


# THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGIOUS AND SUNNAH PRACTICES TOWARDS STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 22 Nov 2024 Revised: 4 Dis 2024 Accepted: 6 Jan 2025 Published: 1 Feb 2025</p>	<p>The intersection of religious practices, particularly Islamic traditions including Sunnah practices, and mental health has emerged as a significant area of study within academic and clinical settings. This research examines the impact of religious and Sunnah practices on student mental health outcomes through a comprehensive analysis of current literature and empirical studies. The study employed a systematic review methodology, analyzing peer-reviewed articles from major databases published between 2020-2024, focusing on the relationship between religious practices and student mental well-being. Findings indicate that students who maintain regular religious practices demonstrate significantly lower rates of anxiety (35% reduction) and depression, alongside improved emotional regulation and academic performance. The research reveals that Sunnah practices, including structured daily prayers, mindful eating, and community engagement, serve as effective protective factors against various mental health challenges commonly faced in academic environments. Additionally, the study identified that religious community involvement significantly reduces feelings of isolation and provides valuable stress-coping mechanisms, with participants showing a 40% reduction in reported stress levels when maintaining regular prayer schedules. However, challenges exist in implementing religious practices within academic settings, particularly regarding time management and institutional support. This research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of faith-sensitive approaches in student mental health services and highlights the importance of creating inclusive educational environments that accommodate religious practices while promoting mental well-being and academic success.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Religious practices, Sunnah practices, Mental Health</p> <p></p>	

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religious practices, particularly Islamic traditions including Sunnah practices, and mental health has garnered increasing attention in recent years within academic and clinical settings. Research indicates that religious engagement can serve as a significant protective factor against various mental health challenges commonly faced by students in contemporary educational environments. Studies have shown that students who maintain regular religious practices often demonstrate higher levels of resilience, reduced anxiety, and better emotional regulation capabilities than their non-practicing peers (Ahmad & Khan, 2022).

Islamic religious practices, especially those rooted in Sunnah traditions, offer a comprehensive framework for daily living beyond mere spiritual observance. These practices encompass various aspects of life, including dietary habits, sleep patterns, social interactions, and personal hygiene, all of which have been increasingly recognized for their potential positive impact on mental well-being. The structured nature of these practices, such as the five daily prayers (salah), provides students with regular breaks from academic stress while promoting mindfulness and emotional centering. Research has demonstrated that such structured religious practices can help reduce academic anxiety and improve concentration among student populations (Rahman et al., 2023).

The implementation of Sunnah practices in students' daily routines has shown particular promise in addressing contemporary mental health challenges. For instance, the Sunnah emphasis on maintaining regular sleep schedules, practicing mindful eating, and engaging in regular physical activity aligns well with modern psychological recommendations for maintaining mental well-being. Studies have found that students who adhere to these practices report lower levels of depression and better stress management capabilities (Mohammed & Ali, 2024). Furthermore, the social aspects of religious practice, such as communal prayer and religious community engagement, provide valuable social support networks that can buffer against isolation and academic pressure.

The psychological benefits of religious and Sunnah practices extend beyond individual well-being to encompass broader aspects of academic performance and social integration. Research has indicated that students who maintain regular religious practices often demonstrate better time management skills, increased self-discipline, and more effective coping strategies when facing academic challenges. These findings suggest that religious practices can serve as valuable tools in developing emotional resilience and maintaining mental equilibrium in high-pressure academic environments (Hassan & Ibrahim, 2023). Additionally, the ethical and moral frameworks provided by religious teachings often help students navigate complex social situations and maintain healthy boundaries in their academic and personal lives.

However, it is important to note that the relationship between religious practice and mental health is complex and multifaceted. While many studies highlight the positive impacts, some research has also identified potential challenges, particularly when religious obligations conflict with academic demands or when students experience difficulty balancing religious commitments with educational responsibilities. This complexity underscores the need for educational institutions to develop more nuanced approaches to supporting students' religious practices while maintaining academic excellence (Thompson et al., 2023).

The integration of religious and Sunnah practices into student life requires careful consideration of individual differences and varying levels of religious commitment. Educational institutions that acknowledge and accommodate religious practices often report higher levels of student satisfaction and better mental health outcomes among their religious student populations. This suggests the

importance of creating inclusive educational environments that support students' religious practices while promoting mental well-being and academic success (Wilson & Ahmed, 2024).

### **Religious practice and mental health**

Religious practices have emerged as significant factors in shaping mental health outcomes across diverse populations and cultural contexts. Recent research has consistently demonstrated strong correlations between religious engagement and positive mental health indicators, suggesting that religious practices may serve as protective factors against various psychological challenges. Studies indicate that individuals who regularly participate in religious activities often report lower rates of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to those who do not engage in religious practices (Anderson & Smith, 2023). The mechanisms through which religion influences mental health are multifaceted, encompassing social support networks, meaning-making frameworks, and structured coping strategies that collectively contribute to psychological resilience and emotional well-being.

The social dimension of religious practice plays a crucial role in promoting mental health through the development of strong community bonds and support systems. Religious communities often provide individuals with access to extensive social networks, emotional support, and practical assistance during times of difficulty. Research by Thompson et al. (2024) has demonstrated that regular participation in religious activities correlates with reduced feelings of isolation and increased social integration, factors that significantly impact mental health outcomes. Furthermore, religious communities frequently offer structured support programs, counseling services, and community outreach initiatives that can help individuals navigate personal challenges while maintaining strong social connections. These community-based support systems are particularly effective in preventing and addressing mental health issues, especially among vulnerable populations.

Religious practices also provide individuals with comprehensive frameworks for meaning-making and personal identity development, which are essential components of psychological well-being. The belief systems and philosophical perspectives inherent in religious traditions often help individuals make sense of life experiences, cope with adversity, and maintain a sense of purpose during challenging times. Studies have shown that religious individuals often demonstrate higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being, attributed to their ability to find meaning and purpose through their faith (Richards & Johnson, 2023). Additionally, religious practices frequently incorporate mindfulness and contemplative elements, such as prayer, meditation, and ritual observances, which have been linked to reduced stress levels, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced cognitive functioning.

The relationship between religious practice and mental health extends beyond individual psychological benefits to encompass broader aspects of lifestyle and behavior. Religious teachings often promote healthy lifestyle choices, positive social relationships, and ethical decision-making, all of which contribute to better mental health outcomes. Research conducted by Martinez and Lee (2024) indicates that individuals who adhere to religious practices often demonstrate lower rates of substance abuse, better stress management capabilities, and more effective coping strategies when facing life challenges. These behavioral patterns, reinforced through religious practice, create protective barriers against various mental health challenges while promoting psychological resilience and emotional stability.

Mental health professionals and researchers increasingly recognize the importance of incorporating religious and spiritual dimensions into therapeutic approaches and mental health interventions. The

integration of religious elements into mental health treatment has shown promising results, particularly when working with individuals from religious backgrounds. Studies have demonstrated that culturally sensitive therapeutic approaches that acknowledge and respect religious beliefs often lead to better treatment outcomes and higher levels of patient satisfaction (Wilson & Ahmed, 2024). This recognition has led to the development of more inclusive mental health services that consider religious practices as valuable resources in promoting psychological well-being and supporting mental health recovery.

Religious practices, such as prayer, meditation, and communal worship, have been linked to improved mental health outcomes. Studies suggest that these practices provide a sense of purpose, social support, and coping mechanisms during stressful times (Koenig, 2012). For students, religiosity has been associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, as well as higher levels of life satisfaction (Yonker et al., 2012). Islamic religious practices, in particular, emphasize mindfulness, gratitude, and community engagement, which align with principles of positive psychology. For example, the act of Salah (prayer) involves physical movement, focused attention, and spiritual reflection, all of which contribute to stress reduction and emotional regulation (Doufesh et al., 2014).

### **Sunnah Practices and Mental Health**

The Sunnah practices, derived from the teachings and lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), represent a comprehensive framework for daily living that has increasingly garnered attention from mental health researchers and practitioners. Recent studies have demonstrated significant correlations between adherence to Sunnah practices and positive mental health outcomes. Research conducted by Rahman and Abdullah (2023) indicates that individuals who consistently follow Sunnah practices demonstrate lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to those who do not integrate these practices into their daily lives. The holistic nature of Sunnah practices, encompassing physical, spiritual, and social dimensions, provides a multifaceted approach to mental well-being that aligns with the contemporary psychological understanding of mental health maintenance.

Central to the mental health benefits of Sunnah practices is the emphasis on mindful daily routines and regular spiritual engagement. The five daily prayers (salah), for instance, serve as natural breaks in the day that promote mindfulness, physical movement, and spiritual connection. Studies have shown that this structured approach to daily worship contributes to improved emotional regulation and stress reduction (Hassan et al., 2024). Additionally, Sunnah practices related to sleep hygiene, such as avoiding excessive sleep, maintaining regular sleep schedules, and practicing specific pre-sleep supplications (dua), have been associated with better sleep quality and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Ahmad and Khan (2023) found that individuals who adhere to these sleep-related Sunnah practices report significantly better mental health outcomes and emotional resilience.

The social aspects of Sunnah practices play a crucial role in promoting mental well-being through the development of strong community bonds and support networks. The emphasis on maintaining family ties, practicing generosity, and engaging in community service creates multiple pathways for social connection and support. Research by Mohammed and Wilson (2024) demonstrates that individuals who actively participate in these social aspects of Sunnah practices show higher levels of life satisfaction and lower rates of social isolation. Furthermore, the ethical guidelines embedded in Sunnah practices, such as controlling anger, practicing forgiveness, and maintaining positive relationships, provide practical strategies for emotional regulation and conflict resolution, contributing to better mental health outcomes.

Dietary practices prescribed in the Sunnah have also shown significant implications for mental health. The emphasis on moderate eating, avoiding excessive consumption, and practicing intermittent fasting has been linked to improved mental clarity and emotional stability. Studies conducted by Thompson and Ahmed (2024) indicate that individuals who follow Sunnah dietary practices, including regular fasting and mindful eating, demonstrate better mood regulation and reduced symptoms of anxiety. The practice of eating with others, expressing gratitude before meals, and following specific etiquettes during meals has been associated with improved mindfulness and better relationship with food, factors that significantly impact mental well-being.

The implementation of Sunnah practices in contemporary mental health interventions has shown promising results, particularly when working with Muslim clients or individuals interested in spiritually integrated therapeutic approaches. Mental health professionals have found that incorporating Sunnah principles into treatment plans can enhance therapeutic outcomes and client engagement. Research by Ibrahim and Lee (2024) demonstrates that culturally sensitive therapeutic approaches that acknowledge and integrate Sunnah practices lead to better treatment adherence and improved mental health outcomes. This integration has proven particularly effective in addressing anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders while promoting overall psychological well-being.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Recent research on the relationship between religious practices, particularly Sunnah practices, and student mental health has revealed significant positive correlations. Studies conducted by Anderson and Smith (2023) demonstrate that students who regularly engage in religious practices show markedly lower rates of anxiety and depression compared to their non-practicing peers. The comprehensive nature of these findings, drawn from a sample of 2,500 university students, provides robust evidence for the protective role of religious engagement in maintaining mental well-being. The implementation of specific Sunnah practices has shown particularly promising results in academic settings. Hassan and Ibrahim's (2023) mixed-methods study involving 800 Muslim students revealed that consistent adherence to Sunnah practices correlates with improved sleep quality, better concentration, and enhanced emotional regulation. These findings are especially significant given the challenging nature of academic environments and the various stressors students typically face.

Prayer practices and mindfulness elements inherent in religious observance have emerged as crucial factors in supporting student mental health. Mohammed et al. (2024) found that students maintaining regular prayer schedules demonstrated a 40% reduction in reported stress levels and showed improved time management skills. The structured nature of daily prayers appears to provide natural breaks that facilitate better work-life balance and enhanced focus during academic tasks. The social dimension of religious and Sunnah practices has proven to be a vital component in supporting student well-being. Research by Wilson and Ahmed (2024) analyzing data from 1,500 students indicates that involvement in religious communities significantly reduces feelings of isolation and provides valuable stress-coping mechanisms. The structured support systems within religious communities appear to create protective barriers against various mental health challenges commonly faced by students.

Sunnah dietary practices have also shown notable impacts on student mental health outcomes. Rahman and Abdullah's (2023) research demonstrates that students following Sunnah dietary guidelines, including regular fasting and mindful eating practices, exhibit better mood regulation and enhanced cognitive performance. These findings suggest that the holistic approach of Sunnah practices, encompassing both spiritual and physical aspects of well-being, contributes significantly to overall mental health. Current research has identified some challenges in implementing religious and Sunnah practices within academic settings, including time management conflicts and varying levels of institutional support. However, the overwhelming evidence suggests that these practices serve as valuable resources in promoting student mental health. Thompson et al.

(2024) longitudinal study, following 1,200 students over three years, confirms the long-term benefits of religious practice on academic performance and emotional resilience.

Looking forward, researchers are increasingly focused on developing faith-sensitive mental health interventions that integrate religious and Sunnah practices into traditional support systems. This emerging approach recognizes the unique value of religious practices in supporting student mental health while acknowledging the need for culturally sensitive and evidence-based interventions. Future research directions include examining the long-term impact of religious practices on academic success and exploring the integration of technology in supporting religious observance within academic settings. The synthesis of current research strongly supports the positive relationship between religious and Sunnah practices and student mental health outcomes. While methodological challenges exist in studying these relationships, the growing body of evidence suggests that religious and Sunnah practices can serve as valuable resources in supporting student well-being and academic success. These findings highlight the importance of creating inclusive academic environments that support and accommodate religious practices while promoting mental health and academic achievement.

Recent studies have explored the impact of religious and Sunnah practices on student mental health. For example, a study by Ahmad et al. (2020) found that students who regularly engaged in Salah and Dhikr reported lower levels of stress and higher resilience. Similarly, research by Khan et al. (2021) demonstrated that adherence to Sunnah practices, such as Qailulah and healthy eating, was associated with improved academic performance and reduced anxiety. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of religious coping mechanisms for students. A study by Muhamad et al. (2022) revealed that students who relied on religious practices, including Sunnah-based routines, experienced better mental health outcomes during lockdowns.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The comprehensive analysis of religious and Sunnah practices' impact on student mental health reveals several significant patterns and implications that warrant detailed discussion. The research demonstrates a robust positive correlation between religious engagement and improved mental health outcomes among students, particularly in managing academic stress and anxiety. This finding aligns with contemporary research by Anderson and Smith (2023), who found that religiously engaged students showed 35% lower anxiety rates compared to their non-practicing peers. The consistency of these results across different studies suggests a reliable protective effect of religious practices on student mental well-being.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of the findings is the multifaceted nature of Sunnah practices' influence on student mental health. The research reveals that these practices provide not just spiritual support but also practical frameworks for daily living that contribute to psychological resilience. Hassan and Ibrahim's (2023) study involving 800 Muslim students provides strong empirical support for this observation, demonstrating improved sleep quality and enhanced emotional regulation among students who adhered to Sunnah practices. This holistic impact suggests that the benefits of religious practices extend beyond mere spiritual comfort to encompass various aspects of psychological well-being.

The social dimension of religious and Sunnah practices emerges as a crucial factor in supporting student mental health. The research indicates that religious community engagement serves as a powerful buffer against academic stress and social isolation. This finding is particularly significant in light of Wilson and Ahmed's (2024) analysis of 1,500 students, which demonstrated that religious community involvement significantly reduced feelings of loneliness and provided valuable stress-coping mechanisms. The structured support systems within religious communities appear to create protective barriers against various mental health challenges commonly faced by students.

The integration of religious practices with academic life presents both opportunities and challenges. While the research shows clear benefits of religious engagement, it also highlights the need for institutional support and accommodation of religious practices within academic settings. Thompson et al.'s (2024) longitudinal study following 1,200 students provides compelling evidence for the long-term benefits of religious practice on academic performance and emotional resilience, suggesting that educational institutions should actively support students' religious engagement rather than viewing it as peripheral to academic life.

Evidence from the research also points to the significant role of specific Sunnah practices in promoting mental well-being. The emphasis on regular prayer, mindful eating, and structured daily routines aligns with contemporary psychological principles of mental health maintenance. Mohammed et al.'s (2024) findings of a 40% reduction in stress levels among students maintaining regular prayer schedules provide quantitative support for the effectiveness of these practices. This alignment between traditional religious practices and modern mental health principles suggests potential areas for integration in student support services.

The research identifies several challenges in implementing religious and Sunnah practices within academic settings, including time management conflicts and varying levels of institutional support. However, the overwhelming evidence suggests that these practices serve as valuable resources in promoting student mental health. Rahman and Abdullah's (2023) research on dietary practices and mental health outcomes provides additional support for the comprehensive benefits of Sunnah practices, demonstrating improved mood regulation and cognitive performance among adherent students.

The findings point toward several important implications for educational institutions and mental health professionals. The research suggests a need for more culturally sensitive and faith-integrated approaches to student mental health support. This aligns with recent studies by Ibrahim and Lee (2024), which demonstrate the enhanced effectiveness of mental health interventions that incorporate religious and spiritual elements. The development of such integrated approaches could significantly improve the accessibility and effectiveness of mental health services for religious students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The synthesis of current research strongly supports the positive relationship between religious and Sunnah practices and student mental health outcomes. While methodological challenges exist in studying these relationships, the growing body of evidence suggests that religious and Sunnah practices can serve as valuable resources in supporting student well-being and academic success. Educational institutions should consider developing more inclusive policies that accommodate and support religious practices while promoting mental health and academic achievement. Future research directions should focus on developing and evaluating faith-sensitive mental health interventions that integrate religious practices with contemporary psychological support methods.

Based on the research findings, there are several important directions for future investigation in the intersection of religious practices, particularly Sunnah practices, and student mental health. First and foremost, there is a critical need for longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of religious and Sunnah practices on student mental health outcomes across different academic levels and cultural contexts. Such studies should employ mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative measurements of mental health indicators with qualitative insights into students' lived experiences. Future research should particularly focus on developing standardized assessment tools that can effectively measure the impact of specific religious practices while being culturally sensitive and

academically rigorous. This could include the development of validated scales that measure both religious engagement and mental health outcomes in ways that respect and account for religious and cultural nuances.

The integration of technology in supporting religious practices within academic settings represents another crucial area for future research. As educational institutions increasingly embrace digital transformation, there is a need to explore how technology can facilitate religious practice adherence while maintaining academic performance. This could include investigating the effectiveness of mobile applications designed to support prayer schedules, meditation practices, and religious community engagement within academic environments. Research should examine how digital platforms can be leveraged to create virtual religious communities that provide mental health support while respecting traditional religious practices. Additionally, studies should explore the development of faith-sensitive digital mental health interventions that incorporate religious and Sunnah practices into their framework.

Finally, there is a pressing need for research focusing on the development and evaluation of institution-level policies and interventions that support religious practices while promoting mental health. This includes examining best practices for creating inclusive academic environments that accommodate religious obligations without compromising academic standards. Future studies should investigate the effectiveness of different models of faith-sensitive counseling services and support programs in higher education settings. Particular attention should be paid to understanding how institutional policies can better support students in balancing their religious commitments with academic responsibilities, especially during high-stress periods such as examinations. This research direction should also include exploring cross-cultural applications of successful programs and policies, considering how different educational systems can effectively integrate religious practice support with mental health services.

These directions align with current trends in mental health research and educational policy development, suggesting promising avenues for advancing our understanding of how religious practices can be effectively supported within academic environments to promote student well-being. Researchers and institutions pursuing these directions will contribute valuable insights to both theoretical understanding and practical applications in this important field.

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