



The Effect of Islamic Counseling on the Mental Health of Underprivileged Senior High School Students

Riska Hariyandani[✉], Sahrul

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract

This study critically examines the use of Islamic counseling in improving the mental well-being of underprivileged students at senior high school. The main problem lies in the students' psychological vulnerability due to economic pressures that impact anxiety, low self-confidence, and emotional instability. This study used a descriptive design with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation of the Guidance and Counseling teacher and two students selected by purposive sampling. Data analysis was carried out through reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions with triangulation of sources and techniques. The results of the study indicate that Islamic counseling that integrates the values of patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and sincerity is significantly able to reduce anxiety, strengthen emotional control, and build a positive self-concept of students. A spiritual approach based on the Qur'an and Sunnah has proven effective in fostering mental resilience and self-acceptance of family economic conditions. It is concluded that Islamic counseling is a strategic and effective intervention in improving the mental well-being of underprivileged students through an integrated strengthening of spiritual, emotional, and cognitive dimensions and the formation of a positive self-meaning on an ongoing basis.

Keywords: Islamic Counseling, Peace of Mind, Underprivileged Students

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[✉]**Correspondence Author:** riska0102221008@uinsu.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Peace of mind is one of the fundamental aspects in the psychological development of students, especially for underprivileged students who often face economic, social, and academic pressures at the same time. Economic limitations not only have an impact on meeting physical needs, but also affect emotional stability, a sense of security, and students' confidence in undergoing the educational process (Putri & Hidayat, 2021). When peace of mind is disturbed, students tend to experience anxiety, prolonged stress, difficulty concentrating, and decreased motivation to learn which ultimately impacts their academic achievement and social behavior (Suryani et al., 2022).

Various research results show that students from underprivileged families have a higher risk of experiencing psychological problems than students from families with stable economic conditions. Life pressure, feelings of inferiority, and limited access to psychological support services are the dominant factors that affect the psychological condition of underprivileged students (Rahman & Nasution, 2020). In the context of



education, peace of mind is not only interpreted as a condition free from mental disorders, but also includes students' ability to manage emotions, think positively, and have self-resilience in facing various challenges in daily life (Keyes, 2021).

Efforts to improve students' peace of mind require a holistic and contextual approach, one of which is through the use of Islamic counseling. Islamic counseling is the process of providing assistance to individuals by integrating psychological principles and Islamic teaching values sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith (Almajri et al., 2025; Arroisi & Muhammad, 2025; Warsah, 2020). This approach emphasizes a balance between physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects, so that individuals are able to find the meaning of life, inner peace, and solutions to the problems they face.

Islamic counseling has the advantage of building peace of mind because it instills spiritual values such as patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and sincerity in facing life's difficulties. These values have been proven to increase mental resilience and reduce anxiety levels in students (Hakim & Fauzi, 2023). In addition, the spiritual approach in Islamic counseling helps students feel closer to Allah, so that a sense of security, optimism, and inner peace emerges despite being in a state of economic limitations (Mulyadi & Anwar, 2022). Islamic-based counseling is effective in lowering anxiety and improving the peace of mind of Muslim adolescents (Elfattah, 2025; Akib et al., 2025). Similar research was also conducted by Islamic counseling services are able to improve the emotional stability and psychological well-being of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

However, studies on the use of Islamic counseling specifically in improving the peace of mind of underprivileged students are still relatively limited, especially at the junior secondary education level. Most previous studies have focused more on mental well-being in general without linking it to students' socioeconomic conditions (Fitriani & Lubis, 2021; Pandey, 2025). In fact, underprivileged students have typical problem characteristics so they require a counseling approach that is in accordance with their psychosocial and spiritual conditions.

Based on this description, the use of Islamic counseling is a strategic alternative in helping to improve the peace of mind of underprivileged students. This research is important to examine in depth how the role of Islamic counseling in helping students manage the stress, anxiety, and life pressures they experience, as well as making a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of Islamic guidance and counseling services in schools.

This condition is increasingly vulnerable to being experienced by underprivileged students. Family economic pressures, limited learning facilities, and social stigma often trigger the emergence of emotional disorders in students from poor families (Osborne et al., 2025; Tasfi & Mostofa, 2024). Research shows that family economic instability is significantly related to increased psychological stress and decreased peace of mind among school-age students (Nurhayati & Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, a psychological mentoring approach is needed that is not only technical, but also touches on aspects of students' values and spirituality.

In the context of a religious Indonesian society, Islamic counseling is a relevant and contextual approach to help students achieve peace of mind. Islamic counseling views humans as biopsychosocial and spiritual beings, so that problem solving is not only focused on psychological aspects, but also on strengthening faith and individual relationships with Allah SWT (Abdulraof & Guro, 2025; Rahman, 2025). This approach is believed to be able to foster inner peace because students are invited to understand the meaning of life tests as part of Allah's provisions and are directed to be patient and *tawakal* in facing difficulties (Hidayat & Amin, 2022).

Furthermore, Islamic counseling also plays a role in building a positive self-concept in underprivileged students. Through internalizing Islamic values such as gratitude, sincerity,

and optimism, students can develop self-acceptance and reduce feelings of inferiority due to family economic conditions (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Recent research shows that Islamic spirituality-based counseling approaches are significantly able to improve the peace of mind and emotional balance of high school students (Aziz & Karim, 2025).

This study aims to analyze in depth the implementation of Islamic counseling in improving the mental well-being of underprivileged students at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumon, and to identify the forms of spiritual values internalized in the counseling process, such as patience, trust, gratitude, and sincerity, in helping students cope with economic, social, and academic pressures. In addition, this study also aims to describe changes in students' psychological conditions after participating in Islamic counseling services, especially in aspects of emotional management, self-acceptance, anxiety reduction, and increased mental resilience. The contribution of this study is expected to enrich scientific studies in the field of Islamic guidance and counseling, especially those related to strengthening the mental health of students from economically vulnerable groups. Practically, the results of this study can be a reference for Guidance and Counseling teachers, schools, and educational policy makers in designing counseling services that are more contextual, systematic, and based on Islamic spiritual values to support the creation of psychological well-being and mental well-being of students in a sustainable manner.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive design with a qualitative approach that aims to examine in depth the use of Islamic counseling in improving the peace of mind of underprivileged students. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore phenomena holistically and contextually based on the experience of the research subjects, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and spiritual dynamics of students (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The research subjects were determined through purposive sampling techniques, taking into account certain characteristics relevant to the focus of the research. The informants consisted of one Guidance and Counseling teacher and two students from underprivileged families. The selection of informants is based on the consideration that they have direct experience related to the implementation of Islamic counseling in the school environment (Etikan et al., 2020).

Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Interviews are used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and psychological changes that students experience after participating in Islamic counseling. Observations were made to identify students' behaviors, emotional responses, and social interactions in the school context. Meanwhile, documentation is used as supporting data that strengthens the research findings.

Data analysis is carried out interactively and continuously through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn (Miles et al., 2020). The data reduction process is carried out by sorting and focusing data that is relevant to the research objectives. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a systematic descriptive narrative to facilitate interpretation. The final stage is carried out by drawing inductive conclusions based on the patterns and relationships found in the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Islamic Counseling

The implementation of Islamic counseling at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumon was carried out adaptively through individual counseling services that emphasized a spiritual and value-based approach. The counseling process was not merely designed as a technical intervention

to address students' immediate personal and academic problems, but also as a medium for instilling Islamic values that could strengthen students' emotional and spiritual resilience. Based on the interview with the Guidance and Counseling teacher coded as M, Islamic counseling was delivered by integrating reflective dialogue, emotional support, religious advice, and value internalization into the counseling sessions. This means that the counselor did not only ask students about the problems they were facing, but also directed them to reinterpret those problems through an Islamic perspective, particularly by understanding hardship as part of Allah's decree and as a test that can elevate one's spiritual quality. This adaptive implementation indicates that Islamic counseling in the school context was positioned not simply as a curative service, but as a transformative effort intended to reconstruct students' way of thinking, emotional responses, and self-understanding. Such an approach is highly relevant for underprivileged students whose psychological burdens are often intertwined with economic hardship, academic pressure, and social stigma.

Field data further show that the role of the Guidance and Counseling teacher was central in shaping the effectiveness of Islamic counseling services. In this study, teacher M functioned not only as a counselor in the conventional sense, but also as a facilitator of meaning, a motivator, and a spiritual guide for students who experienced psychological distress. Teacher M explained that many underprivileged students came to counseling with emotional conditions characterized by insecurity, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. These students often perceived their family's economic condition as a source of shame and inferiority, particularly when comparing themselves to peers who had more stable financial backgrounds. As a result, they developed negative self-perceptions and were less likely to participate actively in academic or social activities at school. In response, teacher M used Islamic counseling to help students understand that self-worth is not determined by wealth, but by piety, effort, and moral character. Through this approach, counseling became an avenue for restoring dignity and hope among students. The counselor's role in providing acceptance, empathy, and religiously grounded encouragement was therefore a crucial factor in helping students regain emotional stability and develop a more positive orientation toward themselves and their life circumstances.

The interview data from student Y strongly support this finding. Student Y stated that feelings of inferiority and insecurity frequently emerged due to the family's economic condition. The student often felt embarrassed when unable to fulfill certain school-related needs or when comparing personal circumstances with those of classmates. This emotional discomfort gradually affected self-confidence and created a tendency to avoid interaction with others. In the counseling process, however, student Y reported receiving not only practical advice but also moral and spiritual reinforcement. The counselor encouraged Y to view economic limitations not as a personal failure, but as a life condition that could be faced with patience, gratitude, and trust in Allah. According to Y, this perspective reduced feelings of shame and helped foster a stronger sense of self-acceptance. The student began to realize that family hardship did not diminish personal worth or future opportunities. Instead, it could become a source of motivation for perseverance and self-improvement. This testimony illustrates that Islamic counseling worked as a process of cognitive and emotional reframing, enabling the student to move away from self-blame and toward a more constructive and spiritually grounded understanding of life challenges.

A similar pattern was found in the interview with student M, who described experiencing significant anxiety related to academic demands and family economic difficulties. Student M admitted to feeling mentally burdened by the expectation to perform well in school while simultaneously dealing with worries about financial limitations at home. This combination of pressure often led to overthinking, emotional instability, and difficulty concentrating on schoolwork. In the counseling sessions, the student was guided to

understand that excessive anxiety could be reduced by developing *tawakal*, or trust in Allah after making sincere efforts. The counselor also emphasized that academic struggle should not be viewed solely as a burden, but as a form of effort that carries spiritual value when approached with patience and sincerity. Student M explained that this approach made it easier to calm down and manage emotional reactions when facing pressure. Rather than being overwhelmed by fear of failure, the student gradually learned to focus on effort, prayer, and acceptance of outcomes. This finding suggests that Islamic counseling can help underprivileged students regulate emotional responses by combining psychological support with spiritual orientation, thereby making academic and social stressors more manageable and less threatening to their mental well-being.

Another important aspect of the implementation of Islamic counseling in this study was the use of persuasive and reflective communication rather than directive preaching. The counseling process was conducted in a manner that allowed students to tell their stories, express their emotional burdens, and reflect on their own experiences before the counselor introduced Islamic values as part of the problem-solving process. This is an important methodological characteristic because it shows that Islamic counseling in this context was not delivered as a one-way moral instruction, but as a dialogical process that respected the students' emotional realities. Teacher M emphasized that underprivileged students often need to feel heard and accepted before they are ready to receive advice. Therefore, counseling sessions were structured to begin with empathy and exploration of the problem, followed by gradual spiritual reinforcement. In this way, values such as patience, sincerity, gratitude, and *tawakal* were not imposed abstractly, but were connected directly to the students' lived experiences. This reflective strategy made the counseling process more meaningful and personally relevant for the students (see Table 1). It also strengthened the possibility that the values discussed during counseling would be internalized not only at the level of knowledge, but also at the level of emotional response and everyday behavior.

Table 1. Summary of Finding 1: Implementation of Islamic Counseling

Informant Code	Main Statement	Emerging Theme	Interpretation
Teacher M	Underprivileged students often experience anxiety, low confidence, and social withdrawal; counseling is delivered through individual sessions with spiritual reinforcement.	Adaptive implementation of Islamic counseling	Islamic counseling is used as a contextual service to address emotional distress and to internalize Islamic values.
Student Y	Felt insecure and inferior because of family economic limitations; counseling helped develop self-acceptance and reduced shame.	Economic hardship and low self-esteem	Counseling functions as emotional support and cognitive reframing through Islamic values.
Student M	Experienced anxiety due to academic pressure and economic burden; counseling fostered calmness and better emotional control.	Academic anxiety and emotional burden	Counseling helps regulate stress by linking effort with <i>tawakal</i> and spiritual acceptance.
Teacher M, Student Y, Student M	Counseling emphasized patience, gratitude, sincerity, and <i>tawakal</i> through reflective dialogue.	Spiritual approach in counseling practice	The counseling process integrates psychological assistance and spiritual meaning-making.

The implementation of Islamic counseling also reflected an understanding that students' problems are multidimensional and cannot be separated from their socio-economic background. Teacher M explained that many of the students' emotional disturbances were rooted not in isolated personal issues, but in a broader pattern of family hardship, social comparison, and fear of being judged by peers. Because of this, counseling could not focus

only on academic motivation or behavioral discipline. Instead, it had to address the students' sense of self, emotional security, and spiritual meaning-making. Islamic counseling became relevant because it offered a holistic framework that acknowledged students as psychological, social, and spiritual beings at once. This holistic orientation enabled the counselor to address both visible symptoms—such as anxiety, withdrawal, and low confidence—and the deeper existential questions underlying those symptoms, including feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and uncertainty about the future. In practice, this meant that counseling sessions encouraged students to talk not only about what happened to them, but also about how they interpreted those experiences and how their faith could help them endure hardship. The findings therefore suggest that Islamic counseling is particularly suitable for underprivileged students because it responds to their problems in a way that is emotionally sensitive, culturally relevant, and spiritually empowering.

The implementation of Islamic counseling at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumun functioned as an adaptive, student-centered, and spiritually grounded service for underprivileged students. Its implementation involved a strong role from the counselor, the use of reflective communication, and the integration of Islamic values into the process of emotional support and meaning reconstruction. Through this approach, students were not only assisted in expressing their emotional difficulties, but were also guided to reinterpret hardship as something that could be faced with patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and sincerity. The interview data from teacher M, student Y, and student M consistently indicate that counseling was perceived as helpful because it provided both emotional relief and spiritual direction. This finding is significant because it shows that Islamic counseling in the school setting can move beyond a narrow problem-solving model and become a transformative educational intervention. For underprivileged students in particular, such counseling provides a space where economic hardship is not ignored, but addressed through a compassionate framework that restores dignity, builds inner strength, and helps students maintain psychological balance amid difficult life circumstances.

The Impact of Islamic Counseling on Students' Peace of Mind and Emotional Stability

The Islamic counseling contributed significantly to improving the peace of mind of underprivileged students at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumun. Before receiving counseling services, the students involved in this study—particularly student Y and student M—were in psychologically vulnerable conditions marked by anxiety, overthinking, insecurity, emotional instability, and negative self-perception. Their mental distress was closely connected to their socio-economic circumstances, including family financial hardship, academic demands, and social pressure in the school environment. After participating in Islamic counseling, however, both students reported a gradual but meaningful improvement in their emotional state. They described becoming calmer, more accepting of their family conditions, and less overwhelmed by fear and worry. These changes indicate that the counseling process did not merely provide temporary emotional comfort, but facilitated a deeper psychological shift in how students interpreted themselves and their life circumstances. The findings suggest that peace of mind among underprivileged students can be strengthened when counseling addresses not only external problems, but also the internal meaning structures through which those problems are understood. In this regard, Islamic counseling appears to function as an intervention that nurtures emotional stability through spiritual insight, self-reflection, and constructive reinterpretation of hardship.

One of the clearest changes observed in this study was the improvement in self-acceptance among student Y. Prior to counseling, Y frequently experienced feelings of inferiority due to the family's economic condition and tended to compare personal circumstances with those of peers. This comparison often led to shame, withdrawal, and an

internal belief that being poor meant being less valuable or less capable than others. During the counseling process, the student was encouraged to reflect on these assumptions and to replace them with a more spiritually grounded understanding of human worth. Through discussions about gratitude, patience, and the Islamic view that every individual is tested differently by Allah, student Y gradually began to reinterpret economic hardship as part of life's test rather than as a marker of personal deficiency. As a result, the student reported feeling less emotionally burdened and more able to accept family conditions without excessive sadness or embarrassment. This change in self-acceptance is important because it demonstrates that peace of mind is closely related to how students define themselves in relation to their social and economic circumstances. Islamic counseling appears to have helped student Y develop a more compassionate and realistic self-view, thereby reducing internal conflict and emotional distress.

Student M also experienced notable changes after participating in Islamic counseling, especially in relation to anxiety management and emotional control. Before counseling, M often felt overwhelmed by academic expectations and family financial pressures, resulting in persistent worry, mental fatigue, and difficulty focusing on school tasks. The student explained that the pressure to succeed academically was accompanied by fear of disappointing the family and concern over limited resources, which together intensified feelings of helplessness. Through counseling, student M was introduced to the concept of *tawakal* as a way of balancing effort with surrender to Allah's will. The counselor also emphasized the importance of sincerity in doing one's best without being consumed by fear of outcomes beyond one's control. Over time, M reported becoming calmer and more capable of controlling anxious thoughts. Rather than constantly anticipating failure, the student began to focus on what could realistically be done in the present while entrusting the results to Allah. This shift demonstrates that Islamic counseling can support emotional regulation by offering students a spiritual framework for dealing with uncertainty, pressure, and fear. In this sense, peace of mind emerges not from the absence of difficulty, but from a transformed way of responding to difficulty.

The findings further indicate that the positive impact of Islamic counseling was closely related to the internalization of specific spiritual values, particularly patience (*sabr*), *tawakal*, gratitude (*shukr*), and sincerity (*ikhlas*). These values did not function merely as abstract moral teachings; rather, they operated as psychological resources that helped students regulate emotions, endure stress, and maintain hope amid hardship. Patience enabled students to slow down impulsive emotional reactions and to face difficult conditions without excessive complaint. *Tawakal* reduced the burden of uncertainty by strengthening trust in Allah after personal effort had been made. Gratitude helped students recognize that even within economic limitations, there were still blessings and opportunities worth appreciating. Sincerity encouraged them to act without excessive attachment to external validation or fear of judgment from others. According to teacher M, these values were repeatedly reinforced during counseling sessions through reflective conversation and practical examples drawn from the students' own experiences. The result was a gradual transformation in the way students understood and managed emotional pressure. This finding is important because it shows that spiritual values in Islamic counseling do not only have theological significance, but also serve as concrete mechanisms for fostering psychological resilience and peace of mind.

Another important impact observed in this study was the reduction of overthinking and negative self-perception among students after counseling. Before the intervention, both student Y and student M tended to dwell excessively on their problems, imagining worst-case scenarios and blaming themselves for circumstances that were often beyond their control. This pattern of overthinking intensified anxiety and made it difficult for them to respond

constructively to academic and social challenges. Islamic counseling helped interrupt this pattern by introducing a more balanced way of thinking rooted in faith, acceptance, and realistic self-evaluation. Students were guided to distinguish between what could be changed through effort and what needed to be accepted as part of Allah’s decree. This distinction appears to have reduced the tendency to internalize every difficulty as a personal failure. Instead, students began to see hardship as a manageable reality that could be faced with faith, perseverance, and support from others. As their thinking became less self-critical and more spiritually grounded, emotional tension also decreased. The reduction in overthinking is particularly relevant because it demonstrates that Islamic counseling can influence not only feelings, but also cognitive patterns that sustain emotional distress. In other words, peace of mind in this study was achieved through a combination of emotional relief, spiritual reflection, and cognitive restructuring.

Table 2. Summary of Finding 2: Impact of Islamic Counseling on Students’ Peace of Mind

Aspect of Change	Condition Before Counseling	Condition After Counseling	Evidence from Informants
Self-acceptance	Student Y felt ashamed and inferior due to family poverty.	Student Y became more accepting of family conditions and less emotionally burdened.	Interview with Y
Anxiety management	Student M experienced excessive worry, academic pressure, and emotional instability.	Student M became calmer, more focused, and better able to control anxious thoughts.	Interview with M
Emotional stability	Students tended to overthink and withdraw socially.	Students showed more emotional control and greater readiness to face school demands.	Interview with M and teacher M
Spiritual coping	Students initially lacked a positive framework for understanding hardship.	Students used patience, <i>tawakal</i> , gratitude, and sincerity as coping mechanisms.	Interview with Y, M, and teacher M

Table 2, the impact of Islamic counseling was also evident in students’ social and academic functioning. As emotional pressure decreased, students became more capable of engaging in daily school life with a calmer and more stable disposition. Teacher M observed that students who had previously appeared withdrawn, hesitant, or emotionally fragile showed signs of improvement after counseling. They became more open in communication, less reactive to stressful situations, and more willing to participate in school activities. Although the study does not claim that all psychological difficulties disappeared completely, it does show that students developed better coping capacities for dealing with the pressures they faced. For underprivileged students, this is a significant outcome because emotional instability often interferes with concentration, motivation, peer relationships, and willingness to seek help. By reducing inner tension and strengthening self-acceptance, Islamic counseling indirectly supported students’ capacity to function more effectively in academic and social contexts. This finding suggests that peace of mind should not be understood only as a subjective feeling of calmness, but also as a condition that enables students to interact with their environment more adaptively. The counseling process therefore had implications not only for internal emotional well-being, but also for students’ broader adjustment in the school setting.

Taken together, the second finding confirms that Islamic counseling had a positive and meaningful impact on the peace of mind of underprivileged students at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumon. The interviews with student Y, student M, and teacher M indicate that counseling contributed to improved self-acceptance, reduced anxiety, better emotional control, and a more constructive interpretation of hardship. These outcomes were achieved

through the internalization of Islamic values that functioned simultaneously as spiritual guidance and psychological coping resources. The findings show that peace of mind among underprivileged students is not produced simply by telling them to be patient or grateful, but by engaging them in a counseling process that helps them understand, personalize, and apply those values in relation to their own struggles. In this way, Islamic counseling serves as a meaningful intervention that bridges emotional healing with spiritual development. Its impact lies in helping students feel that they are not powerless victims of their circumstances, but individuals who can face hardship with dignity, faith, and resilience. This makes Islamic counseling highly relevant as a school-based support strategy for students living under economic and psychological vulnerability.

Discussion

Islamic counseling plays a significant role in improving the peace of mind of underprivileged students by integrating psychological assistance with spiritual value internalization. In the context of SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumun, Islamic counseling was not limited to solving surface-level student problems, but functioned as a holistic intervention that addressed emotional distress, self-perception, and existential meaning. This finding is in line with the theoretical perspective that Islamic counseling is a process of helping individuals return to an awareness of their identity as servants of Allah, so that they can live in accordance with divine guidance and achieve well-being in this world and the hereafter. Counseling is not merely remedial but developmental and transformative (Chauhan et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2025). It aims to help individuals interpret difficulties within a broader spiritual framework and to cultivate inner qualities that support emotional stability. The present study supports this understanding by showing that underprivileged students who initially experienced insecurity, anxiety, and emotional instability became calmer and more accepting of their conditions after receiving counseling. Thus, Islamic counseling may be understood as an approach that does not separate psychological healing from spiritual growth, but rather treats both as interconnected dimensions of human well-being.

The implementation of Islamic counseling in this study also reflects the biopsychosocial-spiritual view of human beings that underlies Islamic guidance and counseling. Underprivileged students do not experience emotional distress solely because of internal psychological weakness, but because they are positioned within difficult social and economic realities that shape how they think, feel, and behave. Economic hardship may limit access to educational resources, increase social comparison, and trigger feelings of shame or inferiority. If these pressures are not addressed properly, students may develop anxiety, low confidence, and withdrawal from school participation. The counseling model identified in this study responded to these conditions by acknowledging students' material difficulties while simultaneously helping them build spiritual resilience. Islamic counseling is particularly relevant for students from economically vulnerable backgrounds because it offers a contextual approach that does not ignore social suffering, but interprets it through values that encourage patience, gratitude, *tawakal*, and sincerity (Maulidi & Misnawi, 2025; Hidayat et al., 2025). In this sense, the study extends the understanding of Islamic counseling as more than religious advice; it is a culturally grounded psychosocial intervention that recognizes the complexity of students' lives and seeks to strengthen their inner capacity to cope with hardship in a meaningful and dignified way.

The positive changes experienced by student can be discussed through the concept of cognitive and emotional restructuring. Before counseling, both students interpreted their family's economic hardship as a burden that diminished their worth and threatened their future. Such interpretations generated insecurity, overthinking, and emotional instability. Through Islamic counseling, however, students were guided to reconstruct these

interpretations by viewing hardship as part of Allah's decree and as a test that can be responded to with faith and effort. This process is important because emotional suffering often persists not only because of external problems, but because of the meanings individuals attach to those problems. Counseling reduced feelings of inferiority by shifting the meaning of poverty from a source of shame to a condition that could be faced with patience and gratitude (Elfattah, 2025). Counseling reduced academic anxiety by reframing performance pressure through the value of *tawakal*, which helped the student focus on effort rather than fear of outcomes. These findings support the view that Islamic counseling contributes to peace of mind by helping students reorganize maladaptive thought patterns and replace them with spiritually informed, emotionally supportive, and more adaptive ways of understanding life difficulties.

The importance of the counselor's role in determining the success of Islamic counseling interventions (Rahman, 2025). In this study, teacher M was not merely a transmitter of religious messages, but a facilitator who created a supportive relationship in which students felt heard, understood, and gradually guided toward spiritual reflection. This relational dimension is essential because underprivileged students often carry hidden emotional wounds related to shame, fear, and self-doubt. If counseling were delivered only as moral instruction without empathy and trust-building, it would likely fail to reach the students' deeper emotional needs. The findings indicate that the counselor's sensitivity, communication style, and ability to connect Islamic values with the student's lived experience were key factors in the observed changes. This means that the effectiveness of Islamic counseling depends not only on the presence of Islamic content, but also on the professional competence of the counselor in applying that content therapeutically. Therefore, discussions of Islamic counseling in schools should not stop at the level of conceptual relevance; they must also consider counselor training, reflective skills, ethical sensitivity, and the ability to translate spiritual principles into practical psychological assistance. In this way, Islamic counseling can function not as a symbolic school program, but as a meaningful intervention with measurable impact on student well-being.

The study reveals several limitations that need to be considered critically. Although Islamic counseling had a positive impact on students' peace of mind, its implementation at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumun was still constrained by limited counseling time, the large number of students, and the absence of a more systematic and sustainable counseling framework. These limitations suggest that the positive outcomes observed in this study were achieved despite structural challenges, rather than because the system had been fully optimized. If counseling remains situational and dependent on the personal initiative of a single counselor, its benefits may not be distributed evenly across all students who need support. Moreover, underprivileged students often face long-term and recurring pressures, meaning that a one-time or occasional intervention may not be sufficient to sustain emotional recovery and resilience (Pandey 2025; Maulidi & Misnawi, 2025). Such a model could include regular mentoring, spiritual reflection activities, peer support, and stronger collaboration between counselors, teachers, and families. Therefore, the discussion of Islamic counseling should include not only its effectiveness at the individual level, but also the institutional conditions necessary to sustain its benefits over time.

Islamic counseling is a relevant, effective, and contextually meaningful approach for supporting the peace of mind of underprivileged students. Its strength lies in its capacity to integrate emotional assistance, cognitive restructuring, and spiritual guidance into a single counseling process that responds to the complexity of students' lives. The experiences of student demonstrate that when students are guided to understand hardship through values such as patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and sincerity, they become better able to regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and accept their circumstances without losing hope. At the same

time, the study also shows that the effectiveness of this approach depends on the counselor's competence and on the institutional support available within the school. Therefore, Islamic counseling should be developed not only as a reactive service for students in crisis, but as a structured and sustainable framework for promoting psychological well-being and spiritual resilience. In this sense, the findings of this study provide both theoretical and practical implications: theoretically, they strengthen the position of Islamic counseling as a holistic model of student support; practically, they encourage schools to invest in counselor capacity, program development, and spiritually grounded mental health services for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The use of Islamic counseling has proven to be effective in increasing the peace of mind of underprivileged students at SMA Negeri 1 Ulu Barumun. The implementation of counseling that integrates spiritual values such as patience, *tawakal*, gratitude, and sincerity is able to transform students' psychological conditions from a state that was originally marked by anxiety, low self-esteem, and emotional instability to be calmer, adaptive, and have positive self-acceptance. Islamic counseling not only functions as a curative intervention in solving student problems, but also plays a strategic role in building mental resilience through strengthening the spiritual dimension. The process of internalizing Islamic values has proven to be able to form constructive coping mechanisms, so that students are better able to manage economic pressures, academic demands, and social dynamics in a balanced manner. However, the effectiveness of Islamic counseling is still influenced by implementing factors, such as limited service time and the systematic structure of counseling programs. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of counselors and develop a more integrated and sustainable Islamic counseling model so that the benefits can be felt optimally by all students, especially underprivileged students.

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