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# Internalizing and Supplicating with the Beautiful Names of Allah: A Treatment Intervention for Anxiety in University Students

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the impact of internalization and supplication through the Name of Allah on the level of anxiety among university students. This approach employs faith/religion as a scientific intervention to mitigate worry levels. A pre and post design method was implemented to measure anxiety levels before and after participants underwent the procedure using the STAI (State-Trait Anxiety Inventory) scale and open-ended questions. Data were analyzed using dependent or paired t-tests through SPSS software. The research findings demonstrate a statistically significant increase in emotional conditions (anxiety) post-intervention compared to pre-intervention conditions ( $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that internalization and supplication using the Name of Allah effectively reduce anxiety levels among students in line with the proposed hypothesis. Qualitative results also reflect the positive impact of this intervention. This paper provides directions and recommendations for future research, focusing on advancements in this field.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religion, especially Islam, plays a significant role in shaping human outlook on life and psychology. Although Islam and psychology are still fields that are being developed, many studies support the integration of Islamic values in treatment interventions for clients' psychological problems (Haque, 1998; Hodge & Nadir, 2008). The focus of this research is concentrated on the core concept in Islam, namely the Names of Allah. Muslims connect themselves with Allah in prayer and supplication, relying on the concept of Tawakkul which emphasizes complete trust in Him while understanding His Names and Attributes. Internalization of the Names of Allah is important for Muslims because it strengthens the spiritual connection with God, resulting in more meaningful supplications.

It is worth emphasizing the high prevalence of anxiety among Saudi medical students, ranging from 34.9% to 65%, which is the focus of this study. During the Covid-19 pandemic, anxiety, stress and depression have become common in Saudi Arabian society. Research shows that these conditions are significantly higher among women, young individuals and health workers (Alamri et.al., 2020). A unique approach is needed in developing a psychotherapy model for Muslims, considering the striking differences between the Western paradigm and the structure of Islamic views regarding human nature, the purpose of life, and the direction of human development (Badri, 2008).

Internalization and Prayer Through the Names of Allah (Free Variables) There are more than 99 Names of Allah that have been revealed in the Qur'an and authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This, as an independent variable in this research, means that students are told and asked to call Allah by His Names while understanding the explanation of these names. Anxiety Level (Dependent Variable) It is important to define anxiety and differentiate between anxiety and fear because the purpose of this study was to measure anxiety levels, not fear. Anxiety is defined as a combination of mental and physiological phenomena that includes a person's conscious situation of worrying about an unfavorable future. Fear is an adaptive response to a realistic threat, whereas anxiety is a pervasive, sometimes irrational or exaggerated reaction to a current or future perceived threat (Romer & Evans, 2017)'.

The specific Conceptual definition of anxiety is creating tension, worry and intrusive thoughts without any threat, avoiding situations as well as physical changes such as increased blood pressure. An adaptive response is a subconscious reaction to a stimulus in the environment, for example the iris expands and contracts in response to the brightness of the environment. Pervasive emotions: When anxiety is referred to as pervasive emotions, it refers to an overall feeling of worry or unease that pervades a person's life. Fitrah refers to the nature within humans that directs them to recognize the absolute oneness of Allah and his existence. The concept of Fitrah in Islam also attempts to explain the essential characteristics of humans. Secular Psychology or Western psychology is defined as, 'The scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Behavior refers to all actions that can be observed by other people, while mental processes include subjective internal aspects such as thoughts, beliefs, feelings, sensations and perceptions that cannot be observed directly but can be obtained information through

behavior' (Myers, 2007). The psychological approach from an Islamic perspective integrates knowledge about aspects of the soul that guide behavior, emotions and mentality, including those that are manifest and those that are invisible. The human soul is essentially spiritual and metaphysical, not just psychological. The soul also contains aspects of agreement with the concept of monotheism, both by Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as fitrah which is a natural principle in every human being instilled by Allah (Utz, 2011).

### **1. Fitrah (Innate Disposition)**

It is in the innate disposition of human beings to believe in a Higher Power or God and research has supported this notion. Gallup International conducted a millennium worldwide survey from sixty countries and stated that two-thirds of participants responded that God was very significant in their personal lives. 87 % of people included themselves in a religion. It is engrossing to know that in 97 % participants from West Africa (majority Muslim) informed that God was very significant in their lives. In the same findings, women were more religious than men and elderly more religious than young and middle-aged group (Utz, 2011).

### **2. Spirituality, Religious Coping and Anxiety Therapy from Islamic Perspective**

According to (Bowland, Edmond, & Fallot, 2012; Ebrahimi, Neshatdoost, Mousavi, Asadollahi, & Nasiri, 2013; Hasanovic, Sinanovic, Pajevic & Agius, 2011), numerous studies in last few decades that studied therapies focusing on spirituality, discovered that such methods aided clients to be hopeful and extract meaning from their mental health sufferings (Rothman, 2021). One of the studies by (Abu-Raiya et al., 2018) indicated that respondents reported high levels of utilizing positive religious coping and this positively correlated with life-satisfaction. (Abdul Rahman, 2020) has outlined several techniques derived from the Quran and Sunnah which have been termed as 'anxiety therapy'. One of them is prayer. Linguistically, pray means 'the call' while terminologically, it means the request of a servant from Allah for securing goodness and protection from harms (Dusuki, 2012;210). The following verse (Quran, 2:186) explains the meaning more vividly,

*When My servants ask you 'O Prophet' about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one's prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond 'with obedience' to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided 'to the Right Way'. – Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran*

(Al-Bakri, 2017). Has outlined particular manners of supplicating the Almighty. One of them is to call Him with His glorious names. As (Abdul Rahman, 2020) has mentioned in the section of pray therapy that it is a weapon for the believers. Specifically for anxiety, it includes seeking refuge in Allah from anxiousness and agitation as narrated in the following,

*Narrated Anas bin Malik: The Prophet (ﷺ) used to say, "O Allah! I seek refuge with You from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by (other) men." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6369)*

### 3. Supplication

As mentioned above, the topic of this research is supplicating Allah through his Beautiful Names and Attributes. Supplication (Duaa in Arabic) is a key aspect of religion including Islam. It is a means of connecting to God and relying upon him alone. The importance of prayer has been discussed and how it can be a mighty healer solely and can also form a complementary act to the relieving ability of medicines (Ahsan, A., Khan, M., & Siddiqui, R. N., 2012).

There are different types of dua'a that an individual can memorize and recite, according to the situation. These supplications are either direct verses from the Qur'an or prayers that Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) prayed (York, 2011).

As (Utz, 2011) writes, a powerful method for conquering grief, depression and anxiety is supplication. A sincere supplication, rooting in the heart relieves the individual who is supplicating from worry and sadness, replacing it with serenity and happiness. A study conducted by (Mohd Yusoff & Zakaria, 2019) on the effect of Dua (supplication) in regulating emotional condition of students (anxiety) and their confidence while taking an e-learning session deduced that respondents in the Dua group demonstrated statistically significant improvement of their emotional states (anxiety) in contrast with the control group ( $U=56$ ,  $p=0.07$ ). Similarly, the former group had reported healthier confidence level compare to the control group after their eLearning session ( $U= 56$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ).

#### 4. Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) Supplication

Moreover, the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) practiced supplicating to Allah a great deal and Muslims, being his followers, consider him as a role model. Learning and modelling support the crucial function of the need of a role model for human beings. Learning in psychology is defined as: 'A relatively permanent change in an organism's behaviour due to experience.' Modelling is also a way to learn and scientists have discovered mirror neurons (frontal lobe of brain) in effect that assist human beings for observational learning (Myers, 2007). This leads to spiritual modelling under the umbrella of observational learning which is comprehended as spiritual growth by imitation of the life or conduct of a spiritual role model (Oman, D., & Thoreson, C.E., 2003). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provides the ideal spiritual model for achieving inner serenity and well-being through the practices prescribed in Islam, as well as an overall philosophy and approach to life.' (Al- Mubarakpuri, S., 1996). As (Hussain, F. A., 2011) writes, 'Indeed, contemporary science is inadvertently reiterating the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the standard for healthy maintenance of mind and body simply due to its moderateness in all aspects of life.'

#### 5. Significance of the Names of Allah

As (Sadi) has been quoted, 'Believing in and knowing the Most Beautiful Names of Allah includes the three types of Tawheed: Tawheed al-Ruboobiyyah (Unity of Divine Lordship), Tawheed al-Uloohiyyah (Unity of the Divine Nature) and Tawheed al-Asma wal-Sifaat (Unity of the Divine Names and Attributes). These three types of Tawheed form the essence and joy of faith (the word translated here as joy implies peace and relief from stress), and this knowledge is the basis and purpose of faith. The more a person learns about the Names and Attributes of Allah, the more his faith increases and the stronger his conviction becomes.' Allah says in Quran (7:180),

*Allah has the Most Beautiful Names. So call upon Him by them, and keep away from those who abuse His Names. They will be punished for what they used to do*

. – Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran In another Chapter (17:110)

*Say, 'O Prophet, ' "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Compassionate- whichever you call, He has the Most Beautiful Names." Do not recite your prayers too loudly or silently, but seek a way between.*

Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran A very comprehensive supplication stated in (Utz, 2011; Abdul Rahman, 2020) by the Prophet (PBUH) is the following,

*O Allah, I am Your slave, and the son of Your male slave, and the son of your female slave. My forehead is in Your Hand (i.e., you have control over me). Your Judgment upon me is assured, and Your Decree concerning me is just. I ask You by every Name that You have named Yourself with, revealed in Your Book, taught any one of Your creation, or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You, to make the Qur'an the spring of my heart, and the light of my chest, the banisher of my sadness, and the reliever of my distress.*

Reference: Ahmad 1/391, and Al-Albani graded it authentic. In another narration,

*Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah has ninety-nine Names, i.e., one hundred minus one, and whoever believes in their meanings and acts accordingly, will enter Paradise; and Allah is witr (one) and loves 'the witr' (i.e., odd numbers).*

Sahih al-Bukhari 6410 ('Uthaymīn & Mujahid, 2011) have elucidated that the above hadith means memorization for remembrance and supplication, knowing the meanings of every name, pondering over them adapting one's life accordingly and acquiring the qualities which the glorious names demand from believers. The Names of Allah have been stated in numerous places throughout the Quranic text and the narrations from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One of the often-quoted verses are from (59:21-24),

*Had We sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have certainly seen it humbled and torn apart in awe of Allah. We set forth such comparisons for people, 'so' perhaps they may reflect. He is Allah – there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah – there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity,*

*the Watcher 'of all', the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him 'in worship'! He is Allah: the Creator, the Inventor, the Shaper. He 'alone' has the Most Beautiful Names.*

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth 'constantly' glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.

*Link 8.1 in Appendix leads to all the Names of Allah in a PDF.*

To begin broadly with an overall world crisis, Muslims are facing a great deal of problems due to war and refugee crisis, Islamophobia etc. And thus, are in utmost need of mental health aid (Marie, Hannigan, & Jones, 2016). However, most Muslims do not seek professional help because of perspectives that psychotherapists do not go in for religious values in an 'informed' and 'open' way (Rothman, 2021; Amri & Bemak, 2012; Killawi, Daneshpour, Elmi, Dadras & Hamid, 2014; Mayers, Leavey, Vallianatou, & Barker, 2007).

It has become necessary for Muslims to develop a unique model of psychotherapy because it is evident that Western patterns are very distinct from the Islamic structure when it comes to nature of human beings, purpose and meaning behind existence, and the course of human development (Badri, 2008). Another serious issue mentioned by (Abdullah, 1999; Skinner, 2010) is that if therapists work according to their Western training with clients regarding the formulation of an individual and about treatment aims that are usually accepted, they may threaten foundational Islamic principles, ethics, or even laws. (Martinez, Smith & Barlow, 2007; Worthington, Hook, Davis, & McDaniel, 2011) have therefore stated that those who identify as Muslims and prefer to stick to their Islamic values in order to guide their decisions ought to be approached by therapists from that very set of standards and ideas (Rothman, 2021).

Moreover, there have been key Muslim figures in the history of Islam who have written and taught regarding the ideas of human psyche according to Islamic comprehension (Badri, 2013; Haque, 2004; Mohamed, 1996). Therefore, it is possible to put forward the notion that Islamic sources of knowledge, i.e., Quran and Sunnah are actually methods of explaining the soul's nature, and the Islamic practices are therapeutic ways for rectifying maladaptive behaviour, working out interpersonal problems and developing oneself (Rothman, 2021). Do the internalization and supplication

with the Names of Allah reduce anxiety for university students? What will be the difference before and after the intervention? And Internalizing and supplicating with the Names of Allah will significantly reduce anxiety levels in university students.

## METHOD

The sample (N=34) consisted of students from Effat University from all majors. Participants were recruited voluntarily through email announcement. Participants were young female adults, Saudi and non-Saudi. Permission to withdraw from the experiment remained valid throughout.

Measures Anxiety Levels of all participants were measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory scale (refer to Figure 2 and 3) before and after 2 weeks of internalization of and supplicating with the Names of Allah. According to (Julian L. J., 2011), The content of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory comprises of current "state" anxiety; pervasive "trait" anxiety and consists of 40 or 20 questions per scale. It consists 4-point Likert scale which features the symptom intensity as state and symptom frequency as trait. It offers self-report with reliability and moderate validity. An example of state anxiety is "I feel secure" and trait anxiety includes, "I try to avoid difficulty" and the response is rated from 'not all to 'very much so' and 'almost never' to 'almost always' respectively.

Participants were also asked open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire which accounted for qualitative measure. It was necessary to add qualitative measures because they are well-adapted to spiritual and religious studies having the scope for reproducing the complication and variability of participant's experiences that are usually difficult to encapsulate via quantitative methods. Qualitative methods have therefore been more trusted in the field of psychology for interpretation (Coyle, 2008; Coyle, 2016). Following are the two open ended questions that were asked:

- **Journal writing**
  - **When did they read**
- **Have these two weeks of reciting supplication and reading description of Allah's names helped you? How?**
- **Will you continue to recite supplication daily? If yes, why?**

Design and Procedure Participants completed STAI inventory twice, before and after internalization of and supplicating with the Names of Allah.



Surveys were published and sent online via emails and social media for participants to voluntarily accept the study. Participants were included in an online group for two weeks where they received description about Allah's names (Allah, Ar-Rabb and Al-Wakeel) and reminders twice a day to recite the supplication seven times for two weeks. They were asked to enter in their journal's daily supplication and time of reading.

### 1- Supplication (Du'aa)

العظيم العرش رَبُّ وَهُوَ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْهِ هُوَ إِلَّا إِلَهَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ حَسْبِيَ

*Allah is sufficient for me. There is none worthy of worship but Him. I have placed my trust in Him, He is Lord of the Majestic Throne. (Recite seven times in Arabic.)*

The design chosen was experimental I.e., cause and effect; examining the effect of independent variable (Internalizing and Supplicating through Names of Allah) on the dependent variable (anxiety levels). Participants were also asked open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire which accounts for qualitative measure. All results were saved in Excel file followed by exportation to SPSS for respective data analysis as discussed below.

Data was analysed in terms of descriptive statistics, reliability and qualitative data. A standard dependent or paired samples t-test was performed to determine statistically significant mean differences between before and after applying the intervention. Software utilized was SPSS. Results In this study, both quantitative and qualitative results were analyzed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study found that internalizing and supplicating with the beautiful names of Allah morning and evening for two weeks significantly reduced anxiety in university students. These findings are consistent with the hypotheses stated in the beginning of the study. The results of this study support the previous literature available in line with religious inclusion in therapeutic techniques (Abu-Raiya et al., 2018; Abdul Rahman, 2020) and utilizing supplications for treatment (Al-Bakri, 2017; Ahsan, A., Khan, M., & Siddiqui, R. N., 2012).

The qualitative results indicate that psychological studies are easier to encapsulate when asked about participants' experiences like the above-

mentioned open-ended questions. Results indicate and help the researchers of this study to label the specific emotions that the participants' themselves have experienced betterment in. A few examples are feeling calm, steady, at ease, confident and relaxed. Participants also increased in spirituality by mentioning an increase in trust and faith in God, clear thinking, lack of loneliness and a sense of protection.

### **Quantitative Results**

There were two sub-scales in STAI inventory; state and trait. The reliability score for pre-experiment for State (Table 1) was 0.901 Cronbach's Alpha and 0.902 Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

Table 1. Reliability score for pre-experiment for State

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.901	0.902	20

The reliability score for post-experiment for State (Table 2) was 0.902 Cronbach's Alpha and 0.905 Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

Table 2. Reliability score for post-experiment for State

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.902	0.905	20

The reliability score for pre-experiment for Trait (Table 3) was 0.837 Cronbach's Alpha and 0.844 Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

Table 3. Reliability score for pre-experiment for Trait

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.837	0.844	20

The reliability score for post-experiment for Trait (Table 4) was 0.871 Cronbach's Alpha and 0.873 Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

Table 4. Reliability score for post-experiment for Trait

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.871	0.873	20

A dependent sample T-Test was performed to compare the difference in pre-experiment State Anxiety and Post-experiment State Anxiety (Table 5).

Table 5. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Pair 1	Pre-Experiment (State)	2.59	34	.701
	Post-Experiment (State)	2.06	34	.886
Pair 2	Pre-Experiment (Trait)	2.68	34	.589
	Post-Experiment (Trait)	2.12	34	.913

As predicted, the post-experiment state anxiety in students was lower ( $M= 2.06, SD= 0.886$ ) compared to pre-experiment state anxiety in students ( $M = 2.59, SD = 0.701$ ). Likewise, the post-experiment trait anxiety in students was lower ( $M = 2.12, SD = 0.913$ ) compared to pre-experiment trait anxiety in students ( $M = 2.68, SD = 0.589$ ) and these results were also statistically significant:  $p = .001$ , as hypothesized (Table 6).

Table 6. Paired Samples Test

			Paired Differences			Significance		
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre (State)	Exp	.529	.825	.142	3.741	<.001	<.001
	Post (State)	Exp						
Pair 2	Pre (Trait)	Exp	.559	.824	.141	3.957	<.001	<.001
	Post (Trait)	Exp						

### Qualitative Results

As discussed above, participants were also asked open ended questions at the end of the form/questionnaire to account for qualitative results. All students/ participants replied in the affirmative to the following questions, 'Have these two weeks of reciting supplication and reading description of Allah's names helped you? How?' and 'Will you continue to recite supplication daily? If yes, why?'. The following are some examples of the answers given by participants to the first question:

1. Most definitely! Each time I recited it, I felt calm and at peace.

2. Yes, they made me feel calm, steady and at ease
3. Yes, Knowing the Allah's names and their meanings increases faith and trust in God. Also reciting supplication helps when I think of the meaning of them and ask the help from Allah
4. Yes, it has helped me calm down and think clearly and know that I'm not alone. I have God watching over me. He is there to guide me.
5. I tried my best to recite them mindfully and genuinely ask Allah to take care of all my life's matters for me. It felt relieving to be reminded of how he takes care of all our affairs without us even realizing it. I can't say how exactly they helped me, because this is a very stressful time of the year for me, I'm under a lot of pressure, so I can't tell if anything helped or not. Maybe it helped in a way that I didn't feel even more stressed like I used to annually.
6. It made me feel closer to Allah especially with the definitions/meanings which helped me understand what I was saying
7. I didn't think it would work but as I'm retaking this test, I find myself answering differently than before. Perhaps it's because I just woke up but I feel that even though I'm still nervous and worried about many things, I think I can get through them.
8. Enhance memory and awareness

The sample answers to the second question (*Will you continue to recite supplication daily? If yes, why?*) are given below:

1. Yes. To continue feeling calm and to remind myself that everything happens with Allah's will.
2. Yes, the meaning of the supplication reminded me that I have someone who is very strong and capable watching and protecting me
3. Yes, because it eases my mind and satisfies my spiritual needs
4. Yes, it has helped me feel less stressed and worried
5. Yes, perhaps different supplications, but they give me a sense of security and safety
6. Since it's one of the day and night du'as, yes, I will, insha'Allah. To be reminded of Allah's subliminal blessings.
7. Yes, it has helped me a lot by reminding myself of the remembrance of God and getting rid of the thoughts that bother me
8. Yes, I want to make it a habit
9. grounded my thoughts in the morning and evening. It did make me feel calm in that moment

10. I hope I will continuously recite it. Brings joy and satisfaction
11. Yes. They definitely helped me feel more confident and relaxed
12. yes, because I found some peace in reading so even though the peace does not last all the time it still feels good to feel relax for a few minutes
13. Maybe. I would like to see how much it would affect my mood.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

The present findings pose some limitations and as well as recommendations. The time period for the study was less than needed because more amount of time is required for psychological studies particularly with a spiritual aspect. Spirituality and religiosity require more time for implementation of an experiment in order to determine long term effect. Moreover, the participants for this study included university students only which makes it arduous for researchers to apply it on population. Another limitation was the irregularity of some participants to fill in daily record of reading the supplication and the description of Allah's names. Also, only female students participated in this study.

It is recommended that more participants from a variety of cultures and backgrounds ought to be added in the experiment with a control group as well in order for the results to be true and avoid extraneous variables. Moreover, further studies should include various constructs and variables to add more to the existing literature review. Other names of Allah with their descriptions, more supplications and respective/relatable assessments could be used in further research. According to the qualitative results, constructs like mood, awareness, memory, confidence, satisfaction and obsessive thoughts could be measured. Last but not least, both genders participating in further studies could add different results and a comparison could also serve a purpose to know which gender is more spiritual and religious, setting forth a stronger causal relationship.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the present study produced significant results which indicate that internalizing (knowing the description and meaning) of the names of Allah and supplication through them regularly, significantly reduced anxiety levels in university students. Participants felt calm, steady and at ease after the experiment with an increase in faith and trust in God. Despite the limitations, this study demonstrates the prominence of utilizing supplications and understanding the meaning of Allah's names in reducing anxiety, feeling calm, aware, satisfied and protected.

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