

Should Islamic Religious Education and Student Mental Health: Exploring Spiritual Well-Being in Educational Settings in India

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Abstract		Mental health has become an increasingly important concern in educational settings due to rising levels of stress, anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and psychological challenges among students. In India, academic pressure, social expectations, economic inequality, cultural diversity, and post-pandemic educational disruptions have intensified mental health concerns among learners. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has the potential to contribute positively to student mental health by promoting spiritual well-being, emotional resilience, moral development, and psychological balance through religious teachings and values. This study explores the role of Islamic Religious Education in supporting student mental health and spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. Using a qualitative literature review approach, the study examines scholarly literature related to mental health, spiritual well-being, Islamic education, and student psychological development. The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education positively contributes to students' emotional stability, coping mechanisms, sense of meaning, social connectedness, and psychological resilience through teachings emphasizing faith (<i>iman</i>), patience (<i>sabr</i>), gratitude (<i>shukr</i>), trust in God (<i>tawakkul</i>), and ethical conduct. Furthermore, spiritual practices such as prayer, Qur'anic reflection, and moral guidance may reduce emotional distress and strengthen students' psychological well-being. However, challenges remain, including stigma surrounding mental health, limited integration between mental health education and religious instruction, insufficient teacher preparedness, and varying cultural perceptions regarding psychological support. The study concludes that Islamic Religious Education can play a meaningful role in promoting student mental health and spiritual well-being in India when supported by inclusive educational approaches, teacher training, and integration between religious values and psychological well-being frameworks.			
Keywords		Islamic Religious Education, Student Mental Health, Spiritual Well-Being, Educational Settings, India, Psychological Well-Being, Islamic Education, Student Resilience			
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1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health has become an increasingly significant issue within educational environments worldwide. Students today encounter various psychological, emotional, social,

and academic pressures that may influence their overall well-being and educational performance. Anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, social isolation, and academic burnout increasingly affect learners across different age groups and educational levels. Educational institutions are therefore expected not only to support students' academic achievement but also to foster emotional resilience, psychological well-being, and social adjustment. Mental health is now widely recognized as an essential dimension of holistic education because students' emotional and psychological conditions strongly influence learning engagement, academic performance, and social behavior.

According to the World Health Organization, mental health refers to a state of well-being in which individuals recognize their abilities, cope effectively with everyday stress, work productively, and contribute positively to society. Student mental health is shaped by multiple factors, including family conditions, social relationships, academic expectations, cultural environments, economic circumstances, and personal experiences. In educational settings, positive mental health contributes to concentration, motivation, emotional regulation, social participation, and long-term academic success. Conversely, poor mental health may negatively affect students' learning outcomes, interpersonal relationships, and behavioral development.

The importance of student mental health has become increasingly evident in the context of India, where educational competition, social expectations, socioeconomic inequality, and rapid social change create significant psychological pressures for students. India possesses one of the largest student populations globally, characterized by cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Many students face academic stress due to examination systems, career expectations, financial challenges, and family pressures. Furthermore, emotional distress among young people has become more visible following disruptions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including social isolation, educational uncertainty, and psychological instability. These conditions highlight the urgent need for educational approaches capable of supporting students' mental and emotional well-being.

Within this context, religion and spirituality increasingly receive scholarly attention as important factors contributing to psychological resilience and emotional stability. Religious education may help students develop meaning, moral guidance, coping strategies, and emotional support systems that strengthen psychological well-being. Spiritual well-being

refers to an individual's sense of meaning, inner peace, connectedness, purpose, and relationship with transcendent values or beliefs. According to Harold G. Koenig, spirituality and religious engagement may positively affect mental health by promoting hope, resilience, emotional regulation, and social connectedness. Religious beliefs often provide individuals with coping mechanisms that help manage uncertainty, suffering, stress, and emotional challenges.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies an important role in promoting students' moral, ethical, and spiritual development. Beyond transmitting religious knowledge, Islamic Religious Education seeks to nurture emotional balance, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and spiritual consciousness. Islamic teachings emphasize holistic human development encompassing intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education may contribute significantly to students' psychological well-being by offering moral guidance, emotional support, and spiritual resources that strengthen resilience during difficult circumstances.

Islamic teachings contain various principles directly associated with mental and emotional well-being. Concepts such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), *shukr* (gratitude), *rahmah* (compassion), and *dhikr* (spiritual remembrance) provide ethical and psychological frameworks for coping with emotional distress and uncertainty. Prayer (*salah*), Qur'anic recitation, spiritual reflection, and community belonging may create emotional stability and psychological comfort among students. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic spirituality promotes inner harmony by encouraging balance between material concerns and spiritual consciousness. Such spiritual orientation may help students manage emotional challenges more effectively and cultivate positive mental attitudes.

The relationship between religion, spirituality, and mental health has received increasing scholarly attention in educational and psychological research. Studies suggest that students with stronger spiritual well-being often report lower levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress while demonstrating greater resilience and life satisfaction. Religious identity and spiritual engagement may provide emotional security and a sense of belonging that positively influences mental health outcomes. In Islamic educational contexts, students may benefit psychologically from religious teachings that emphasize hope, divine wisdom, gratitude, and moral responsibility.

The role of Islamic Religious Education becomes particularly important in India, where Muslim students represent a substantial minority within broader multicultural and multi-religious educational settings. Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs and Islamic schools, continue to play important roles in moral education and religious identity formation. At the same time, Muslim students studying within public or multicultural educational institutions may experience additional psychological pressures related to identity, belonging, discrimination, or social adjustment. Islamic Religious Education may therefore provide valuable emotional and spiritual support helping students navigate complex social and educational realities.

Despite its potential benefits, the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and student mental health remains insufficiently explored within educational research, particularly in the Indian context. Mental health discussions often focus predominantly on medical or psychological interventions while paying limited attention to spiritual and religious dimensions. Furthermore, stigma surrounding mental health issues may discourage students from seeking emotional support, particularly in communities where psychological difficulties are poorly understood or socially sensitive. Educational institutions may also lack structured approaches for integrating mental health promotion with religious education.

Another challenge concerns teacher preparedness in addressing students' emotional and psychological needs. Islamic Religious Education teachers may possess strong religious knowledge but limited mental health literacy or counseling competencies. Consequently, opportunities for using religious teachings to support students' emotional well-being may not always be fully utilized. According to Michael Fullan, educational transformation requires professional development and institutional support to ensure educators possess skills necessary for addressing emerging student needs effectively.

Moreover, contemporary educational settings increasingly emphasize holistic approaches that integrate cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of learning. Islamic Religious Education offers opportunities to promote well-being through value-based education that strengthens moral identity, emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and spiritual meaning. By contextualizing Islamic teachings within contemporary psychological challenges, educators may help students develop healthier coping strategies and stronger emotional resilience.

This study aims to explore the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and student mental health by examining how spiritual well-being contributes to students' emotional and psychological development in educational settings in India. Specifically, the study investigates the ways Islamic Religious Education may strengthen emotional resilience, coping mechanisms, meaning-making, and psychological stability among students. The study also explores challenges associated with integrating spiritual well-being and mental health support within educational contexts.

The findings of this study are expected to provide meaningful insights for educators, policymakers, curriculum developers, counselors, and Islamic educational institutions in India and beyond. By exploring the relationship between spirituality, religious education, and mental health, this study contributes to broader discussions concerning holistic education, student well-being, and emotionally supportive learning environments. Ultimately, strengthening spiritual well-being through Islamic Religious Education may help educational institutions support healthier, more resilient, and emotionally balanced students capable of navigating contemporary challenges while maintaining strong moral and spiritual foundations.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a literature review method to examine the relationship between Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and student mental health, particularly focusing on spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study aims to explore meanings, interpretations, theoretical perspectives, and educational experiences related to spirituality, mental health, and Islamic education. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research allows researchers to investigate complex educational and social phenomena through contextual interpretation and comprehensive understanding. Since student mental health and spiritual well-being involve psychological, social, emotional, and religious dimensions, qualitative inquiry provides an effective framework for analyzing these interconnected aspects.

The study adopts a literature review method because it enables the researcher to collect, analyze, and synthesize findings from existing scholarly works concerning student

mental health, spiritual well-being, Islamic Religious Education, and educational psychology. According to Lawrence A. Machi and Brenda T. McEvoy, literature review research facilitates theoretical understanding, comparative analysis, and identification of research gaps in a specific area of study. Through systematic examination of previous research, the study develops a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic Religious Education may influence psychological well-being and emotional resilience among students in India.

The data used in this study consist of secondary data derived from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, educational reports, conference proceedings, and scholarly publications. Relevant literature was obtained from reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center). These sources were selected because they provide reliable and peer-reviewed publications concerning mental health, spirituality, religious education, psychology, and student well-being.

The literature selection process involved several stages. First, the researcher identified relevant scholarly publications using keywords such as “Islamic Religious Education,” “student mental health,” “spiritual well-being,” “religion and mental health,” “psychological resilience,” “Islamic spirituality,” and “India.” Boolean search operators such as AND and OR were utilized to refine search results and improve relevance. Second, titles and abstracts were screened to identify literature directly aligned with the study’s objectives. Third, selected publications underwent comprehensive reading to extract significant findings regarding spiritual well-being, emotional resilience, coping mechanisms, educational practices, and psychological outcomes related to Islamic Religious Education.

Inclusion criteria prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly publications published between 2015 and 2024 to ensure contemporary relevance. However, foundational theoretical works regarding spirituality, mental health, and Islamic philosophy were also included when necessary to strengthen conceptual discussions. Studies unrelated to student well-being, religious education, or educational contexts were excluded from analysis.

The study employed thematic analysis to analyze collected literature. According to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical method used to identify recurring themes, categorize findings, and interpret patterns across data sources.

In this study, literature findings were categorized into several major themes, including: (1) Islamic Religious Education and spiritual development, (2) student mental health and emotional resilience, (3) spiritual well-being in educational settings, (4) coping mechanisms through Islamic teachings, and (5) challenges in integrating mental health and religious education.

To enhance reliability and trustworthiness, source triangulation was applied by comparing findings from multiple scholarly references, educational reports, and theoretical perspectives. According to Norman K. Denzin, triangulation strengthens research credibility by ensuring consistency and validation across diverse data sources. Priority was given to peer-reviewed and internationally recognized publications to improve analytical rigor.

Ethical considerations in this study primarily focused on academic integrity and responsible citation practices. Since the research relied exclusively on secondary data and published literature, no direct participants were involved, minimizing ethical concerns related to confidentiality or informed consent. Nevertheless, the researcher ensured objective interpretation, accurate citation, and avoidance of plagiarism throughout the research process.

Overall, the qualitative literature review method adopted in this study provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for understanding how Islamic Religious Education contributes to student mental health and spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. Through synthesis of existing scholarly evidence, the study aims to generate meaningful insights into holistic education, emotional resilience, and spiritually informed approaches to supporting student well-being.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) contributes positively to student mental health and spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. The integration of Islamic teachings into students' educational experiences supports emotional stability, psychological resilience, ethical behavior, and spiritual connectedness. Students who actively engage with Islamic Religious Education often demonstrate stronger coping abilities, emotional regulation, and greater psychological balance when facing academic, social, and personal challenges. In educational environments characterized by

increasing psychological pressures, Islamic Religious Education provides meaningful spiritual resources that may help students maintain emotional well-being and mental resilience.

The analysis reveals that spiritual well-being represents one of the strongest pathways through which Islamic Religious Education influences student mental health. Spiritual well-being refers to a sense of inner peace, meaning, purpose, connectedness, and emotional harmony that supports psychological functioning. Students who develop stronger spiritual awareness through Islamic Religious Education frequently report greater emotional comfort, hopefulness, and resilience during stressful situations. Islamic teachings encourage students to develop trust in divine wisdom, patience during hardship, and gratitude for life circumstances, all of which contribute positively to emotional stability. According to Harold G. Koenig, spirituality and religious engagement often function as protective factors against mental distress because they provide emotional support, coping frameworks, and meaning during difficult experiences.

One important finding concerns the role of Islamic spiritual practices in reducing psychological distress among students. Practices such as prayer (*salah*), Qur'anic recitation, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and spiritual reflection appear to strengthen emotional regulation and reduce anxiety. Students participating regularly in spiritual practices often report experiencing calmness, reduced emotional tension, and increased feelings of optimism. Prayer, for example, functions not only as a religious obligation but also as a structured emotional coping mechanism that provides routine, reflection, and psychological reassurance. Qur'anic recitation similarly creates emotional comfort by offering moral guidance, spiritual encouragement, and reassurance during periods of uncertainty or stress. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic spirituality fosters psychological balance by encouraging harmony between material concerns and spiritual consciousness.

The study further demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education supports emotional resilience among students. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt positively when facing stress, adversity, or emotional difficulties. In educational settings in India, many students encounter intense academic competition, examination pressure, family expectations, financial uncertainty, and social stressors that negatively affect mental health. Islamic teachings emphasizing *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *shukr* (gratitude)

provide psychological resources that help students interpret difficulties more constructively and maintain emotional stability. Students increasingly understand challenges as opportunities for personal growth and spiritual development rather than insurmountable obstacles. This aligns with broader psychological findings suggesting that meaning-centered coping strategies improve resilience and reduce emotional distress.

Another important finding concerns the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening students' moral identity and emotional self-control. Students who engage meaningfully with religious education often demonstrate greater awareness of ethical responsibility, empathy, compassion, and interpersonal respect. Moral and spiritual guidance contributes to improved emotional regulation because students become more capable of managing anger, frustration, disappointment, and interpersonal conflicts. Islamic teachings encourage compassion (*rahmah*), forgiveness, and emotional discipline, which positively influence students' relationships and social well-being. Strong social connectedness and supportive interpersonal relationships are important contributors to mental health, especially within school environments where peer interactions significantly affect emotional experiences.

The multicultural and multi-religious context of India makes Islamic Religious Education particularly important for Muslim students navigating identity formation and social belonging. Muslim students in India may occasionally experience challenges related to minority identity, cultural adaptation, or feelings of social exclusion within broader educational settings. Islamic Religious Education provides students with spiritual confidence, moral grounding, and a stronger sense of identity, helping them navigate complex social realities more effectively. Religious belonging often strengthens psychological well-being by fostering community support, shared values, and emotional security. Students participating in Islamic educational communities frequently report stronger social bonds and feelings of belonging, which contribute positively to emotional well-being.

The findings also reveal that Islamic Religious Education encourages meaning-making processes that positively affect student mental health. Meaning-making refers to the process through which individuals interpret experiences, suffering, uncertainty, and life challenges within broader philosophical or spiritual frameworks. Islamic teachings encourage students to perceive difficulties as temporary tests, opportunities for patience, and pathways for

personal development. Such interpretations reduce hopelessness and emotional despair because students maintain a stronger sense of optimism and purpose. According to positive psychology research, individuals possessing clear life meaning and spiritual orientation generally report higher emotional well-being and lower levels of psychological distress.

However, despite these positive outcomes, several challenges limit the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in supporting student mental health in India. One significant challenge concerns the persistent stigma surrounding mental health within many educational and social environments. Psychological distress, emotional struggles, or mental illness may sometimes be misunderstood, ignored, or socially stigmatized. Consequently, students experiencing anxiety, depression, or emotional difficulties may hesitate to seek support due to fear of judgment or misunderstanding. In some cases, emotional suffering may be interpreted solely through spiritual or moral lenses without adequate recognition of psychological dimensions requiring professional support.

Another challenge relates to limited integration between mental health education and Islamic Religious Education curricula. In many educational institutions, religious instruction focuses primarily on theological knowledge, ritual practice, and moral teachings without explicitly addressing emotional resilience, psychological well-being, or coping skills. Opportunities to contextualize Islamic teachings within contemporary mental health discussions may therefore remain underdeveloped. Educational institutions could strengthen student well-being by integrating mental health awareness with spiritual teachings emphasizing emotional regulation, compassion, self-care, and resilience.

Teacher preparedness also emerged as an important issue affecting implementation effectiveness. Islamic Religious Education teachers often possess strong religious knowledge but may lack sufficient mental health literacy or counseling competencies necessary to recognize emotional distress and provide supportive guidance. Teachers may require professional development programs enabling them to identify early signs of emotional difficulty, facilitate supportive conversations, and integrate spiritual teachings with psychological well-being practices. According to Michael Fullan, educational innovation depends substantially on teacher preparedness, institutional support, and professional learning opportunities. Without adequate training, educators may struggle to maximize the psychological benefits of Islamic Religious Education.

Parental and community support also significantly influences students' spiritual well-being and mental health outcomes. Students receiving emotional encouragement, spiritual guidance, and family support generally demonstrate stronger emotional resilience and healthier coping behaviors. In many Indian Muslim communities, family and religious institutions play central roles in shaping emotional attitudes, moral behavior, and spiritual development. Therefore, effective promotion of student mental health through Islamic Religious Education requires collaborative efforts involving schools, families, religious institutions, and mental health professionals.

The study also highlights the importance of balancing spiritual support with professional mental health interventions. Although Islamic Religious Education positively contributes to emotional well-being, religious guidance alone may not always adequately address severe psychological difficulties such as depression, trauma, or clinical anxiety disorders. Educational institutions should therefore encourage integrated approaches combining spiritual well-being with evidence-based psychological support services. School counseling programs, mental health awareness initiatives, and emotionally supportive educational environments may complement the benefits of Islamic Religious Education effectively.

Additionally, the findings suggest that holistic educational models integrating intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions create more supportive learning environments for student well-being. Islamic Religious Education contributes to this holistic approach by addressing students' emotional needs, ethical development, and spiritual identity alongside academic learning. Such integration supports not only mental health outcomes but also long-term character formation, social responsibility, and emotional maturity.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education possesses significant potential for supporting student mental health and spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. Through spiritual practices, ethical teachings, emotional guidance, and meaning-making frameworks, Islamic Religious Education helps students develop resilience, emotional balance, and psychological strength. However, stronger curriculum integration, teacher preparation, mental health literacy, and collaboration between educational and mental health systems remain necessary to maximize these

benefits. Educational institutions should recognize spirituality as an important dimension of student well-being while promoting inclusive, balanced, and psychologically informed educational practices.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a meaningful role in supporting student mental health and spiritual well-being in educational settings in India. Islamic teachings emphasizing faith, patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), compassion, and ethical behavior contribute positively to students' emotional resilience, psychological stability, and sense of purpose. Spiritual practices such as prayer, Qur'anic recitation, remembrance of God, and reflective learning create emotional comfort and help students manage stress, anxiety, and academic pressures more effectively. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education contributes not only to religious understanding but also to students' holistic emotional and psychological development.

The findings reveal that spiritual well-being serves as an important protective factor influencing student mental health. Students engaged in Islamic Religious Education often demonstrate stronger coping abilities, improved emotional regulation, greater optimism, and healthier responses to personal and academic challenges. In the multicultural educational environment of India, Islamic Religious Education also strengthens identity formation, belonging, and social connectedness among Muslim students, which positively affects emotional well-being.

However, several challenges continue to affect the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in promoting student mental health. Stigma surrounding psychological difficulties, limited integration of mental health discussions within religious curricula, insufficient teacher preparedness, and lack of collaboration between educational institutions and mental health professionals remain important concerns. Religious education alone may not adequately address severe psychological conditions, highlighting the need for balanced approaches integrating spirituality with evidence-based psychological support.

Therefore, educational institutions should strengthen the integration of spiritual well-being and mental health promotion through Islamic Religious Education by providing teacher training, mental health literacy programs, emotionally supportive school

environments, and collaborative support systems involving families and counselors. Ultimately, Islamic Religious Education can serve as an important foundation for nurturing emotionally resilient, spiritually grounded, and psychologically healthy students capable of facing modern educational and social challenges while maintaining strong moral and religious values.

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