a psychological perspective, gambling disorder is viewed as a form of behavioral addiction that bears similarities to substance addiction (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Neurobiological mechanisms such as dopamine and norepinephrine dysregulation cause individuals to experience a loss of control and a compulsive urge to continue gambling despite facing serious negative consequences (Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2025).

Personality factors such as impulsivity, sensation-seeking tendencies, and cognitive biases like the illusion of control and the gambler's fallacy also play a significant role in reinforcing online gambling addiction (Sharma & Weinstein, 2025; Wang, Li, et al., 2023). This is in line with research by Armoor, Griffiths, Mohammadi, and Ahounbar (2023a), which

found a significant relationship between gambling disorders and an increased risk of suicidal behavior as a result of the emotional and financial stress it causes.

In addition to internal factors, external dimensions are also highly influential. Easy access to online gambling through digital platforms has made this practice increasingly widespread in Indonesia. A permissive social environment and the onslaught of online gambling advertising have also reinforced the normalization of this behavior in society. The three-pathway psychopathology model proposed by Lopes and Tavares (2024b) emphasizes that gambling disorder can be triggered by the interaction of biological vulnerability, emotional-cognitive vulnerability, and sociocultural influences. In this context, Griffiths and Pontes (2024) argue that behavioral addictions in the digital age are fueled by the constant accessibility of digital technologies and the blurring boundaries between entertainment and risk behaviors. Thus, gambling cannot be viewed solely as a legal violation, but also as a complex psychological symptom involving the interaction of individual and environmental factors.

From an Islamic perspective, the prohibition on gambling has a strong normative basis as emphasized in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 219 and Surah Al-Ma'idah [5]: 90–91. These verses indicate that gambling is not merely a futile activity but one that creates hostility, hatred, and distances humans from remembering Allah. The interpretation of contemporary scholars, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, places the prohibition of gambling within the framework of *maqasid al-shariah*, namely as part of the protection of religion, reason, property, and human life (Rasito & Mahendra, 2022a). This perspective explains that the impact of gambling is not only material but also spiritual, because it can damage an individual's relationship with Allah SWT. Thus, recovery from gambling disorders from an Islamic perspective cannot be separated from efforts to *tazkiyah al-nafs* or purification of the soul that aims to restore an individual's spiritual balance (Defiana & Handayani, 2024; Hamjah, 2022a).

Integrating these two perspectives is crucial in formulating rehabilitation strategies. From a psychological perspective, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been shown to be effective in helping individuals identify and change maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors associated with gambling (Cowlishaw et al., 2022; G. N. Pfund, Donahue, et al., 2023). However, this approach is considered even more effective when combined with a spiritual dimension. A meta-analysis conducted by Bouwhuis-Van Keulen, Van der Maas, Hoxha, and Hodgins (2023) showed that spirituality-based therapy has an additional positive impact on recovery from mental disorders, including addiction. In addition, mindfulness-based interventions are also reported to enhance emotional regulation and reduce relapse rates among gambling addicts (Kim & Hodgins, 2023). In an Islamic context, this approach can include strengthening the spiritual dimension through the contemplation of the Qur'an and Hadith, practicing worship, and Islamic therapy based on *tazkiyah al-nafs* (self-purification). Research by Bensaid, Machouche, and Tekke (2021b) and Sonbol, Al-Qahtani, Hassan, and Tekke (2025) confirmed that the combination of CBT and Islamic spirituality increases resilience, self-esteem, and motivation for recovery in individuals with addictive behavior disorders.

In Indonesia, the potential for implementing an Islamic psychospiritual rehabilitation model is significant, given that society still upholds religious values as a moral foundation.

The proposed rehabilitation model includes integrating behavioral therapy with religious practices such as dhikr (remembrance of God), prayer, and strengthening faith awareness as a self-control mechanism. A study by Afkar (2022) conducted in Malaysia demonstrated that Islamic psychospiritual therapy effectively assists addicts in their rehabilitation process, while research by Kabir, Kabir, and Siam (2024) emphasized the need to develop Islamic lifestyle apps that can motivate daily spiritual practices as a preventative measure against addictive behavior. Thus, integrating clinical psychology and Islamic approaches can address the need for more contextual interventions in Muslim communities.

The social implications of these findings are quite broad. Religious-based character education in schools can serve as a preventative measure to prevent addictive behavior in young people. Community-based counseling involving psychologists, religious leaders, and community leaders can be an effective strategy in addressing online gambling cases. The government can also use this research as the basis for more comprehensive preventive policies, utilizing not only legal approaches but also spirituality-based rehabilitation programs.

However, this study also has limitations due to its library research approach. The findings are still conceptual and have not been tested through field research. Therefore, further research is recommended using experimental methods involving direct Islamic psychospiritual counseling for individuals with gambling disorders. The use of a quantitative approach to measure the effectiveness of this integrative intervention is also essential to ensure the results can serve as a robust empirical guideline.

Thus, it can be concluded that gambling disorder cannot be understood solely through a psychological approach but needs to be enriched with an Islamic perspective. Integrating both perspectives allows for the development of a more effective, applicable, and tailored Islamic psychospiritual rehabilitation model for the context of Indonesian Muslim society. This approach not only targets the behavioral dimension but also strengthens the individual's spiritual foundation as the basis for sustainable recovery.

Conclusion

The study, "Gambling Disorder: Psychological and Islamic Perspectives," found that the phenomenon of gambling, particularly online gambling, is a multidimensional problem that cannot be understood from a single perspective. From a psychological perspective, gambling disorder falls into the category of impulse control disorder or behavioral addiction, characterized by loss of self-control, compulsive urges, and a close association with other psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and impulsivity. Gambling is not only financially detrimental but also undermines an individual's mental well-being and social relationships.

Meanwhile, from an Islamic perspective, gambling, or maysir, is strictly prohibited because it brings greater harm than benefit. This prohibition is emphasized in the Quran and Hadith as a form of protection for reason, morals, wealth, and social harmony. Islam considers gambling to be a behavior that contradicts the maqasid al-shariah (the principle of Islamic law). Therefore, healing for individuals who fall into it is not only clinical but must also be directed at purifying the soul (tazkiyah al-nafs) and strengthening spirituality.

The integration of these two perspectives has led to the understanding that gambling disorder rehabilitation is most effective through a psychospiritual approach that combines modern psychological therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Islamic values emphasizing faith development, worship, and self-control. This integrative approach can address the needs of the Indonesian Muslim community, which, in addition to requiring clinical intervention, also highly values religious values as a guide to life.

Thus, this study confirms that gambling disorder is not simply a legal or economic issue, but rather a psychological and spiritual one that must be addressed comprehensively. Prevention and rehabilitation efforts based on the integration of psychology and Islam are expected to provide more applicable, contextual, and sustainable solutions to address the growing phenomenon of online gambling in Indonesia.

Funding

This article is a research output from funding from the Faculty of Psychology, Riau Islamic University (UIR) through the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM) UIR with research contract number: 1566/KONTRAK/P-NK-PD/DPPM-UIR/07-2025.

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