Islamic-Based Counseling for Fostering Self Efficacy in Muslim Communities

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Abstract

The global Muslim community faces challenges in achieving well-being goals. Self-efficacy is key to encouraging active participation and empowerment, but studies examining the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in improving self-efficacy are limited. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of an Islamic counseling intervention in improving self-efficacy in the Muslim community. Using a quantitative approach with a two-group pretest-posttest design, 130 participants aged 18-45 years were divided into experimental and control groups. The intervention consisted of four group sessions, which integrate Islamic values such as *tawakal* and *ikhtiar*, reflection on Qur'anic verses, as well as modern psychological techniques such as cognitive restructuring and directed imagination. The three dimensions of self-efficacy based on Bandura's theory—level, generality, and strength—were measured using a validated questionnaire. Two-Way ANOVA analysis showed that the experimental group significantly improved on all three dimensions compared to the control group ($p < 0.001$), while the effects of age and age versus group interaction were not significant. Post-hoc results strengthened the differences between subgroups. The findings support the effectiveness of Islamic counseling as a values-based approach capable of strengthening self-efficacy across ages and backgrounds. This study makes a theoretical contribution by integrating Islamic spirituality into Bandura's self-efficacy framework, while offering a practical intervention model that can be applied in the mental strengthening of Muslim communities. This research shows that Islamic counseling has potential as an evidence-based approach that is relevant, contextual, and adaptive to the psychological needs of the ummah in the modern era.

INTRODUCTION

Muslim communities around the world face complex challenges in achieving social, economic, and spiritual well-being. Islamic teachings have emphasized the importance of community empowerment through values such as solidarity, mutual assistance, and earnest effort (*ikhtiar*) as fundamental principles of community life (Shabbir, 2021; Syauqillah et al., 2023). However, low levels of self-efficacy often become a barrier to individuals' active participation in social, economic, and political activities, ultimately diminishing the potential for overall community empowerments (Drury et al., 2005; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Low self-efficacy makes community empowerment difficult to achieve, as individuals lacking

confidence are unlikely to take active roles in improving their conditions and the surrounding environment (Pinkett & O'Bryant, 2003).

Self-efficacy plays a significant role in the empowerment process of individuals and communities (Agusnaya et al., 2024; Ajjan et al., 2019; Mosanya & Kassie, 2024; Ozer & Bandura, 1990; To et al., 2021). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their own abilities, influencing motivation, actions, and success in facing challenges (Bandura, 1977, 1978; Rozikin et al., 2024). The concepts of *tawakkul* (trust in God) serve as a foundation for strengthening self-efficacy (Tammar et al., 2023). This internal belief drives active engagement in various aspects of life, whether social, economic or political. Self-efficacy also encourages initiative and perseverance in the face of obstacles (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Nsereko et al., 2021), and increases active participation in building communities (Ergün & Avcı, 2018). Self-efficacy, plays a crucial role in enhancing community empowerment (Drury et al., 2005; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowering communities by increasing self-efficacy can help develop individuals who not only believe in their abilities but also have the capacity to motivate and inspire those around them (Malinowska et al., 2024; Pigg, 2002). When individuals feel confident in their capabilities, they are more likely to overcome obstacles, seek creative solutions, and collaborate with others to achieve shared goals (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Thus, enhancing individual self-efficacy contributes to strengthening the community as a whole, creating an environment where collaboration, innovation, and progress can flourish (Kim & Park, 2008). Fostering self-efficacy is a key element in sustainable and effective community empowerment efforts. Implementing counseling based on Islamic values can be a strategic solution to help Muslim communities strengthen their self-efficacy, thereby contributing to broader community empowerment.

One strategic approach that is aligned with the spiritual and psychological needs of Muslim communities is Islamic counseling (Çınaroğlu, 2024; Cucchi, 2022; Rassool, 2024). The concept of Islamic counseling integrates religious values rooted in the Qur'an and *Sunnah— briefly explain what is sunnah*, such as *tawakkul* and *ikhtiar* (Tammar et al., 2023), with principles of modern psychology—what are those principles, introduce them here (Yusuf et al., 2021). This combination of religious values and modern counseling approaches allows Islamic counseling to play an important role in enhancing community self-efficacy. Islamic counseling helps individuals develop their potential, engage in society, and boost their self-efficacy (Mu'min & Wyhardes, 2024). Therefore, Islamic counseling not only enhances personal confidence but also strengthens community solidarity and resilience.

Research on the relationship between self-efficacy and community empowerment has been widely conducted, particularly in education and health contexts (Andini et al., 2023; Devi & Putri, 2022; Rahmi, 2019; Yunitasari, 2018) showing that enhancing self-efficacy can influence individual involvement in empowerment efforts, and for influence of spirituality and self-efficacy. These findings consistently show that increasing self-efficacy plays a central role in encouraging individuals' active participation in empowerment programs. However, to date there is limited research that explicitly integrates an Islamic based counseling approach in an effort to improve self-efficacy, particularly in the context of empowering Muslim communities. Unlike approaches in education and health that often focus on individual psychological and technical aspects, Islamic counseling interventions in educational contexts are generally aimed at reducing student anxiety, increasing self-awareness (mindfulness), and strengthening academic and moral aspects. This focus is more individualistic and limited to the formal education sector, particularly university students as the primary population (Kadafi et al., 2021; Yusuf et al., 2021). Meanwhile, in the health sector, Islamic counseling approaches focus more on restoring patients' psychological well-being through spiritual strategies such as improving coping mechanisms and achieving inner peace. However, these approaches are generally

therapeutic in nature and have not explicitly integrated social and cultural dimensions into their intervention designs (Yosep et al., 2023).

Previous studies have shown that Islamic counseling is effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, but few have examined its relationship to self-efficacy, an important psychological indicator supporting individual capacity development within the community. Several studies have identified a relationship between religious environments and increased perceptions of self-efficacy, but none have systematically examined how Islamic counseling interventions can shape dimensions of self-efficacy within the context of empowering Muslim communities. Furthermore, although numerous studies have developed theoretical frameworks and practices for Islamic counseling, the empirical impact of interventions on indicators such as self-efficacy, which are closely related to social participation and individual resilience, has rarely been directly explored (Rauf et al., 2025; Tanhan, 2019; Ismail et al., 2024; Hanin & Mat, 2014; Lubis, 2011; Zakaria & Mat Akhir, 2017) . The studies that have been presented mostly only highlight the effect of Islamic counseling on self-efficacy in general, without exploring its specific contribution to the empowerment of Muslim communities. Therefore, this study discusses the impact of Islamic counseling to foster self-efficacy in Muslim communities. This research aims to foster the self-efficacy of the Muslim community through Islamic-based counselling. This research contributes to the application of Islamic-based counseling, which is believed to be an effective strategy in fostering self-efficacy, while also addressing the need for empowerment that is in accordance with the values and religious beliefs of the Muslim community contextually.

METHODS
Design
The study involved two groups of participants, an experimental group that received the Islamic counseling intervention and a control group that did not receive the intervention over the same period of time. Both groups underwent a measurement of self-efficacy before (pretest) and after the intervention period (posttest). The choice of this design aims to measure differences in changes in self-efficacy scores more objectively between participants who received the intervention and those who did not. This design also allowed the identification of relevant patterns of differences based on involvement in the Islamic counseling program. Although participants were not randomly selected, group assignment was done based on equality of basic characteristics (gender, occupational status) to maintain internal validity. This design was deemed appropriate for exploring the initial effectiveness of the intervention model developed in the context of the Muslim community, as well as providing a strong basis for the development of a larger-scale and multi-contextual intervention in the future.

Participants
The population in this study was Muslim community members aged 18-45 years old living in Lampung Province, Indonesia. The sample size was determined based on statistical power analysis using GPower 3.1, assuming a significance level (α) of 0.05, statistical power of 0.80, and a medium effect size (f = 0.25) for a two-way ANOVA design. The calculation results indicate that a minimum of 128 participants are needed to detect main effects and interactions. So, this study sample consisted of 130 participants who were selected using purposive sampling technique. The criteria for this study were (1) aged 18–45 years, (2) Muslim, (3) willing to participate in the entire series of studies, (4) not currently undergoing other psychological therapy, and (5) able to understand instructions and fill out the questionnaire independently. The participants were divided into two main groups, namely the experimental group that followed the Islamic counseling program (n = 65) and the control group that did not follow any intervention during the study period (n = 65). The division of the groups

took into consideration the equal distribution of basic demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and educational background. Each group consisted of age subgroups, namely 18-25 years (40 total participants; 20 each in the experimental group and 20 in the control group), 26-35 years (50s total participants; 25 each per group), and 36-45 years (40 total participants; 20 each per group). This age grouping was used to analyze differences in response to the intervention based on the phase of psychosocial development.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of a demographic questionnaire and a self-efficacy scale. The demographic questionnaire collected essential participant information, including age group (18–25, 26–35, 36–45), gender, occupational status, and prior experience with counseling services, enabling a contextual understanding of the sample and subgroup comparisons. The self-efficacy scale was adapted from Bandura's theoretical model Bandura (1982, 2012) and comprised 15 items measuring three dimensions: Level (confidence in completing tasks of varying difficulty), Generality (belief generalization across contexts), and Strength (resilience in facing challenges). Each item was rated using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (Riadi et al., 2024). Prior to distribution, the instrument was validated by counseling and Islamic psychology experts, and reliability testing produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.85, indicating strong internal consistency and suitability for assessing self-efficacy in the context of Islamic counseling interventions.

Intervention package

The research procedure began with the preparation stage, which included recruiting participants and explaining the purpose of the study. In the implementation stage, participants first filled out a self-efficacy questionnaire as a pre-test. The Islamic counseling intervention was then provided in four structured sessions over two weeks, each lasting 90 minutes, and facilitated by certified counselors who hsave a background in clinical psychology and Islamic values-based counseling training. The sessions were specifically designed to target the three dimensions of self-efficacy (Level, Generality, Strength) by integrating Islamic spiritual values. The first counseling session focuses on self-awareness and spiritual grounding, through written reflection activities, Qur'anic verse analysis and personal value clarification. The second counseling session emphasized goal setting and the concept of effort using problem solving techniques, directed imagery, and group discussions to build confidence in personal abilities. The third counseling session addressed the themes of emotion regulation and *tawakal* through cognitive restructuring, spiritual affirmation, and narrative counseling. The fourth counseling session reinforced successful experiences of mutual feedback and collective prayer as a form of strengthening social cohesion and psychological resilience. Delivery methods included a combination of short lectures, interactive discussions and reflection among participants. All sessions followed a pre-tested manual-based protocol in a similar population, the same facilitator to maintain consistency of delivery, and completeness of implementation was monitored using a session checklist to maintain internal validity of the intervention. After all sessions were completed, participants again completed the self-efficacy questionnaire as a post-test to evaluate changes in scores resulting from the intervention.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the participants' characteristics and self-efficacy scores. Normality test using Shapiro-Wilk was conducted to ensure normal distribution of the change in score (Δ) data. In addition, Levene's test was used to test the homogeneity of variance between age groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to test for significant differences in change in self-efficacy scores by age group. Two-way ANOVA was used to

examine the interaction effect between group type (experimental and control) and age category on changes in self-efficacy.
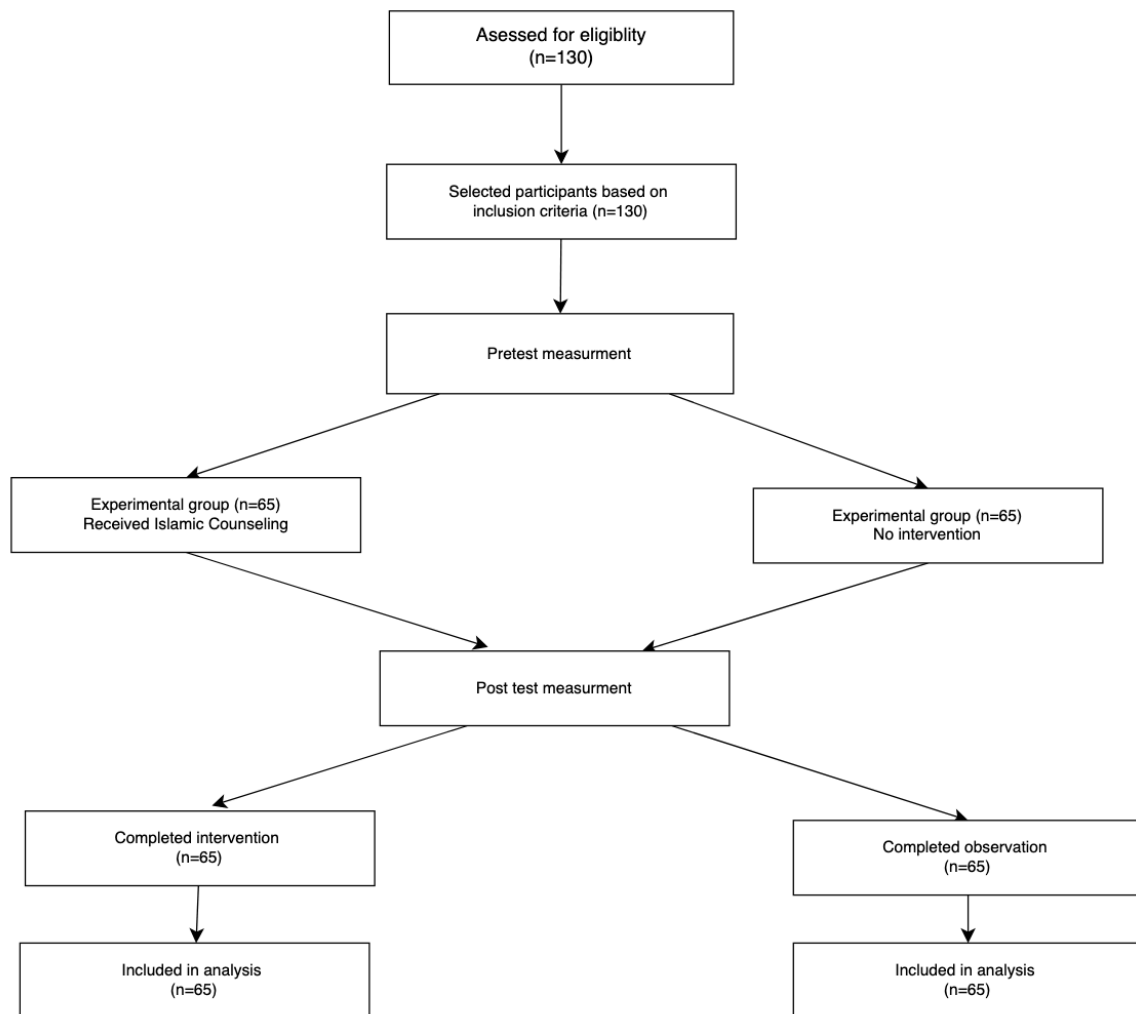

Figure 1. Research Procedure

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The study included 130 participants who were equally divided into two groups: an experimental group (n = 65) that followed the Islamic counseling intervention, and a control group (n = 65) that received no intervention during the study period. Overall, the participants consisted of 62 males (47.7%) and 68 females (52.3%), with ages ranging from 18 to 45 years (M = 31.2; SD = 7.9). The age distribution was divided into three categories as follows: Based on employment status, 45.4% of all participants were employed or self-employed, 34.6% were students, and 20.0% were unemployed or working in the informal sector. In terms of self-reported socioeconomic status, 62.3% were from the middle economic group, 21.5% from the low economic group, and 16.2% from the high economic group. Table 1 describe the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

All participants in the experimental group attended the full four sessions of the Islamic counseling intervention according to the implementation protocol. Meanwhile, the control group continued their normal activities without receiving any additional intervention during the study period. Table 2 presents the mean scores of each experimental and control group, categorized by age group.

Table 1. Table of Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Precentage (%)
Age Group	18-25 Years	40	30.8
	26-35 Years	50	38.5
	36-45 Years	40	30.8
Gender	Males	62	47.7
	Females	68	52.3
Employment Status	Students	45	34.6
	Employed/Self-Employed	59	45.4
	Unemployed/Informal Sector	26	20.0
Socioeconomic Status	Low	28	21.5
	Middle	81	62.3
	High	21	
Previous Counseling Experience	Yes	31	23.8
	Never	99	76.2

Table 2. Mean Pretest and Posttest Scores per Experimental and Control Age Group

Group	Age Group	Level Pre-test	Level post-test	Generality Pre-test	Generality Post-test	Strenght Pre-test	Strenght Post-test
Control	18-25	59.76	62.42	57.23	59.33	62.85	63.74
Control	26-35	61.49	61.93	57.58	59.33	63.88	62.22
Control	36-45	57.90	61.25	59.44	58.85	64.40	64.49
Experimental	18-25	59.14	79.85	57.10	80.50	60.28	80.53
Experimental	26-35	58.74	80.74	58.72	81.03	62.64	82.36
Experimental	36-45	59.59	79.08	58.51	80.74	63.62	81.76

Normality and Homogeneity

The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed that the changes in self-efficacy scores (Δ) were normally distributed across all age groups ($p > 0.05$). This ensures the data is suitable for parametric statistical tests, such as ANOVA. Furthermore, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance revealed no significant differences in variances between the groups ($p = 0.27$). These results confirm that the assumptions for conducting ANOVA were met, providing robust support for the validity of the subsequent analyses.

Table 3. ANOVA and Post-Hoc Results

Effect	F-Value	p-Value
Level		
Group	1536.75	< 0.0001
Age Group	0.08	0.9232
Group x Age Group	0.44	0.6435
Generality		
Group	1656.98	< 0.0001
Age Group	0.30	0.7394
Group x Age Group	0.21	0.8105
Strength		
Group	1737.85	< 0.0001
Age Group	0.53	0.5906
Group x Age Group	0.06	0.9445

ANOVA and Post-Hoc Analysis

The results of the two-way ANOVA analysis showed that there were highly significant differences in the improvement of self-efficacy based on the treatment group (experimental vs. control) for all three dimensions measured: Level ($F = 1536.75$, $p < 0.0001$), Generality ($F = 1656.98$, $p < 0.0001$), and Strength ($F = 1737.85$, $p < 0.0001$). These findings confirmed that the Islamic counseling intervention had a strong and consistent impact on increasing

participants' self-efficacy, regardless of the age factor. In contrast, there was no significant effect of age group on changes in self-efficacy scores across the three dimensions (all $p > 0.05$), with F values for Age Group ranging from 0.08 to 0.53. Similarly, the interaction between group and age (Group × Age Group) was also not significant (all $p > 0.05$), indicating that the effectiveness of the intervention asspplied equally across all age categories: 18-25, 26-35, and 36-45 years. This suggests that although each age group has different developmental characteristics, the intervention is still universally acceptable and positive.

Discussion

The results of the analysis show that the increase in scores in the Level dimension which reflects an individual's self-efficacy in completing tasks with a certain level of difficulty is strongly influenced by the Islamic counseling intervention. The experimental group showed a much higher increase compared to the control group. This finding is in line with Bandura's (1982) theory, which states that mastery experience directly increases self-efficacy. Interventions that integrate Islamic values as well as modern psychological approaches are thought to create a situation that provides participants with the opportunity to experience success directly, thus increasing Level scores. In contrast, there were no significant differences between age groups in this dimension, indicating that the increase in task completion ability was not strongly influenced by age, but was more determined by the quality of the intervention experience experienced by participants.

The Generality dimension, which is the ability to generalize self-confidence to various domains of life, results showed a significant increase in the experimental group. This suggests that the intervention not only improved efficacy in the context of a specific task but also expanded self-confidence across the board. The first session, which focused on self-awareness, spiritual values, and reflection on Qur'anic verses, is thought to be an important foundation in building personal meaning that can be generalized to various life contexts. In addition, the clarification of personal values conducted in the session contributed to participants' ability to see self-confidence as part of their identity and life principles, not just a situational skill. The absence of an age effect or group × age interaction in this dimension suggests that the internalization of spiritual values has the potential to touch all age ranges relatively equally (Sutoyo et al., 2023). This finding is in line with the results research which show the generality dimension in self-efficacy can be formed through repeated experiences in memorizing the Qur'an and active involvement in religious development activities. This indicates that spiritual internalization through value-based Islamic activities can form self-efficacy (Hasbi et al., 2022).

The Strength dimension, which measures the strength of belief in the face of challenges and pressures, experienced the most notable increase. This increase was particularly significant in the experimental group compared to the control group and was reinforced by the results of Tukey's post-hoc test which showed significant differences between subgroups based on age. This finding supports by Bandura (2003) that the role of social persuasion and emotional arousal in shaping self-efficacy strength. In this intervention, the third and fourth sessions contributed greatly to the development of the Strength aspect. Participants were trained to regulate emotions through cognitive restructuring, spiritual affirmation, and narrative counseling that provided space to change their perspective on failure and pressure. Furthermore, the fourth session strengthened psychological resilience through the practice of collective prayer, strengthening social cohesion and positive feedback, all of which created an atmosphere of social recognition, emotional support and collective confidence. This improvement also reflected the spiritually meaningful process of verbal persuasion, as participants received affirmations not only from others, but also from the religious narratives they internalized during the intervention (Rix et al., 2022). Thus, the Strength dimension became an important indicator in demonstrating the success of the integration of religious and psychological approaches in improving self-efficacy.

Based on the demographic distribution of participants, this study covered a wide age range (18–45 years) with diverse occupational and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity is important to assess the extent to which Islamic counseling can be effectively adapted within the context of a heterogeneous Muslim society. For example, the 18–25 age group, which is predominantly composed of university students (34.6%), tends to still be in the stage of exploring self-identity and spirituality. This influences the depth of internalization of counseling materials, which may not be as strong as participants aged 36–45 years who are more religiously and psychosocially mature. This is in line with findings showing that psychological and spiritual factors can vary with age, providing insight into the influence of age on the internalization of counseling material and supporting the framework of the dynamics of self-identity development (Butts & Gutierrez, 2018). The 18–25 age group is generally still in the early adulthood phase, namely a period of exploration of spiritual and religious identity that is not yet fully stable, so they tend to have a different level of internalization of religious values compared to older participants who have reached a more mature and consistent stage of religiosity (Akib et al., 2025). Although increases in self-efficacy were observed across all age groups, variations in levels of understanding and resonance with spiritual values need to be considered as factors mediating the effectiveness of the intervention.

Employment background also influenced the dynamics of participation and reflection during the sessions. Participants who were employed or self-employed (45.4%) tended to face real challenges in their daily lives related to social, economic, and spiritual responsibilities, making a values-based counseling approach more easily understood as part of problem-solving. Conversely, participants who were unemployed or worked in the informal sector may require a more empowering approach to gradually build self-efficacy. This finding aligns with research demonstrating that spiritually based counseling can significantly improve psychological well-being, particularly stress resilience (Osei-Tutu & Affram, 2023). Furthermore, these results support the findings that found increased self-efficacy after Islamic values-based training (Zakaria et al., 2020).

Unlike previous studies that emphasize the general benefits of Islamic counseling on psychological well-being (Hanin & Mat, 2014; Kadafi et al., 2021), this study explicitly positions self-efficacy as a crucial, central variable in the process of empowering individuals and communities. Thus, this study not only strengthens the argument that Islamic counseling is effective in improving well-being but also explains how and why this intervention successfully shapes positive self-perceptions through the internalization of spiritual values. Furthermore, compared to approaches that focus on enhancing resilience and emotional balance through spiritual values, this study offers a more comprehensive and applicable framework (Lubis, 2011; Zakaria et al., 2020). Its methodological strength lies in the use of quantitative psychometric measures to assess changes in subdimensions of self-efficacy, combined with an intervention protocol that can be consistently replicated across Muslim community contexts.

This study's contribution extends beyond a conceptual framework, expanding it by targeting the structural dimensions of self-efficacy: Level, Generality, and Strength, and demonstrating that each aspect can be measurably improved through structured and standardized Islamic counseling sessions. Therefore, this intervention can be used as a practical, values-based empowerment strategy for application in community programs, religious institutions, or religious organizations, not only as individual therapy but also as a model for adaptive and sustainable community capacity building.

Implications

This research has significant practical implications, particularly in the context of Muslim communities. By integrating Islamic values into counseling interventions, the approach bridges participants' spiritual and psychological needs, offering a culturally relevant model for

enhancing self-efficacy. This approach is not only beneficial for individuals but can also be applied in broader community empowerment programs. The findings highlight the importance of developing interventions tailored to demographic needs, such as age and social responsibilities. Moreover, the integration of Islamic values provides a robust framework for practitioners and policymakers to design more effective and sustainable intervention programs.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite its significant contributions, this study has several limitations. Using a comparative design with experimental and control groups, the participants were not randomized. This limits the ability to draw strong causal inferences. Another important limitation is related to the age diversity of the participants. Although no statistically significant differences were found between age groups, the possibility of differences in the resonance of meaning to spiritual narratives and Islamic values in counseling sessions remains. Younger participants (18-25 years old), for example, may not have the same depth of religious experience as their older counterparts, so their perception and internalization of the counselling materials may differ. Therefore, it is necessary to consider age adjustment in the delivery of content, both in terms of language, symbols, and depth of reflection. Further studies are recommended to use a randomized controlled trial method and observe the long-term effects of this intervention. Future research needs to design counseling materials that are more age-adaptive, with a stage-based approach to psychological and religious development. This is important to optimize the resonance of meaning and effectiveness of spiritual reflection, especially in younger participants.

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the Islamic counseling intervention that has been designed is able to provide significant improvements in the three main dimensions of self-efficacy, namely Level, Generality, and Strength. Statistical tests showed that the experimental group experienced greater improvements than the control group, with consistent effects across age groups. The intervention blends Islamic spiritual values such as *tawakal*, *ikhtiar*, and religious reflection with modern psychological techniques, creating a transformative experience that effectively strengthens an individual's belief in his or her ability to cope with life's tasks, pressures, and uncertainties. This research shows that the Islamic counseling approach can be implemented as a relevant and adaptive intervention in enhancing the psychological capacity of Muslim communities. The intervention is cross-age inclusive and has the potential to be further developed through digitization, adaptation of content based on developmental stages, and expansion of demographic reach.

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All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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