



THE SUITABILITY OF AL GHAZALI'S APPROACH IN DEALING WITH MENTAL HEALTH: A NOMINAL GROUP APPROACH

¹Siti Norma Aisyah Malkan, ²Ramlan Mustapha
Universiti teknologi MARA Pahang, Kampus Raub Malaysia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received: 1 Sept 2023 Revised: 4 Oct 2023 Accepted: 18 Oct 2023 Published: 1 Nov 2023 Keywords: Mental Health, Al-Ghazali, Nominal Group technique  OPEN ACCESS	This article explores an alternate method for evaluating al Ghazali's model for its applicability to the treatment of mental health issues: the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). Researchers have used this method to develop treatments for mental health issues. According to the findings of the compiled recommendations from experts, According to the analysis in this study, al-Ghazali's paradigm is still applicable today. In addition, the results of the study demonstrate that the NGT technique has aided researchers in obtaining element validation in a timely manner, as the elements have been developed through a process of reading the literature, expert discussion, and voting. It is proposed that more research be done to improve our understanding of how various modules can help with mental health issues.

Corresponding Author:

*Siti Norma Aisyah Malkan,
Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies, UITM Pahang
Email: siti_norma@uitm.edu.my



INTRODUCTION

Islamic psychology places a strong emphasis on the many protective factors that contribute to a state of mental health in addition to defining mental health as the absence of psychopathology. Hasan Langgulung (1934-2008) argues that a healthy Muslim mind is one in which a person experiences peace and contentment as a result of following the teachings of Islam. He further believes that the Islamic emphasis on good morals and avoidance of bad habits and degrading conducts in life in a way explains the fact that following good morals

will lead one to a good state of mental health and on the contrary bad habits and conduct will lead one to a bad state of mental health (Langgulung, 1991).

The practice of spiritual purification known as *tazkiyat al-nafs* is emphasized in Islamic psychology as a means by which a person can improve his or her mental health. During the path of spiritual purification, many of man's spiritual diseases are cured not physically with drugs and surgery, but with spiritual cure and healing such as *Dhikr* (meditation and memory of Allah), *tilāwah* (reading of the Qur'an), *tawbah* (repentance) and etc. Many works were written by early Muslim thinkers on how one can keep his mind healthy. In instance, the famous thinker, philosopher, and Sufi-scholar al-Ghazali (1058-1111) wrote fairly passionately on the nature of man and his spiritual journey. He discussed the *nafs's* (souls') journey through life and death in his magnum opus, the *Ihy 'Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences). In *Ihya*, al-Ghazali elaborates on numerous facets of the human existence, including personal hygiene, education, worship, the relationship between man and God, interpersonal relationships, and more. In this work also, al-Ghazali spoke on how one can purify one's soul from the lower animalistic desires by religious rites and meditation. To achieve the spiritual elevation that will bring about happiness in this life and eternal felicity in the afterlife, al-Ghazali also outlined the tools by which man can alter his behavior to become a better person. Al-Ghazali elaborates on the human soul's nature and its psychospiritual growth towards perfection in his work on the spiritual component of man. A good state of mind and regular spiritual training are among his suggestions for guiding a person's character growth toward *Insan Kamil* or *Insan Salih* (perfect man or righteous man) and warding off the spiritual ailments that can plague the human spirit (Razak, Razak & Zaroum, 2019).

Islamic psychology, in contrast to many Western schools of psychology, not only acknowledges the importance of mental health but also offers concrete strategies for fostering and sustaining it. According to Islamic psychology, one among the many reasons of human mental illness is produced by the sensation of frustration and despair which develop due to envy and jealousy existent in the human psyche. The human mind becomes anxious and depressed as a result of these negative emotions. As a medicine for the human heart, the Qur'an cautions its readers against harboring feelings of envy or jealousy toward those who appear to be better off than themselves. The best course of action would be for them to consider those who are less fortunate and struggling. They will be able to appreciate the blessings God has bestowed upon them (Razak et al, 2019).

Imam Al-Ghazali Concept on Mental Health

Mental health is the fulfillment of harmonious mental functioning, which is distinguished by the formation of self-adjustment between a man and himself and also his surroundings. A person's mental health encompasses more than just the absence of psychiatric disorders; it also includes positive traits such as a well-developed personality, healthy physical health, a unified point of view, resilience in the face of adversity, the capacity to rely solely on one's own resources, an accurate and honest appraisal of the world around them, a strong sense of identity, a strong sense of empathy and social awareness, and an aptitude for adaptation and social integration. Faith and piety are the foundations of a healthy mind in Islam; both are necessary for a fulfilled life here and after death (Hasan & Tamam, 2018). According to Al-Ghazali's classification of his ideas, a healthy state of mind is characterized by having a firm *aqidah*, being free from heart disease, growing into a person of noble character, constructing moral relationships with others, and finding success in both this life and the next.

i. The Aqidah solidity

The human condition has its roots in *Aqidah*. Those who have a strong *aqidah* recognize the purpose of life. Those who are in touch with their past are less likely to feel like outsiders now. The following is an exact quote from verses 28-29 of the book of *Ar-Ra'd*: "Those who have believed and whose hearts are secured by the memory of Allah. Without a doubt, trust in Allah may calm anxious minds. Those who put their faith into action will be rewarded in this life and the next. Those who have faith and have done good things will be rewarded well. These verses elaborate on how *aqidah* might improve one's state of mind. For believers, remembering Allah SWT can be a source of comfort in the face of mental health issues, shocks, disasters, and so on (Hasan & Tamam, 2018).

ii. The Liberation from the Heart Disease

Those who are mentally healthy are free from the heart illness. The stress of living with heart disease is real. People will be able to live more practically and tranquilly once heart disease has been eradicated. If treating disease involves doing the opposite of what causes it, then heart disease must be treated in the same way. Since people's personalities vary, the outcomes also vary.

iii. Noble Character

Those who make morality a daily practice enjoy improved psychological health. A person's integrity (akhlaq) can only be shown by his or her ability to take meaningful action in the world. As a result, the individual's very spirit may be compromised. According to Al-Ghazali, morality is a sedentary and pervasive conduct in the soul that cultivates deeds that emerge spontaneously and effortlessly without much thought or reflection. This inner state is referred to as *ashshuratal-bathina*. A simple definition of Islamic morality (akhlaq) would be an Islamic person's manners, temperament, behavior, or disposition. Al-Ghazali states *akhlaq* as a temperament, character, or character that sets securely in one's spirit and is the source of the creation of some deeds of someone spontaneously, without any idea or purpose. If nature creates beneficial activities according to reason and *syara'* then the character is called noble *akhlaq*. However, an evil *akhlaq* is one whose personality is responsible for bringing forth evil results.

iv. Productive Social Relations

In order to be empathetic and not a priori negate herself and others, a healthy person must be able to accept others as they are and be resilient in the face of adversity (Arifin, 2018). He has a strong sense of community and belonging, is able to love and be loved, and is able to understand and respect the perspectives of those who are different from himself. He is able to meet the duties of his social environment, make responsible decisions, envision a desirable future, be open to new ideas and experiences, and enjoy the fruits of his labor. *Adab* is vital to the success of every interpersonal connection. Al-Ghazali recognized the value of *adab* in all kinds of interactions, including those with one's parents, siblings, teachers, and friends (Hasan & Tamam, 2018).

v. Happiness in the World and the Hereafter

Illness and unhappiness are not signs of a healthy individual. He has a healthy sense of self-worth, handles stress well, recovers quickly from setbacks, is generally content with life, exhibits sound judgment without resorting to hyperbole or disrespect, and lives a life he enjoys. An individual's mental health, as viewed by Al-Ghazali, is crucially important. Only persons with healthy mind can be happy, capable, useful, and able to cope with difficulties and hurdles in life. Thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and even physical health can all show signs of trouble if one's mental health is in disarray.

Al Ghazali Approach expalining the mental Health

In his approach to education, Al-Ghazali draws from a number of different pedagogical traditions. It is grounded in a system that strikes a balance between human reason and divine force, between rationality and the mystical experiences that free the mind, between inductive reasoning and actual lived experience. Hasan (2017) explains that the method follows the teachings of *riyadhah* and *mujadahah*.

The term "training," or "*riyadhah*," was also defined by Hasan (2017). *Riyadhah* is a religious practice that involves overcoming one's own impulses with the goal of purifying the mind and spirit. This is accomplished by *zikr*, worship, piety, and high moral standards, once the soul has been purified or emptied of everything else. Among the practices that make up *riyadhah* are fasting from food and sleep in order to pray at night, avoiding idle chatter and spending more time alone, as well as doing anything else necessary to stay out of God's bad graces. The goal of *riyadhah* is to train one's mind and willpower to keep one's spirit unadulterated. *Riyadhah* must be performed with full intention and free will. A person's efforts to refrain from evil toward other humans, other creatures, and Allah S.W.T. are examples of *riyadh*. Self-improvement is the goal of *Riyadhah*. To practice *riyadhah* in accordance with Al-Ghazali's teachings requires constant self-discipline, which in turn leads to realization of Allah SWT's existence and gratitude for His grace (Hasan, 2017).

The Arabic root for the word "mujahadah," "jahada," implies "earnest" or "struggle" (jihad). Mujahadah is the first step in realizing a dream or fulfilling one's destiny. Another definition of mujahadah is an internal fight waged for the purpose of drawing closer to Allah S.W.T. For instance, Mujahadah al-nafs is the effort to overcome lust and its associated bad emotions, thoughts, and actions. Mujahadah, in its fuller sense, is the struggle against lust, including the insatiable need for a spotless heart before Allah SWT. (Hasan, 2017). Anyone who takes up arms in sincere jihad against the aforementioned five factions will undoubtedly receive guidance from Allah that leads directly to the pearly gates. On the other side, anyone who leaves jihad, his life would be lonely and empty without obtaining direction from Allah S.W.T (Hasan, 2017). So, it's clear that Imam Al-Ghazali has a positive outlook on people's evolving attitudes and behaviors. The human soul, according to Imam Al-Ghazali, always has room for moral growth.

Based on the highlights of this literature, we feel the desire to see if this kosnep alghazali is still relevant today. We are more interested to see whether the experts' opinions are consistent or not related to the suitability of alghazali's model is still relevant today or not. Therefore, the NGT technique is systematically related to expert opinion, so we feel that this study is suitable by using this method.

METHODOLOGY

The NGT exercise involved the inclusion of viewpoints from a total of seven participants, each of whom possessed unique knowledge and expertise that were relevant to the subject matter of this research. The procedure, aided through the utilization of the Webex online platform, extended over a duration of two hours. The participants were categorized into three separate cohorts, each of which assembled at different intervals and dates, in accordance with the methodology employed in prior research conducted by Mustapha et al, (2022), Kennedy and Clinton (2009), and Williams (2006). The initial cohort consisted of persons fulfilling the role of religious officers inside hospital settings, whereas the subsequent group comprised medical practitioners. The third and ultimate cohort consisted of individuals who had prior exposure to inpatient care within a hospital environment and did not possess professional medical training. Afterwards, the thoughts and ideas from these three groups were compiled in an evaluation format. Subsequently, every participant involved in the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was instructed to allocate scores to the items, which had been organized based on the proposed topics and subtopics.

The process of implementing the NGT technique involves a group discussion controlled by a leader or facilitator (Perry & Linsley, 2006). Thus, the facilitator acts as a collector of ideas from the interaction of group members who are discussing and can manage the flow of information in the ongoing discussion. Facilitators are also normal and do not interpret ideas given by study participants. The description of the NGT implementation steps is as in table 1 below:

Step	Description
Description of the study conducted	This stage as an opening that involves the explanation and presentation process. The explanation of the research conducted should be clearly explained by the facilitator. This description covers the purpose of the study, the study procedure and the responsibilities of the study participants. Next, the facilitator makes a presentation about the developed model. Study participants were also provided with an appendix containing specific questions for the discussion session of study participants.
The idea generation process	This second stage is the idea generation process by the research participants. All study participants can record all the ideas they get from the facilitator's presentation during the opening. Study participants were given space to express ideas and recorded them on paper.

Sharing of ideas between study participants	This third stage involves the sharing of ideas between all study participants. All ideas and suggestions from group members were recorded and displayed to all study participants. Ideas are recorded so that there is no loss of ideas and views from the study participants. Each study participant writes their ideas or suggestions in turn until all members' turn is complete. This stage can take 25 to 30 minutes
Discussion of items, themes and elements studied	In this fourth stage, the facilitator reads each item and explains each item briefly and this process can take 5 to 10 minutes. During this process, research participants can present their views on any item and in the event of overlapping ideas then the ideas can be combined or can only be discarded based on the agreement and discretion of the group members.
Study participant voting process	At this stage, each group member makes an assessment of all the items and they are asked to vote and choose the item they like the most. The best idea is given a score of 5 followed by a score of 4 and so on. All the accumulated scores will be totaled and calculated according to the order of priority given by the group members. The strength of NGT is evident at this stage where only truly relevant items are voted on and have all gone through the evaluation stage by group members.

According to Perry and Linsley (2006), the NGT is classified as a semi-quantitative methodology that integrates a numerical assessment procedure. Simultaneously, it employs a qualitative approach, enabling the production and examination of ideas put forth by participants of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (Dobbie, 2004; O'Neil & Jackson, 1983). The combination of these strategies results in a collective output, which is influenced by agreement and arises from the group's assimilation of ideas (Dang, 2015). The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) has been utilized by many researchers across several disciplines. These researchers have frequently made modest modifications to the NGT in order to assess the usability or effectiveness of a generated application or module. As a result, a modified version of the NGT, known as the Nominal Group Technique Modified, has been established. The research articles that may provide guidance to researchers interested in using the modified Nominal Group Technique (NGT) include the works of Dobbie (2004), Perry and Linsley (2006), Burrows (2011). The application of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), as outlined by researchers, consists of five fundamental stages: defining the research topic, generating ideas, disseminating ideas, engaging in deliberation and clarification of ideas, and concluding with the voting process (Jamil & Noh, 2020). The aforementioned steps, although not inherently inflexible, possess the capacity for adaptation in accordance with the unique parameters of the study, as demonstrated in the research conducted by O'Neil and Jackson in 1983. According to Jamil and Noh (2020), it is said that there are two fundamental parts that should not be changed: the identification of concerns through debate and the decisive voting procedure.

Data analysis

In this study the researcher used the NGT process. The data obtained from this process is entered into the NGT-PLUS software during the process. After all the items are discussed by the experts, the voting process is carried out directly in front of all the invited experts. After the experts responded to each item, the NGT-PLUS software was used for data analysis.



Figure 1: NGT-PLUS analysis software

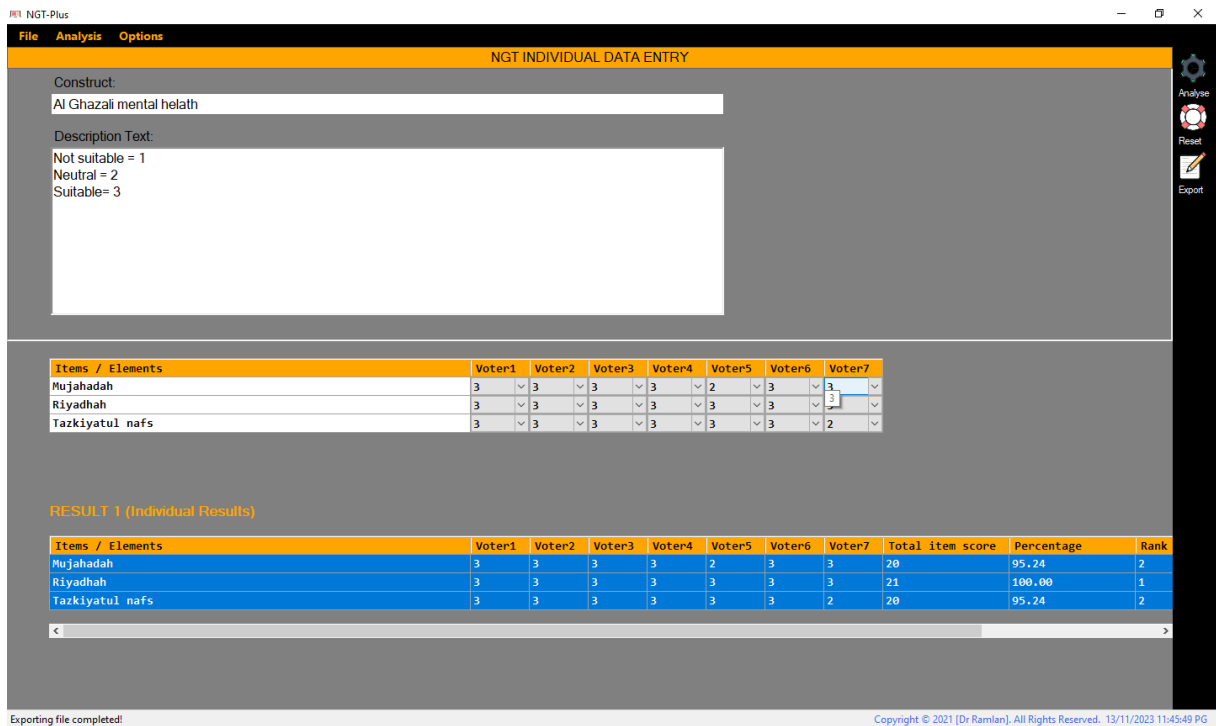


Figure 2: Data entry from expert voting

Sampling

The optimal sample size for NGT-based studies is a topic of debate among researchers. Depending on the needs of the research, NGT can be performed on a single cohort or a large group, and it can also be broken down into smaller groups to provide more in-depth communication (Lomax & McLeman, 1984; Dobbie et al., 2004; Mustapha et al.2022). Because of this, past research have used the sample sizes provided in table 1:

Table 1: Sampling procedure

Author	Sample
Van de Ven dan Delbecq (1971)	5 – 9 experts/participants
Horton (1980)	7 – 10 experts/participants
Harvey dan Holmes (2012)	6 – 12 experts/participants
Abdullah & Islam (2011)	7 – 10 experts/participants
Carney et al (1996)	Min. 6 experts/participants

Source : Mustapha et al, (2022)

Based on the aforementioned source, the researcher recruited 7 specialists to take part in the NGT procedure of this investigation. This quantity is regarded adequate for this study considering the existing scenario, which restricts the number of contacts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section we will present the results of this study after the NGT process is completed. The results of solving mental health problems based on Al Ghazali's model are as follows:

Table 2: AlGhazali model

Item (Alghazali model)	decription
Mujahadah	Mujâhadah al-nafs is an act of resistance to lust because it seeks to counteract the negative emotions and actions that are triggered by lust. Mujâhadah, in a broader sense, is the sincere struggle against lust, wants, and all manner of personal goals in order to purify the spirit.
Riyadhah	Spiritual cleansing can be attained by the practice of Riyâdhah by resisting one's baser instincts. Emptying oneself of all thoughts and feelings that are not focused on Allah is the first step toward achieving this state.
<i>Tazkiyah An-Nafs</i>	Tazkiyatun-nafs refers to the process of purging one's soul of idolatry and its offshoots, coming to terms with one's holiness through monotheism and its offshoots, and adopting the praiseworthy attributes of God as our guiding principles.

Table 3: NGT analysis result (output from NGT-PLUS software)

Items	Voter1	voter2	Voter3	Voter4	Voter5	Voter6	Voter 7	Score	%	Rank	Result
Mujahadah	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	20	95	2	Suitable
Riyadhah	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	21	100	1	Suitable
Tazkiyatul nafs	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	20	95	2	Suitable

Table 3 displays the expert-opined suitability scores for mental health according to Al-Ghazali Model. According to the findings of this investigation, all of the constituents' percentages were within acceptable ranges. These investigations have established a threshold for the percentage at or over 70% (Deslandes, Mendes, Pires, & Campos 2010; Dobbie et al., 2004; Mustapha et al.2022). We can draw the conclusion that everyone involved in the study thinks the model's core ideas are sound. Researchers can save time by using the modified NGT strategy instead of the time-consuming Delphi method, which involves numerous rounds of expert review.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

With regards to Islamic counselling guidance, Imam Al-Ghazali's ideas can be useful, particularly when it comes to dealing with mental health issues. We must include the Islamic counselling guidance in our understanding of Islam as a whole. Studying and applying al-Ghazali's ideas on mujâhadah, tazkiyah an-nafs, and riyâdhah in the present day helps strengthen convictions in the value of moral coaching as a means of shaping people's worldviews.

It would be interesting to see Islamic-based mental health education based on Al-Ghazali's ideas. Evaluation of an Islamically informed approach to mental health education, with the twin goals of increasing one's understanding of the topic and testing one's ability to put that understanding to use in improving one's own mental well-being. Therefore, it is important to assess a variety of factors, including the stability of aqidah, recovery from cardiovascular disease, the growth of a noble character, the establishment of morality in one's social relationships, and the attainment of happiness in this life and the next. Al-Ghazali provides the tools of mujahadah, riyadah, and tazkiyatun nafs, all of which can be included into structured programs of mental health education.

The ideas of Al-Ghazali continue to be studied and used in Islamic educational systems around the world, including Malaysia. Islamic education, which places a premium on the spiritual well-being of its students, is seen as a potential solution to the widespread problem of materialism. For the benefit of humanity, it is possible to study theological approaches to mental health. This is in line with the Islamic education's ultimate goals, which include the development of strong convictions and virtuous personalities, the promotion of social harmony, and the attainment of a healthy mental and emotional state.

Future research & Recommendation

This mental health problem is not an easy problem to solve. In fact, it is increasing from time to time. Therefore, we suggest to future researchers to make a study related to this mental health more specifically. Future researchers can build special modules based on Al-Ghazali's model and apply them for alternative treatment purposes. In addition, future researchers can also apply a more in-depth methodology such as qualitative, by exploring more deeply in order to know this problem more deeply. The use of other theories or models is also encouraged to be studied in the future.

REFERENCES

- Arifin, Z. (2018). Al-Ghazali's Thought of Islamic education and its relevance with the modern education. *Khalifa Journal of Islamic Education*, 2(1), 1-20.
- Burrows, T., Findlay, N., Killen, C., Dempsey, S., Hunter, S., Chiarelli, P., & Snodgrass, S. (2011). Using Nominal Group Technique to Develop a Consensus Derived Model for Peer Review of Teaching across
- <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1996.09623.x> Dang, V. H. (2015). The Use of Nominal Group Technique: Case Study in Vietnam. *World Journal of Education*, 5(4).
- Dobbie, A., Rhodes, M., Tysinger, J. W., & Freeman, J. (2004). Using a modified nominal group technique as a curriculum evaluation tool. *Family Medicine*, 36(6), 402–406.
- Hasan, A. B. P., & Tamam, A. M. (2018). The implementation of mental health concept by Imam Al-Ghazali in Islamic counseling guidance. *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies*, 1(1), 1.

- Hasan, A. P. (2017). Terapan Konsep Kesehatan Jiwa Imam Al-Ghazali dalam Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam. *Jurnal Penelitian Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 2(1).
- Jamil, M. R. M., & Noh, N. N. M. (2020). *Pengenalan Teknik Kumpulan Nominal (NGT)*. In Kepelbagaian Metodologi Dalam Penyelidikan : Reka Bentuk Dan Pembanguna (2nd editio, pp. 187–211). Qaisar Prestige Resource.
- Kennedy, A., & Clinton, C. (2009). Identifying the professional development needs of early career teachers in Scotland using nominal group technique. *Teacher development*, 13(1), 29-41.
- Langgulong, H. (1991). Kreativitas dan pendidikan: Analisis psikologi dan falsafah. *Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka al-Husna*.
- Lomax, P., & McLeman, P. (1984). The uses and abuses of nominal group technique in polytechnic course evaluation. *Studies in Higher Education*, 9(2), 183-190
- Mustapha, R., Ibrahim, N., Mahmud, M., Jaafar, A. B., Wan Ahmad, W. A., & Mohamad, N. H. (2022). Brainstorming the Students Mental Health after Covid-19 Outbreak and How to Curb from Islamic Perspectives: Nominal Group Technique Analysis Approach. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(2), 90–99.
- O'Neil, M. J., & Jackson, L. (1983). Nominal group technique: a process for initiating curriculum development in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 8(2), 129-138.
- Perry, J., & Linsley, S. (2006). The use of the nominal group technique as an evaluative tool in the teaching and summative assessment of the inter-personal skills of student mental health nurses. *Nurse Education Today*, 26(4), 346–353.
- Razak, M. A. A., Razak, A. L. A., & Zaroum, A. M. A. (2019). Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Comparison between Western and Islamic Scripturally Based Psychologies. *Al-Burhān: Journal of Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies*, 3(2), 15-33.
- Williams, P. L., White, N., Klem, R., Wilson, S. E., & Bartholomew, P. (2006). Clinical education and training: Using the nominal group technique in research with radiographers to identify factors affecting quality and capacity. *Radiography*, 12(3), 215–224.