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Self-Efficacy as a Mechanism in Sufi Psychotherapy for Psychological Disorders based on the *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* Approach: A Gadamerian Hermeneutic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: The escalating prevalence of psychological disorders highlights the limitations of conventional psychotherapy in addressing existential distress and spiritual alienation, creating an urgent need for an integrative psychospiritual framework. **Objective:** This study aims to examine self-efficacy as a core psychospiritual mechanism within Sufi psychotherapy based on the *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* approach in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. **Methods:** A qualitative interpretive design employing Gadamerian hermeneutics was adopted, analyzing classical textual fragments (*ibārah*) through the iterative hermeneutic circle and the fusion of horizons between Sufi thought and modern psychological theories. **Results:** *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* practices (*muḥāsabah*/self-reflection, *dhikr*/remembrance of God, controlling *hawā*/worldly desires, *ṣabr*/patience, and *tawakkul*/trust in God) reconstruct self-efficacy from an autonomous cognitive appraisal into a transcendently grounded capacity for emotional regulation, impulse control, and psychological resilience. **Conclusion:** Sufi psychotherapy addresses psychological disorders by shifting agency from ego-centric self-reliance to a purified *qalb* (heart), generating resilient self-efficacy through the synergy of human effort (*mujāhadah*) and divine empowerment (*tawfīq*). **Originality/Value:** This study strengthens the conceptual foundation of Islamic Psychology and Sufi Psychotherapy by uncovering the operational mechanisms of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* regarding the reconstruction of transcendent self-efficacy in psychological disorders, which has remained underexplored. These findings enrich existing empirical evidence while serving as a strategic reference for psychotherapists, counselors, and mental health clinicians in developing spiritually responsive interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, burnout, stress, and existential crises continue to increase rapidly in modern society (Balqis et al., 2023). These conditions indicate that mental health issues are not solely related to emotional and cognitive disturbances, but are also closely associated with the spiritual and transcendental di-

mensions of human life. Globally, mental health is increasingly recognized as an individual capability to maintain psychological balance, discover authentic life meaning, and sustain resilience when facing intense pressures (Arslan et al., 2020; Ungar & Theron, 2019). Consequently, exploring holistic approaches that address spiritual well-being alongside psychological health has become a critical area of scientific inquiry.

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According to modern psychology and humanistic principles, individuals should ideally possess adaptive capacities to regulate stress, maintain psychological stability, and exercise self-governance in navigating life challenges (Nilsson & Strupp-Levitsky, 2016)). Within the theoretical framework of Albert Bandura, self-efficacy serves as a core psychological foundation where an individual maintains strong confidence in their capability to organize actions and manage difficult situations adaptively (Narayanan & Onn, 2016; Nyuiemedi & Richardson, 2024). Furthermore, in Islamic psychospiritual paradigms, Sufi psychotherapy views human beings as psycho-spiritual entities (Irham, 2023; Ismail et al., 2021), wherein the human soul ideally operates through a harmonious balance of the *qalb*, reason, and spiritual consciousness, enabling individuals to achieve emotional tranquility and moral integrity (Bozorgzadeh & Grasser, 2021; Sotillos, 2022).

Despite these ideal expectations, empirical reality demonstrates a significant prevalence of psychological distress, existential emptiness, and inner alienation among individuals facing modern life pressures (Hughes, 2017). Conventional psychotherapeutic approaches often fail to resolve these issues completely because they focus predominantly on cognitive and behavioral adjustments while neglecting spiritual dimensions (Shakhova & Zhdanova, 2025). In clinical and community contexts, psychological disorders manifest not merely as emotional instability, but as spiritual alienation caused by weak self-control and the domination of worldly desires (Harisoorya & Vidya, 2022). This occurs because mainstream psychological frameworks lack an integrated mechanism to transform the soul at a deeper transcendental level.

Studies regarding spiritual practices and mental health have been conducted extensively in recent years. Various studies demonstrate that spirituality, religiosity, and Sufi practices contribute positively to psychological well-being and emotional tranquility (Bozorgzadeh & Grasser, 2021; Fatimah et al., 2025; Hasanah, 2025; Herliana & Pant, 2023). Other studies also confirm that specific practices within *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, particularly as framed in classical texts like *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Amin et al., 2025), such as self-reflection, remembrance of God, and patience, enhance emotional regulation and stress resilience (Abdilah et al., 2025; Ma'muroh et al., 2024; Wandira et al., 2023). Existing literature reveals that spiritual practices serve as effective coping tools for psychological distress (Amal & Othman, 2025; Cucchi, 2022; Kasim et al., 2024; Rusydi et al., 2022). From these study outcomes, the current state of the field indicates that while the therapeutic benefits of Sufism are widely acknowledged, research remains largely normative and descriptive without thoroughly explaining the underlying psychospiritual mechanisms of self-efficacy formation.

Although various studies have widely examined Sufi psychotherapy, most previous studies discuss these as-

pects in a normative manner and have not provided a comprehensive explanation regarding how self-efficacy is structured through spiritual transformation. Furthermore, self-efficacy literature in modern psychology has not adequately integrated spiritual transcendental dimensions, creating a significant theoretical and knowledge gap regarding the synthesis of Bandura's self-efficacy theory with Islamic spiritual psychology (Faizal et al., 2025; Nurcahyati et al., 2026; Syahid & Alif, 2026). Based on this limitation, this study offers an integrative theoretical framework as a literature and theoretical gap by reinterpreting core practices of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* through a Gadamerian hermeneutic dialogue. Through the hermeneutic circle and the fusion of horizons, classical Sufi texts are brought into an active philosophical dialogue with contemporary psychological theories to uncover the psychospiritual architecture of self-efficacy.

The significance of this study provides a theoretical and conceptual contribution to the development of science by expanding the theoretical framework of self-efficacy in the fields of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy. The study findings are expected to broaden academic horizons, overcome the limitations of secular cognitive-behavioral paradigms, strengthen the scientific foundation of Islamic mental health, and serve as a reference for future researchers in formulating spiritually responsive therapeutic interventions. Practically, the resulting integrative model bridges theoretical knowledge with field implementation, offering practical guidance for psychotherapists, counselors, and mental health practitioners in treating psychological disorders through a holistic psychospiritual approach.

Addressing this theoretical and practical urgency is imperative because the ongoing neglect of transcendental dimensions in clinical settings leaves individuals facing existential crises and spiritual alienation without comprehensive, soul-level therapeutic solutions. In modern mental health practice, relying solely on secular, performance-based cognitive models often prove inadequate for resolving the deeper psychospiritual distress rooted in moral disintegration and ego-centric vulnerabilities. Reinterpreting *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* through a rigorous hermeneutic lens is crucial to transforming classical Sufi wisdom from abstract theological doctrine into an operational, evidence-informed psychospiritual architecture. Consequently, this study is of paramount importance as a strategic bridge between classical Islamic metaphysics and contemporary psychotherapy, providing mental health professionals with an actionable, culturally responsive framework to cultivate resilient, transcendent self-efficacy in patients struggling with modern psychological disorders.

This study aims to interpret the concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* as a psychospiritual mechanism in the formation of self-efficacy for psychological disorders through the perspectives of Sufi psychotherapy and Gada-

merian hermeneutics. Specifically, the focus of this study centers on two primary dimensions: 1) conceptualizing *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as an integrative psychospiritual framework that recenters human agency and personality restructuring in the *qalb* (heart); and 2) analyzing the core operational mechanisms of transcendent efficacy formation, specifically *muḥāsabah* (self-reflection), *dhikr* (spiritual emotional regulation), control of *hawā al-nafs* (executive self-regulation), as well as *ṣabr* and *tawakkul* (psychological resilience and existential trust), through a dialogical fusion of horizons between al-Ghazālī's Sufi thought and modern mental health theories.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive design using Gadamerian hermeneutics to examine self-efficacy as a psychospiritual mechanism within Sufi psychotherapy through the concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*. Based on Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, textual understanding is conceptualized as a dialogical process between the text, the interpreter's pre-understanding, and historical horizons. The unit of analysis consisted of specific textual fragments (*ibārah*) in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* related to *muḥāsabah* (self-reflection), *dhikr* (remembrance of God), control of *hawā al-nafs* (worldly desires), *ṣabr* (patience), and *tawakkul* (trust in God). These textual fragments were interpreted through the iterative principles of the hermeneutic circle (part-whole relationship) and the fusion of horizons (fusion between classical Sufi thought and modern psychology). Gadamerian hermeneutics was selected because it enables the reinterpretation of classical Sufi concepts within the context of contemporary mental health while preserving the historical and philosophical integrity of the text. This approach allows *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* to be understood not merely as a medieval theological doctrine, but as a dynamic psychospiritual framework relevant to self-regulation, psychological resilience, and transcendental self-efficacy in addressing modern psychological disorders.

2.2 Data Sources

The primary data source for this study was *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, specifically the quarter of "Destructive Evils" (*Rub' al-Muhlikāt*) and "Saving Virtues" (*Rub' al-Munjiyāt*) which explicitly address purification of the soul, self-control, *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul*. This classic text was selected due to its foundational role in Sunni Sufi psychology, providing a systematic and

comprehensive account of human spiritual, moral, and psychological transformation. Secondary data sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and scholarly literature related to Sufi psychotherapy, Islamic psychology, mental health, emotional regulation, and Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy.

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through an extensive documentation study and close textual reading (close reading) of *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. The researcher systematically identified, extracted, and cataloged textual materials (*ibārah*) directly addressing the structural mechanisms of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, particularly passages illuminating *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, *ṣabr*, *tawakkul*, control of worldly desires, spiritual emotional regulation, inner tranquility, and soul transformation. The extracted textual fragments were then categorized into thematic units corresponding to core psychological dimensions, including reflective self-awareness, affective regulation, impulse control, coping confidence, and psychospiritual resilience.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the analytical procedures of Gadamerian hermeneutics through a multi-layered interpretive dialogue between the classical text, the historical horizon of al-Ghazālī, and contemporary psychological theories. The interpretive process was governed by the hermeneutic circle, in which understanding moved continuously between the part (Part: specific textual fragments, terminology, and *ibārah*) and the whole (Whole: the overall psychospiritual system of al-Ghazālī's thought in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*).

The analysis was executed through three distinct stages: 1) Textual Analysis (Part): Examining the literal, linguistic, and contextual meanings of specific textual fragments (*ibārah*) in *Iḥyā'*; 2) Systemic Contextualization (Whole): Integrating these specific fragments into al-Ghazālī's broader conceptual architecture of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (*takhallī*, *taḥallī*, and *tajallī*); and 3) Fusion of Horizons: Engaging al-Ghazālī's historical Sufi paradigm in a critical dialogue with modern psychological concepts (specifically Albert Bandura's self-efficacy model, self-regulation, and emotional regulation).

Through this dialogical process, modern psychological theories provided a vocabulary for interpreting classical Sufi insights, while the Sufi framework expanded modern self-efficacy into a transcendental, spiritually grounded construct.

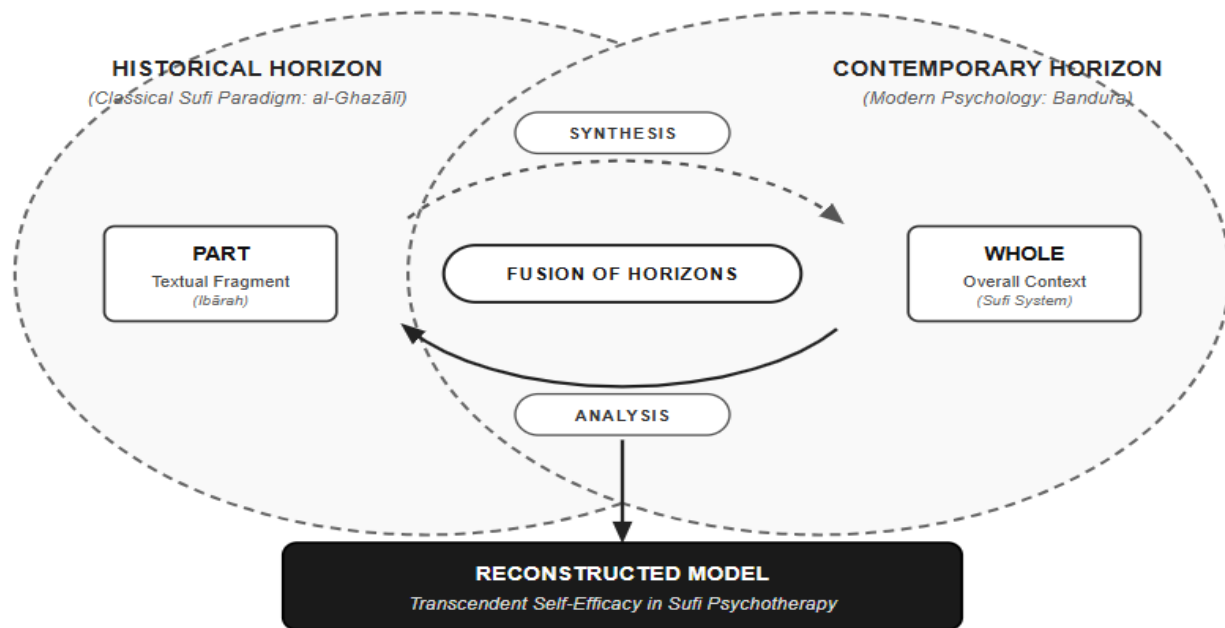


Fig. 1. The Hermeneutic Circle and Fusion of Horizons Framework (Adapted from Gadamer, 1960/2004).

Figure 1 illustrates the iterative analytical process of Gadamerian hermeneutics applied in this study. The inner loop represents the hermeneutic circle, depicting the continuous dialogical movement between individual textual fragments (Part: *ibārah*) and the overarching Sufi system in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Whole). The outer bridge represents the fusion of horizons, wherein the historical-spiritual horizon of al-Ghazālī meets the contemporary horizon of modern psychology to synthesize a transcendental framework of self-efficacy in Sufi psychotherapy.

2.5 Trustworthiness

To ensure interpretive validity and qualitative rigor, this study adopted strategies appropriate for philosophical-hermeneutic research. Credibility was established through persistent and iterative textual engagement (hermeneutic close reading), contextual verification of classical Arabic terminology, and reflexive awareness regarding the researcher's pre-understandings. Theoretical triangulation was rigorously maintained by cross-referencing al-Ghazālī's primary expressions with secondary commentary literature and contemporary psychological frameworks. Furthermore, interpretive dependability was enhanced by providing clear audit trails of the analytical steps, ensuring that every interpretive claim regarding self-efficacy is transparently grounded in specific textual fragments (*ibārah*) of *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. A

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

Engaging with Abū Ḥāmid al Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al*

Dīn through a Gadamerian hermeneutic movement requires acknowledging the interpreter's pre understanding (*Vorverständnis*). Driven by contemporary concerns regarding modern psychological distress and grounded in Bandura's social cognitive framework, this hermeneutic inquiry does not seek an objective, frozen historical truth. Instead, it initiates an active dialogue with the text. Through this fusion of horizons, the analysis reveals that *Tazkiyat al Nafs* can be reconstructed as a structured psychospiritual framework that transforms self efficacy from an autonomous, performance contingent cognitive appraisal into a transcendently grounded conviction. Rather than relying on ego centric competence, Sufi self efficacy is forged through an iterative internal transformation consisting of core operational mechanisms: self reflection (*muḥāsabah*), spiritual emotional regulation (*dhikr*), impulse control (control of *hawā al nafs*), and psychological spiritual resilience (*ṣabr* and *tawakkul*).

3.1.1 Tazkiyat al-Nafs as an Integrative Psychospiritual Framework

In the overarching architecture of *Iḥyā' Tazkiyat al Nafs* functions as the foundational matrix for personality restructuring. Reading the text through the dialectical movement between individual practices (Part) and al Ghazālī's holistic Sufi system (Whole), specifically the stages of *takhallī* (ego deconstruction), *taḥallī* (virtue internalization), and *tajallī* (existential integration), demonstrates that human agency is recentered from peripheral behavioral adjustments to the *qalb* (heart) as the governing executive locus of consciousness. Al Ghazālī articulates this ontological hierarchy in the core *ibārah*:

القلب هو الأصل، والأعضاء تتبع له، فإذا طاب القلب طابت الجوارح كلها، وإذا فسد فسدت الجوارح كلها

(*Al-qalbu huwa al-aṣl, wa al-a'dā'u taba'un lah, fa idzā ṭāba al-qalb ṭabat al-jawāriḥ kulluhā, wa idzā fasada fasadat al-jawāriḥ kulluhā*)

Meaning: "The heart is the foundation, while the limbs follow its condition; if the heart is sound, then all behavior becomes sound, and if the heart is corrupted, then all behavior becomes corrupted."

From a linguistic perspective (*Sprachlichkeit*), employing the term *al aṣl* (root or foundation) constructs the *qalb* as the primary executive center, while the physical limbs (*al jawāriḥ*) are framed as subordinate dependents (*taba'*). Interpreting this textual fragment (Part) within al Ghazālī's broader psychospiritual system (Whole) reveals that psychological helplessness, chronic distress, and diminished efficacy stem from spiritual alienation and an unpurified ego. Consequently, *Tazkiyat al Nafs* restructures the soul so that an individual's belief in their capacity is not anchored in fragile external outcomes, but in interior spiritual purity and transcendental alignment.

3.1.2 Core Operational Mechanisms of Transcendent Efficacy Formation

The hermeneutic interpretation of core textual evidences (*ibārah*) unfolds four distinct operational mechanisms through which spiritual transformation generates transcendent self efficacy:

a) Self-Reflection (*Muḥāsabah*)

Within the *Tazkiyat al Nafs* framework, *Muḥāsabah* is interpreted through the hermeneutic circle as a continuous metacognitive engine of self auditing, evaluating internal states prior to ultimate divine accountability. Al Ghazālī grounds this mechanism in the imperative directive:

حاسب نفسك قبل أن تحاسب، وزن أعمالك قبل أن توزن عليك

(*Hāsib nafsaka qabla an tuḥāsab, wa zin a'mālaka qabla an tūzana 'alaik*)

Meaning: "Hold yourself accountable before you are held accountable, and weigh your deeds before they are weighed against you."

Etymologically derived from the commercial accounting root *ḥ s b*, the imperative verb *ḥāsib* constructs an active self observing subject. In the hermeneutic dialectic with al Ghazālī's broader system, *muḥāsabah* consists of preaction vigilance (*murāqabah*) and postaction evaluation. Fusing this historical insight with the contemporary horizon of cognitive psychology, this mechanism directly corresponds to self monitoring and metacognitive awareness. However, while secular self monitoring evaluates be-

havioral performance against temporal and situational standards, *muḥāsabah* evaluates internal patterns against absolute transcendental imperatives. This application (*Appliation*) dismantles egoic self deception (*ghurūr*), endowing the individual with reflective confidence grounded in accurate, undeceived self knowledge

b) Spiritual Emotional Regulation (*Dhikr*)

In this hermeneutic movement, spiritual emotional regulation through *dhikr* is conceptualized as an affective stabilization process that cleanses the soul from cognitive turmoil and transforms *al nafs al ammārah* (impulsive self) into *al nafs al muṭma'innah* (tranquil self). Al Ghazālī characterizes true remembrance as: In this hermeneutic movement, spiritual emotional regulation through *dhikr* is conceptualized as an affective stabilization process that cleanses the soul from cognitive turmoil and transforms *al nafs al ammārah* (impulsive self) into *al nafs al muṭma'innah* (tranquil self).

Al Ghazālī characterizes true remembrance as:

الذكر الحقيقي هو الذي يستغرق القلب حتى لا يبقى فيه متسع لغير المذكور

(*Al-dzikr al-ḥaqīqī huwa alladzī yastaghriqu al-qalba ḥattā lā yabqā fihi muttasa'un li ghair al-madzkūr*)

Meaning: "True *dhikr* is the remembrance that fills the heart until no space remains within it for anything other than the One who is remembered."

From a linguistic perspective (*Sprachlichkeit*), the verb *yastaghriq* (complete absorption or saturation) denotes total cognitive and affective immersion. In the context of al Ghazālī's broader system (Whole), the *qalb* is viewed as a vessel with limited attentional capacity; when saturated with temporal anxieties, emotional regulation collapses. *Dhikr* functions as an active restorative mechanism that purges intrusive cognitive noise and fills the *qalb* with divine presence (*ṭuma'nīnah*). Bringing this classical fragment into a fusion of horizons with contemporary stress theories shows that *dhikr* operates similarly to attentional recentring and mindfulness based emotional regulation. Yet, it expands secular mindfulness by anchoring the self to an absolute transcendental reality, thereby reducing hyperarousal and fostering calm coping confidence under acute psychological stress.

c) Impulse Control (*Hawā al-Nafs*)

Within al Ghazālī's psychospiritual architecture, impulse control over *hawā al nafs* establishes executive behavioral governance, serving as the primary mechanism for volition and self mastery.

Al Ghazālī frames the undisciplined ego using a vivid agrarian metaphor:

النفس كالدابة إن أهملتها جمحت، وإن روضتها

انقادت

(*Al-nafs ka al-dābbah, in ahmaltahā jamaḥat, wa in rawwaḍtahā inqādat*)

Meaning: "The soul is like a mount; if left unattended, it will become wild, but if trained, it will submit."

By equating the ego (*nafs*) to an untamed animal (*dābbah*) requiring systematic conditioning (*riyāḍah*), the text emphasizes that agency requires intentional discipline. Interpreting this fragment within the whole Sufi system demonstrates that subduing reactive drives (*hawā*) restores executive control to the *qalb*. Left without discipline, the *nafs* exhibits impulsive, reactive behaviors (*jamaḥat*); through rigorous practice (*mujāhadah*), it becomes aligned and obedient (*inqādat*). Fusing this insight with modern psychology maps this process directly onto executive functioning, impulse control, and self regulatory strength. By repeatedly overcoming destructive impulses, the individual builds mastery based self efficacy and authentic confidence in maintaining moral and emotional integrity.

d) Resilience and Trust (*Ṣabr* and *Tawakkul*)

In al Ghazālī's architecture, *Ṣabr* (patience or endurance) and *Tawakkul* (transcendental trust) function as twin, interdependent pillars of psychological resilience. Rather than viewing patience as passive resignation.

Al Ghazālī defines *Ṣabr* as an active, high-energy resistance:

الصبر ثبات باعث الدين في مقاومة باعث الهوى

(*Al-ṣabru tsabātu bā'itsi al-dīn fī muqāwamati bā'itsi al-hawā*)

Meaning: "Ṣabr is the steadfastness of the religious impulse in resisting the impulses of worldly desire."

To complement this active behavioral resistance, Al-Ghazālī anchors inner psychological tranquility in the mechanism of absolute reliance (*Tawakkul*):

التوكل عبارة عن اعتماد القلب على الله وحده

(*Al-tawakkulu 'ibāratun 'an i'timādi al-qalbi 'alā Allāh waḥdah*)

Meaning: "Tawakkul is the complete reliance of the heart upon Allah alone."

From a linguistic perspective (*Sprachlichkeit*), *Ṣabr* is defined through *tsabāt* (steadfastness) and *muqāwamah*

(active resistance), establishing patience as dynamic effort. Conversely, *Tawakkul* shifts the structural reliance of the soul (*i'timād*) onto Divine providence. Within the whole system of *Ihyā'*, this synthesis converts efficacy from an autonomous belief in personal self sufficiency into a transcendental belief in capacity through Divine empowerment. Fusing this classical model with contemporary stress and coping paradigms transforms standard secular resilience; where secular coping relies on fragile personal adequacy, Sufi psychotherapy grounds resilience in transcendental trust, alleviating helplessness and sustaining persistent coping confidence during existential crises.

3.1.3 Reconstruction of Sufi Self-Efficacy

Synthesizing these mechanisms through the Hermeneutic Circle demonstrates that self efficacy in Sufi psychotherapy is actively forged through spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*). As expressed in *Ihyā'*:

من جاهد نفسه في الله هداه الله سبيل الرشاد وقوى قلبه على الثبات

(*Man jāhada nafsahu fī Allāh hadāhu Allāhu sabīla al-rashād wa qawwā qalbahu 'alā al-tsabāt*)

Meaning: "Whoever earnestly struggles against their desires for the sake of Allah, Allah will guide them to the path of truth and strengthen their heart with steadfastness."

The conditional grammatical structure (*man jāhada... hadāh... wa qawwā*) establishes a direct causal relationship between human spiritual exertion (*mujāhadah*) and divine empowerment (*tawfīq*). Within al Ghazālī's integrative architecture, self efficacy is neither a static cognitive trait nor an egoistic belief in autonomous competence. Instead, it is an evolving psychospiritual conviction generated through the synergy of human effort and divine grace.

Through the fusion of horizons, this reconstructed model expands Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory into a transcendental construct. Efficacy is no longer contingent upon fragile external performances, but becomes an enduring, spiritually responsive capacity for resilient agency, self governance, and existential stability amidst modern psychological distress.

The integrated synthesis of these hermeneutic findings across all analytical dimensions is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Single Comprehensive Matrix: Hermeneutic Synthesis of Tazkiyat al-Nafs and Self-Efficacy Reconstruction

Mechanism / Theme	Core Textual Evidence (Part - Arab & Latin)	Hermeneutic & Systemic Meaning (Whole)	Fusion of Horizons (Modern Psychology Dialogue)	Reconstruction of Self-Efficacy
Tazkiyat al-Nafs Framework	...القلب هو الأصل (<i>Al-qalbu huwa al-aṣl, wa al-a'ḍā'u taba'un lah...</i>)	Locus of inner restructuring through <i>takhallī-taḥallī-tajallī</i> ;	Personality restructuring, holistic mental health &	Establishes an existential conviction of capacity for spiritual self-

Mechanism / Theme	Core Textual Evidence (Part - Arab & Latin)	Hermeneutic & Systemic Meaning (Whole)	Fusion of Horizons (Modern Psychology Dialogue)	Reconstruction of Self-Efficacy
Self-Reflection (<i>Muḥāsabah</i>)	حاسب نفسك قبل أن تحاسب... (<i>Ḥāsib nafsaka qabla an tuḥāsab...</i>)	<i>qalb</i> as executive center. Metacognitive engine providing continuous spiritual auditing and moral supervision.	existential integration. Self-monitoring, metacognitive awareness & reflective functioning.	governance. Generates reflective confidence grounded in accurate, un-deceived self-knowledge.
Emotional Regulation (<i>Dhikr</i>)	الذكر الحقيقي هو الذي يستغرق القلب... (<i>Al-dzikr al-ḥaqīqī huwa alladzī yastaghriqu al-qalb...</i>)	Affective restorative mechanism saturating the heart with divine peace (<i>ṭuma'nīnah</i>).	Emotional regulation, attentional re-centering & mindfulness-based stability.	Fosters affective stability and calm coping confidence under stress.
Impulse Control (<i>Hawā</i>)	النفس كالدابة إن أهملتها جمحت... (<i>Al-nafs ka al-dābbah, in ahmaltahā jamaḥat...</i>)	Executive moral boundary establishing internal governance over reactive drives.	Self-regulation, impulse control, delayed gratification & executive function.	Builds mastery agency through demonstrated conquest over egoistic impulses.
Resilience (<i>Ṣabr & Tawakkul</i>)	التوكل عبارة عن اعتماد القلب على الله... (<i>Al-tawakkulu 'ibāratun 'an i'timādi al-qalbi 'alā Allāh...</i>)	Twin pillars combining active behavioral endurance with transcendental trust.	Psychological resilience, coping confidence & positive expectancy.	Converts efficacy into transcendental reliance ("Efficacy through God").
Sufi Self-Efficacy Synthesis	من جاهد نفسه في الله... وقوى قلبه... (<i>Man jāhada nafsahu fī Allāh... wa qawwā qalbahu...</i>)	Integrative outcome of spiritual struggle (<i>mujāhadah</i>) and divine empowerment.	Bandura's self-efficacy model expanded into a transcendental construct.	Reconstructs efficacy as a spiritually responsive capacity for resilient agency.

The synthesis in Table 1 illustrates that the reconstruction of self-efficacy within Sufi psychotherapy operates through a unified, multi-layered hermeneutic movement. Through the continuous dialectic between textual fragments (Part) and al-Ghazālī's overarching Sufi architecture (Whole), *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* reframes self-efficacy from an autonomous, performance-contingent cognitive belief into a transcendently grounded conviction. Each operational mechanism serves a distinct yet interdependent psychological function: *muḥāsabah* supplies the un-deceived metacognitive self-knowledge required for self-correction, *dhikr* stabilizes the affective center (*qalb*) to cultivate calm coping confidence under stress, impulse control over *hawā al-nafs* establishes executive behavioral governance, and the integration of *ṣabr* and *tawakkul* converts human endurance into transcendental reliance upon Divine providence. By fusing these classical insights with contemporary psychological paradigms (Fusion of Horizons), the findings demonstrate that self-efficacy is not merely an expression of egoistic capability, but the integrative outcome of spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*) and Divine empowerment. Consequently, this model expands Albert Bandura's social cognitive framework into a spiritually responsive, resilient capacity for human agency, offering a holistic foundation for addressing existential and psychological distress in modern mental health contexts.

3.2. Discussion

This study reveals that self efficacy in Sufi psychotherapy is actively constructed as a transcendently grounded

capacity for self management and psychological adaptation through the integrative mechanism of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*. The direct implications of these findings explain how core practices within al Ghazali's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* systematically restructure the human soul by shifting the locus of human agency from an autonomous cognitive perception to a spiritually purified *qalb* (Al-Asyhar & Gazali, 2024; Syawaldi & Charles, 2025). In this context, mental health is achieved not merely through behavioral adjustment, but as an existential balance cultivated through profound transcendental connection (Reza, 2023). This outcome directly fulfills the objective of the study by providing a comprehensive psychospiritual model that demonstrates how self efficacy is formed to address modern psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, stress, and existential crises. The significance of these findings lies in their ability to bridge classical Islamic spiritual psychology with contemporary mental health paradigms, offering a rigorous theoretical foundation for developing spiritually responsive psychotherapy and clinical interventions.

The results of this study can be explained through the interaction of several primary internal mechanisms, namely *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, control of *hawā al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul*. *Muḥāsabah* functions as a metacognitive engine that provides continuous self auditing and moral supervision, extending beyond evaluative cognition to embrace spiritual self-awareness and life purpose (Karofi, 2023; Wahyudi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, *dhikr* operates as an affective restorative mechanism that saturates the *qalb* with divine peace to stabilize emotional regulation and re-

duce anxiety (Widyastuti et al., 2019). Simultaneously, impulse control over *hawā al-nafs* establishes executive behavioral governance over reactive worldly desires to achieve inner liberation (Fajrin et al., 2022), while *ṣabr* and *tawakkul* serve as twin spiritual pillars that cultivate psychological resilience, existential trust, and positive coping (Hapsari et al., 2021; Qudsyi & Fadlillah, 2025). The systemic interplay among these spiritual component's demonstrates that transcendent self efficacy is generated through a multi layered internal transformation where cognitive self awareness, affective stability, and behavioral discipline are anchored in divine reliance.

The findings of this study modify the assumptions of Social Cognitive Theory proposed by Albert Bandura, which conceptualizes self efficacy primarily as an ego centric belief in personal capability derived from mastery experiences and social learning (Yusuf et al., 2021). While modern psychological frameworks emphasize autonomous self governance and cognitive self appraisal, the psychospiritual architecture in *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* demonstrates that human efficacy is fundamentally contingent upon spiritual purification and divine empowerment (Hidayah et al., 2021). This theoretical modification aligns with expert perspectives emphasizing that Islamic psychology centers human agency within a transcendent framework where moral integrity and spiritual alignment govern psychological function (Bozorgzadeh & Grasser, 2021; Sotillos, 2022). This paradigm explains that true self efficacy is achieved when personal effort is synthesized with divine trust, transforming efficacy from a fragile performance contingent belief into an enduring psychospiritual conviction.

The results of this study confirm various prior inquiries demonstrating that spiritual practices, religiosity, and *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* contribute positively to emotional regulation, stress resilience, and overall mental health (Abdilah et al., 2025; Amal & Othman, 2025; Cucchi, 2022; Fatimah et al., 2025; Hasanah, 2025; Kasim et al., 2024; Ma'muroh et al., 2024; Rusydi et al., 2022; Wandira et al., 2023). On the other hand, this study also identifies a distinct difference from previous literature, particularly in moving beyond normative and descriptive accounts of Sufi practices toward revealing the precise operational mechanisms of self efficacy formation. This divergence occurs because prior research predominantly evaluated Sufi practices as external coping tools for psychological distress rather than structural components of cognitive, emotional, and executive self regulation.

Unlike previous studies that tended to examine Sufi psychotherapy or cognitive self efficacy in a partial manner, the results of this study offer the distinct advantage of a more integrated mapping across the reflective, affective, executive, and transcendental dimensions of the human psyche (Apriliani & Arifin, 2025). By employing Gadamerian hermeneutics, this investigation establishes a system-

atic dialogue between classical Arabic textual fragments (*ibārah*) and modern psychological concepts, such as metacognition, emotional regulation, and impulse control. This analytical strength aligns with integrated frameworks in mindfulness and self regulation literature showing that contemplative spiritual mechanisms can be mapped directly onto contemporary neurobiological and psychological models of human agency (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012; Gard et al., 2014).

These findings fill a significant theoretical and knowledge gap regarding the integration of transcendental spiritual dimensions into Bandura's self efficacy model within Islamic psychology, directly addressing theoretical limitations highlighted by Faizal et al. (2025), Nurcahyati et al. (2026), and Syahid & Alif (2026). By explicitly reinterpreting the core practices of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* through the fusion of horizons, this study provides a conceptual model that bridges classical Sufi thought with contemporary mental health frameworks. This novelty aligns with the broader movement in Islamic counseling and psychotherapy toward formulating culturally responsive interventions grounded in authentic spiritual heritage (Al Asyhar & Gazali, 2024; Ismail et al., 2021).

This study opens the possibility of a new conceptual model that explains the relationship between spiritual purification, emotional stabilization, executive impulse control, and existential coping capacity. Critical analysis of the hermeneutic data reveals that human agency within Sufi psychotherapy does not depend on egoistic self sufficiency, but functions through an integrative process where internal spiritual effort (*mujāhadah*) unlocks divine support and existential steadfastness. This conceptual mechanism shows that true psychological resilience in the face of modern distress is forged when reflective self auditing removes egoic self deception, enabling the individual to maintain composure, adaptive self control, and clear purpose through transcendental reliance.

Although the results of this study demonstrate that *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* offers a structured psychospiritual framework for self efficacy, there is the possibility that external contextual factors not analyzed in this textual study also influence individual psychological outcomes. External aspects such as social support networks, environmental stressors, financial stability, biological vulnerabilities, and the specific clinical severity of psychological disorders may simultaneously affect how individuals experience distress and implement spiritual practices. This objective perspective is supported by holistic and multisystemic mental health frameworks asserting that human resilience and psychological adaptation emerge from complex interactions across biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions (Hughes, 2017; Ungar & Theron, 2019).

The urgency of this study establishes a new conceptual understanding that self efficacy within Sufi psychotherapy is an existential conviction forged through internal

spiritual purification rather than secular self reliance. This perspective effectively bridges the gap between theoretical self efficacy models and the clinical reality of individuals experiencing existential alienation, burnout, and psychological distress in modern society.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study provide theoretical and practical implications for the study of self-efficacy within Sufi psychotherapy by proving that the framework of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* constructs transcendental self-efficacy through five integrated operational mechanisms (*muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, control of *hawā al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul*) that shift the locus of human agency from autonomous cognitive perceptions to a spiritually purified *qalb*. The findings of this study fill a theoretical and literature gap regarding the integration of spiritual-transcendental dimensions into Albert Bandura's self-efficacy model and the lack of an operational explanation regarding the psychospiritual mechanisms of self-efficacy formation within Islamic psychology and mental health interventions.

4.2 Research Contributions

The findings of this study contribute as a new source of scientific knowledge in the field of Islamic Psychology and Sufi Psychotherapy by providing a novel framework regarding the psychospiritual mechanisms of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in forming transcendental self-efficacy that can be used to explain how the synthesis of spiritual struggle (*mujāhadah*) and divine reliance transforms consciousness, stabilizes spiritual emotional regulation, enforces impulse control, and fosters existential resilience in addressing modern psychological disorders (such as anxiety, depression, burnout, and stress) based on actual textual evidence and contextual data from the field (derived from a Gadamerian hermeneutic analysis of al-Ghazālī's classical text, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, in dialogue with contemporary psychological theories).

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, as a conceptual study based on Gadamerian hermeneutics, the findings are derived from interpretive analysis rather than empirical validation, which limits the generalizability of the proposed framework. Second, the interpretation of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* and self-efficacy is grounded in selected classical Sufi texts and contemporary psychological literature, which may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives within Islamic scholarship and modern psychology. Third, the study focuses on theoretical integration

without involving empirical data from clinical or field settings, thereby limiting its applicability to real-world therapeutic contexts.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research is recommended to empirically validate the integrative psychospiritual framework proposed in this study by applying quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method designs in clinical or counseling settings. Subsequent studies may operationalize the components of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, such as *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, control of *hawā al-nafs*, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul*, into measurable psychological constructs to examine their direct and indirect effects on self-efficacy and mental health outcomes. In addition, cross-cultural studies are needed to explore how Sufi-based psychospiritual mechanisms are understood and applied in diverse Muslim populations. Further research may also compare the effectiveness of Sufi psychotherapy with other contemporary therapeutic approaches to assess its relative contribution to psychological resilience and well-being.

6. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* represents a psychospiritual transformation framework that develops self-awareness, emotional regulation, impulse control, psychological resilience, and existential self-efficacy. Through a Gadamerian hermeneutic approach, Sufi concepts such as *muḥāsabah*, *dhikr*, control of worldly desires, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul* are reinterpreted as psychospiritual mechanisms that remain relevant to contemporary psychological perspectives. The findings demonstrate that Sufi psychotherapy in al-Ghazālī's thought is not limited to behavioral modification, but emphasizes the restructuring of the *qalb* as the center of human spiritual and psychological consciousness.

The findings further indicate that *muḥāsabah* cultivates reflective self-awareness and authentic self-evaluation, *dhikr* functions as spiritual emotional regulation that promotes inner tranquility, control of worldly desires strengthens self-regulation and impulse control, while *ṣabr* and *tawakkul* reinforce resilience, persistence, and existential trust in confronting life pressures. These interconnected processes integratively construct self-efficacy in the perspective of Sufi psychotherapy, namely an existential conviction that individuals are capable of managing themselves, enduring difficulties, and continuously improving their lives through the integration of spiritual effort and transcendental reliance upon Allah.

This study shows that self-efficacy in Sufi psychotherapy is not merely understood as belief in personal capability, as commonly conceptualized in modern psychology, but as a psychospiritual conviction emerging from inner

purification and transcendental closeness to Allah. Therefore, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* may be understood as a holistic psychospiritual mechanism integrating reflective, affective, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the development of mental health and existential resilience amidst the complexity of modern psychological disorders

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All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Muaddyl Akhyar: Conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft. Muhammad Afif Al Faruq: Conceptualization, writing – review & editing. Damarkunsi Maja Sius: Conceptualization, writing – review & editing.

Declaration of GenAI Usage in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used [QuillBot](#) to assist with language refinement, grammar correction, and academic writing improvement. The authors reviewed and edited all generated content and take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the final manuscript. The use of generative AI was limited to writing assistance and did not replace the authors' intellectual contributions, data analysis, interpretation, or scientific conclusions. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJCP GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to declare. All co-authors have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report.

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Informed Consent Statement

The authors declare that this study was conducted in accordance with study ethics, including obtaining approval from the relevant institution. This process respects the autonomy of participants, ensures the confidentiality of their data, and prioritizes their safety and well-being, in compliance with applicable study ethics guidelines. Written and verbal informed consent, or assent for minors, was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

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