



Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling: A Ruhiological Perspective in Islamic Educational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Background. University students increasingly experience anxiety, emotional exhaustion, fragile self-worth, and existential uncertainty. Narrative counseling supports meaning-making and identity reconstruction but remains grounded in secular humanistic paradigms, while Islamic counseling emphasizes spiritual guidance without systematic narrative reconstruction. This gap highlights the need for an integrative framework bridging psychological meaning-making and Islamic spiritual consciousness.

Purpose. This study explored how narrative-based Islamic counseling, grounded in a ruhiological perspective, facilitates students' psychological and spiritual transformation by reconstructing self-meaning and awakening ruh consciousness.

Method. A qualitative narrative inquiry was conducted with three university students experiencing academic anxiety, emotional exhaustion, fear of rejection, and people-pleasing tendencies. Data were collected through narrative-based Islamic counseling sessions, reflective dialogues, counseling notes, and participant reflections, following six ruhiological stages, and analyzed using thematic narrative analysis.

Results. Four themes emerged: fragile self-worth shaped by external validation; narrative reflection as meaning reconstruction; awakening of ruh consciousness through spiritual reflection and reconnection with God; and a Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model describing the shift from externally driven identities toward spiritually grounded selfhood. Participants showed greater existential clarity, emotional resilience, and spiritually rooted self-understanding.

Conclusion. This study introduces a Ruhiological Narrative Counseling framework integrating narrative inquiry, Islamic psychology, and Ruhiology, positioned as a paradigm of consciousness enabling reconstruction through ruh awakening. The model offers a practical roadmap for Islamic educational psychology addressing students' anxiety, identity conflicts, and existential crises.

KEYWORDS

Islamic Psychology, Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling, Narrative Inquiry, Ruhiology, Ruhani Quotient

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions worldwide are facing an increasing prevalence of psychological distress among university students. Alongside academic demands, students are confronted with emotional exhaustion, chronic anxiety,

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identity confusion, fear of failure, fragile self-worth, and a growing sense of existential emptiness. These difficulties are no longer limited to academic performance but increasingly involve deeper questions concerning personal meaning, purpose in life, social acceptance, and future uncertainty. Large-scale international surveys consistently demonstrate that mental health problems among university students have become a global concern. The WHO World Mental Health International College Student Project reported that approximately one-third of university students meet the criteria for at least one common mental disorder, with anxiety and depression representing the most prevalent conditions (Auerbach et al., 2018). Likewise, a recent meta-analysis involving more than 100,000 college students estimated the global prevalence of anxiety symptoms at 39% and depression symptoms at 33.6%, with even higher rates among medical students and during the post-pandemic period (Li et al., 2022). Longitudinal evidence further indicates that psychological distress is associated not only with reduced academic achievement but also with impaired well-being, social functioning, and increased suicidal ideation (Duffy et al., 2020).

Within educational settings, these psychological challenges frequently emerge as experiences of excessive perfectionism, fear of disappointing others, overthinking, emotional instability, and loss of meaning. Students often possess excellent academic abilities while simultaneously experiencing persistent internal conflicts that are difficult to articulate. Nissa and Primana (2023) demonstrated that final-year students commonly experience severe anxiety related to thesis completion, career uncertainty, and fear of failure. Similarly, Wijaya et al. (2025) found that narrative counseling helps students reconstruct personal meaning, strengthen self-understanding, and rediscover life purpose through reflective storytelling. These findings indicate that students' psychological problems cannot be sufficiently understood merely as cognitive deficits or emotional dysregulation. Instead, they involve disrupted personal narratives through which individuals interpret themselves and their experiences.

The increasing use of narrative approaches in counseling reflects a broader shift from symptom-oriented intervention toward meaning-oriented psychological practice. Bruner (1990) argued that human beings are fundamentally storytelling beings who construct identity through narratives rather than isolated experiences. Accordingly, White and Epston (1990) developed narrative therapy to help individuals externalize problems, reconstruct dominant stories, and develop alternative narratives that support healthier identities. Contemporary studies continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of narrative counseling in reducing anxiety, strengthening resilience, facilitating identity reconstruction, and promoting psychological recovery across various educational and clinical contexts (Karibwende et al., 2023; Stapley et al., 2025; Keisari, 2024). Narrative approaches therefore provide a powerful framework through which individuals reinterpret difficult experiences and generate new meanings for their lives.

Nevertheless, despite these significant contributions, contemporary narrative counseling remains predominantly grounded in constructivist and humanistic epistemology. Transformation is generally understood as the reconstruction of personal meaning through language, reflection, and social interaction. Although this perspective successfully explains how individuals reconstruct narratives, it pays comparatively little attention to the deepest ontological dimension of human existence. Meaning is reconstructed psychologically, yet the subject who ultimately experiences meaning remains conceptualized primarily in cognitive, emotional, or social terms. Consequently, the spiritual essence of the human being—particularly the *ruh* as understood within Islamic anthropology—remains largely absent from dominant narrative counseling theories. This limitation becomes increasingly important because many students' psychological struggles are closely

associated with existential wounds, fear of rejection, fragile self-worth, and disconnection from their deepest spiritual consciousness.

Conversely, Islamic counseling originates from a fundamentally different worldview. Human beings are understood not merely as biological or psychological entities but as creations of God whose lives are directed toward the realization of *fitrah*, *tawhid*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. Within this perspective, psychological well-being cannot be separated from one's relationship with Allah, spiritual purification, and moral refinement. Rothman and Coyle (2020) proposed an Islamic psychotherapy model grounded in the interconnected dimensions of *ruh*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *nafs*, while Skinner (2019) emphasized that Islamic psychology should develop from Qur'anic anthropology rather than merely adapting Western psychological theories. Likewise, Al-Karam (2018) argued that Islamic psychology requires its own conceptual framework rooted in Islamic epistemology instead of functioning merely as a religious adaptation of secular psychology.

Despite these important developments, many contemporary Islamic counseling practices remain predominantly directive in nature. Counseling is frequently conducted through religious advice, moral instruction, spiritual reminders, and exhortations toward worship. Such approaches successfully strengthen religiosity and encourage spiritual practice, yet they often provide limited opportunities for individuals to reconstruct their personal narratives through systematic reflective dialogue. The counselee is commonly guided toward normative religious values, but the lived experiences through which identity, suffering, and meaning are reconstructed receive comparatively less attention. Consequently, while Western narrative counseling offers sophisticated methods of narrative reconstruction without a comprehensive spiritual ontology, Islamic counseling offers profound spiritual orientation without an equally systematic model of narrative reconstruction. These two traditions therefore develop largely in parallel rather than interactively.

The present study argues that this conceptual divide creates an important opportunity for theoretical integration. Rather than positioning Western narrative counseling and Islamic counseling as competing paradigms, this study proposes Ruhiology as a conceptual bridge capable of integrating the strengths of both traditions. Within this integrative framework, narrative reconstruction remains central to the counseling process, yet the reconstruction of meaning is no longer viewed solely as a psychological activity. Instead, narrative reflection becomes a pathway through which individuals reconnect with the deepest dimension of the self, namely the *ruh*, thereby allowing psychological transformation to occur simultaneously with spiritual awakening.

Ruhiology, developed progressively through a series of previous studies (Ushuluddin et al., 2021a; Ushuluddin et al., 2021b; Ushuluddin et al., 2023), positions *ruh* as the primary ontological center of human consciousness rather than merely one component of spirituality. Building upon the author's earlier work on holistic health education, Ruhani Quotient (RQ), spiritual intelligence, and Ruhiology-based counseling, the paradigm conceptualizes human consciousness as an integrated system consisting of *ruh*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *nafs*, with *ruh* functioning as the deepest source that directs cognition, emotion, morality, and behavior. Unlike Spiritual Quotient (SQ), which generally conceptualizes spirituality as an individual's capacity to derive meaning, values, and transcendence from life experiences, Ruhiology proposes that authentic transformation originates from the awakening of *ruh* itself as the divinely inspired center of human existence. Consequently, Ruhani Quotient (RQ) is not merely another form of intelligence but represents the manifestation of awakened *ruh* expressed through prophetic values such as *ṣiddiq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *faṭānah*. These values function as observable indicators of spiritual consciousness emerging through an individual's relationship with God rather than through psychological coping alone.

This conceptual development also extends the authors' previous work on Ruhiology-based Islamic counseling. Earlier research developed a counseling guidance module for stress management by emphasizing *ruhani* awareness, prophetic character, and the concept of *direct influence*, in which genuine psychological regulation originates from an individual's connection with God rather than merely from cognitive or behavioral techniques (Ushuluddin et al., 2023). However, that study primarily focused on module development and procedural implementation. The lived experiences through which students reconstruct their personal narratives, awaken *ruhani* consciousness, and experience existential transformation remained largely unexplored.

Building upon this foundation, the present study conceptualizes narrative-based Islamic counseling as a sequential transformative process in which narrative articulation enables reflective dialogue, reflective dialogue facilitates meaning reconstruction, reconstructed meaning awakens *ruh* awareness, awakened *ruh* strengthens Ruhani Quotient, and strengthened Ruhani Quotient ultimately promotes holistic psychological and spiritual transformation. Within this framework, narrative is not merely a linguistic reconstruction of experience but becomes a medium through which individuals rediscover their authentic self in relation to God.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how narrative-based Islamic counseling facilitates students' psychological and spiritual transformation through a Ruhiological perspective. Using narrative inquiry, the research examines students' lived experiences of anxiety, fear of rejection, people-pleasing tendencies, existential struggle, and spiritual reflection during counseling sessions. The study contributes to Islamic Educational Psychology in three important ways. First, it bridges Western narrative counseling and Islamic spiritual anthropology through a coherent conceptual framework. Second, it operationalizes Ruhiology by clarifying its dimensions, indicators, and transformative mechanisms within counseling practice. Third, it proposes a practical roadmap for narrative-based Islamic counseling in which psychological healing is achieved not only through narrative reconstruction but through the awakening of *ruh* as the deepest center of human consciousness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry design to explore students' lived psychological and spiritual experiences during narrative-based Islamic counseling. Narrative inquiry was selected because the objective of this study was not merely to identify psychological symptoms but to understand how students interpreted their life experiences, reconstructed personal meanings, and transformed their narratives through reflective dialogue and spiritual awareness. Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), human experience is understood as a storied experience in which identity develops through narratives situated within temporality, social interaction, and place. This perspective was particularly relevant because the present study sought to explore how students reconstructed the meanings of anxiety, fear, rejection, and self-worth within an Islamic educational context through a ruhiological perspective.

The study involved three university students who experienced varying forms of psychological distress associated with academic pressure, fear of failure, emotional exhaustion, people-pleasing tendencies, fragile self-worth, and existential uncertainty. Participants were selected through purposive sampling because qualitative narrative inquiry emphasizes information-rich cases rather than statistical representativeness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) actively enrolled university students; (2) experiencing psychological or emotional distress affecting academic or personal functioning; (3) willingness to participate in reflective counseling sessions; and (4) openness to discussing personal experiences, emotions, and spiritual reflections.

Although only three participants were included, the sample size was considered appropriate because narrative inquiry prioritizes depth, richness, and complexity of individual life stories rather than breadth of participants. Data collection continued until narrative saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of central themes without the emergence of substantially new narrative patterns (Saunders et al., 2018).

Prior to data collection, all participants received a detailed explanation regarding the objectives of the study, the counseling procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the counseling sessions commenced. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants, including respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality, and privacy. Participant identities were protected through the use of pseudonymous initials (HAF, HNI, and SKN), and all personally identifiable information was removed during transcription and reporting to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Data were generated through individual narrative counseling sessions conducted in an offline face-to-face setting. Each participant attended between two and three counseling sessions, with each session lasting approximately 60–90 minutes over a period of four to six weeks. Multiple sessions were intentionally conducted to allow participants sufficient time to narrate their experiences, revisit emotionally significant events, reflect upon emerging meanings, and gradually reconstruct their personal narratives. The counseling process was documented through audio recordings, counseling field notes, reflective journals, and researcher memos immediately following each session.

Unlike conventional narrative counseling that primarily emphasizes meaning reconstruction at psychological and social levels (White & Epston, 1990), the counseling procedure in this study was conceptually guided by the Ruhiology-based Islamic counseling framework previously developed by Ushuluddin et al. (2023). While the previous framework focused primarily on stress management through a structured counseling module, the present study extended this approach by exploring participants' lived experiences and spiritual transformation phenomenologically. Ruhiology positions the *ruh* as the deepest center of human consciousness, serving as the primary source of moral awareness, spiritual intelligence, and authentic selfhood. Consequently, counseling was designed not merely to reduce psychological symptoms but to facilitate participants' reconnection with their *ruh* through reflective dialogue and spiritual awareness.

The counseling process consisted of six sequential yet flexible stages. First, Problem Story Exploration, during which participants freely narrated dominant life stories related to anxiety, academic pressure, interpersonal conflict, or emotional suffering. Second, Externalizing the Narrative, adapted from narrative counseling principles, where participants were encouraged to distinguish themselves from the problems they experienced, allowing them to recognize that the problem did not define their identity. Third, Reflective Dialogue, in which the counselor facilitated deeper reflection concerning emotions, beliefs, fears, personal assumptions, and recurring internal dialogues that sustained psychological distress. Fourth, *Ruh Awareness*, representing the distinctive contribution of Ruhiology, where participants reflected upon their inner spiritual consciousness, the voice of conscience, their relationship with God, and the awareness that their essential identity transcended external judgments and social evaluations. Fifth, Meaning Reconstruction, during which participants reinterpreted painful experiences from a spiritual perspective, reconstructing new meanings grounded in *fitrah*, divine values, and personal responsibility. Finally, Commitment and Integration, where participants formulated concrete commitments to strengthen their relationship

with God through worship, self-reflection, emotional regulation, and daily behavioral changes reflecting newly reconstructed meanings.

Data analysis employed a Ruhiological Narrative Thematic Analysis, integrating narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008), reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021, 2022), and the interpretive framework of Ruhiology. The analysis was conducted iteratively rather than linearly. Initially, interview transcripts, counseling notes, and reflective journals were repeatedly read to obtain holistic familiarity with participants' narratives. During open coding, psychologically and spiritually significant expressions were identified, producing preliminary codes such as *fear of rejection*, *people pleasing*, *external validation*, *fragile self-worth*, *self-blame*, *inner conflict*, *spiritual emptiness*, *voice of conscience*, and *trust in God*. Similar codes were then clustered into broader narrative categories describing dominant psychological experiences and turning points within each participant's life story. Subsequently, cross-case thematic analysis identified overarching themes representing shared narrative patterns across participants. Finally, these themes were interpreted through the lens of Ruhiology to examine how narrative reconstruction facilitated the activation of *ruhani* consciousness and the development of Ruhani Quotient (RQ).

Table 1. Example of the Ruhiological Narrative Coding Process

Raw Narrative Data	Initial Open Code	Narrative Category	Emergent Theme
"I was afraid they would reject me."	Fear of rejection	Social evaluation	Fear of Rejection
"I always tried to make everyone happy."	Pleasing others	Relational dependency	People Pleasing
"I thought I was not good enough."	Self-blame	Negative self-schema	Fragile Self-Worth
"My value depended on others' opinions."	External validation	Conditional self-worth	External Validation
"I realized my true self belongs to God."	Spiritual awakening	Ruh awareness	Meaning Reconstruction

Throughout the analysis, researchers continuously compared emerging themes with participants' complete narratives to preserve contextual integrity and avoid fragmenting lived experiences into isolated codes. Reflexive memos were maintained throughout the analytical process to document evolving interpretations and minimize premature theoretical assumptions.

To enhance methodological rigor, several trustworthiness strategies were employed following Nowell et al. (2017). Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement, repeated counseling sessions, member checking, and triangulation across interview transcripts, counseling field notes, participant reflections, and researcher memos. Dependability was supported through an auditable coding trail documenting analytical decisions from raw narratives to final themes. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive journaling, allowing researchers to critically examine how their own assumptions, professional backgrounds, and familiarity with Ruhiology might influence interpretation. Transferability was addressed by providing rich descriptions of participants, counseling procedures, narrative contexts, and analytical processes to enable readers to determine the applicability of findings in comparable educational settings.

Researcher reflexivity constituted an integral component of this study because the first author simultaneously served as counselor and principal investigator. Rather than assuming complete

neutrality, reflexivity was continuously practiced by documenting interpretive decisions, emotional responses during counseling sessions, and theoretical reflections throughout data collection and analysis. This process enabled the researchers to distinguish participants' authentic narratives from interpretive constructions while ensuring that the Ruhiological perspective functioned as an analytical lens rather than a predetermined explanatory framework.

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was not statistical generalization but analytical and conceptual development. By integrating narrative inquiry, Islamic psychology, and Ruhiology, this methodological approach sought to generate a deeper understanding of how students reconstruct meaning, awaken *ruhani* consciousness, and experience psychological as well as spiritual transformation through narrative-based Islamic counseling.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From External Validation to Fragile Self-Worth

One of the most prominent findings emerging from the participants' narratives was that their psychological distress originated not merely from academic demands but from identities that had become increasingly dependent on external validation. Although each participant experienced different life circumstances, all three initially constructed their sense of self primarily through the expectations, judgments, and evaluations of significant others. Consequently, achievement, social acceptance, and recognition gradually became the primary standards through which they evaluated their own worth. Rather than experiencing academic success as a source of personal growth, participants frequently perceived it as an obligation to maintain acceptance and avoid disappointment.

This pattern was particularly evident in HAF's narrative. Throughout the counseling sessions, HAF repeatedly described how her academic journey had been strongly influenced by parental expectations, especially those of her mother, who had envisioned her becoming a physician since childhood. Although HAF eventually embraced medicine as a meaningful profession, she admitted that much of her motivation had initially been driven by the desire to avoid disappointing her mother. Reflecting on years of academic struggle, she recalled,

"Sometimes I feel that no matter how hard I try, it is never enough. When I received a score of 80, my mother asked why it was not 100. I worked very hard for that score, but I still felt I had failed."

This statement illustrates how achievement gradually became intertwined with emotional acceptance. Success was experienced not simply as competence but as a condition for receiving recognition and affection. During the reflective dialogue, HAF also acknowledged,

"I think I am a people pleaser. I am afraid of disappointing others, especially my mother."

Similarly, HNI's narratives revealed that his emotional suffering was deeply rooted in an excessive dependence on social evaluation. Rather than fearing failure itself, he feared becoming a burden or losing acceptance from others. His descriptions consistently reflected chronic self-monitoring and emotional suppression. He explained,

"I am afraid of disappointing other people. I often say yes even when my heart says no because I don't want them to be disappointed."

Following a painful experience in a collaborative art project where he felt criticized and isolated, HNI internalized the incident as evidence of personal inadequacy rather than situational conflict. As he reflected,

"I kept asking myself what was wrong with me. I couldn't find the answer, but I still believed that I was the problem."

His narratives suggested that external criticism was immediately translated into negative judgments about his own identity. Consequently, he rarely distinguished criticism directed toward his work from rejection directed toward himself.

A comparable pattern emerged in SKN's experiences despite her impressive academic profile. As an internationally active law student who had participated in prestigious moot court competitions and numerous organizational activities, SKN appeared highly accomplished from an external perspective. Nevertheless, counseling conversations revealed persistent anxiety regarding maintaining this successful identity. During one reflective session she remarked,

"Sometimes I wonder whether all these achievements truly represent who I am, or whether I have simply been trying to fulfill other people's expectations."

She further explained,

"People always expect me to keep achieving. I enjoy learning, but sometimes I feel exhausted because I am afraid of losing that image."

Although the contextual circumstances differed from those of HAF and HNI, SKN demonstrated the same underlying narrative structure in which personal worth became increasingly attached to external appraisal.

Across all three cases, participants initially understood themselves through narratives organized around conditional acceptance. Self-worth was experienced as contingent upon achievement, social approval, productivity, or the absence of criticism. Consequently, moments of failure, rejection, or perceived inadequacy were interpreted not merely as isolated events but as threats to personal identity itself. Cross-case analysis therefore identified external validation as the dominant narrative organizing participants' psychological experiences, while fragile self-worth emerged as its principal psychological consequence.

These findings strongly support Bruner's (1990) proposition that identity is fundamentally narrative in nature. Individuals do not merely experience events; rather, they construct coherent stories through which those experiences become meaningful. The participants' narratives demonstrated that repeated stories concerning achievement, parental expectations, criticism, competence, and social acceptance gradually evolved into dominant identity narratives. As Mattingly et al. (2008) further argued, narratives do not simply describe reality but actively organize how individuals interpret themselves and anticipate future experiences. In the present study, the repeated internalization of achievement-oriented stories produced identities that became increasingly vulnerable to external evaluation.

The findings are likewise consistent with White and Epston's (1990) concept of problem-saturated narratives. Prior to counseling, participants had become so immersed in narratives of failure avoidance, perfectionism, and social acceptance that these stories appeared to define their entire identities. HAF interpreted insufficient appreciation as evidence that she had not achieved enough; HNI interpreted interpersonal criticism as confirmation of personal inadequacy; and SKN interpreted continuous achievement as an obligation necessary to preserve her identity. Their problems therefore extended beyond emotional distress to encompass restrictive identity constructions.

However, the present findings also reveal an important limitation of conventional narrative therapy. White and Epston primarily conceptualize externalization as separating individuals from their problems so that alternative stories may emerge. While this mechanism proved valuable during the counseling process, participants in the present study experienced deeper transformation only after they began reconnecting these alternative narratives with their spiritual consciousness. In other words, externalization alone was insufficient to produce enduring psychological change. Narrative

reconstruction became transformative only when participants began questioning not merely *which story* they believed about themselves, but *from where* their deepest sense of identity originated.

These findings also extend previous studies of narrative counseling within educational settings. Nissa and Primana (2023) demonstrated that narrative counseling effectively reduced anxiety among final-year students by helping them reinterpret stressful academic experiences. Similarly, Wijaya et al. (2025) reported that narrative counseling promoted meaning-making, self-understanding, and life purpose among university students. The present study supports these findings while extending them in two important respects. First, participants' narratives suggest that academic anxiety frequently reflects deeper existential concerns involving conditional self-worth rather than academic performance alone. Second, meaning reconstruction became substantially more profound when participants reflected not only upon personal experiences but also upon their spiritual identity and relationship with God.

The broader mental health literature likewise supports these observations. Large-scale international studies consistently demonstrate that university students increasingly experience anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and identity-related distress associated with academic competition and social expectations (Auerbach et al., 2018; Duffy et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). Furthermore, systematic reviews indicate that although university counseling services effectively reduce psychological distress, many interventions remain focused primarily on symptom reduction rather than deeper identity reconstruction (Collins et al., 2025). The present findings suggest that psychological interventions within Islamic educational contexts may require a broader understanding of identity that includes existential and spiritual dimensions beyond cognitive and emotional functioning.

From a ruhiological perspective, external validation represents more than a maladaptive cognitive schema; it reflects a gradual displacement of the human center of consciousness. Rather than grounding identity in the *ruh*—the deepest and divinely oriented dimension of the self—participants increasingly located their worth within fluctuating external evaluations. This displacement generated fragile identities that became highly dependent upon achievement, recognition, and interpersonal approval. Consequently, psychological distress emerged not simply because participants encountered criticism or failure, but because their narratives had become disconnected from their ontological source of worth. This interpretation extends previous formulations of Ruhiology (Ushuluddin et al., 2021, 2023) by demonstrating empirically that fragile self-worth may be understood as a manifestation of weakened ruh-consciousness, where external voices gradually overshadow the inner voice of *fitrah*. Therefore, the primary task of narrative-based Islamic counseling is not merely reconstructing more adaptive stories but facilitating a return to the *ruh* as the authentic center of human identity. This process becomes the foundation for the subsequent phases of narrative transformation, namely meaning reconstruction and the awakening of Ruhani Quotient (RQ), which are discussed in the following sections.

Narrative Reflection as Meaning Reconstruction

A second major finding of this study concerns the role of narrative reflection as the primary mechanism through which participants reconstructed the meaning of themselves and their life experiences. Although each participant entered counseling with different presenting concerns, none experienced immediate transformation merely by telling their stories. Rather, meaningful change emerged gradually through reflective dialogue that enabled participants to revisit previously unquestioned assumptions, reinterpret emotionally significant events, and reconstruct the meaning of their experiences from a broader psychological and spiritual perspective.

Throughout the counseling process, participants were repeatedly encouraged to return to critical moments in their personal narratives and examine how these experiences had shaped their beliefs about themselves. Instead of directing participants toward predetermined religious conclusions, the counseling sessions emphasized reflective questioning that invited them to observe their own narratives from a new perspective. Consequently, participants gradually distinguished between factual life events and the meanings they had attached to those events over many years.

This process was particularly evident in HAF's narrative. During the early counseling sessions, HAF consistently interpreted academic achievement as the primary source of personal value. Every success was understood as temporary relief from disappointment, whereas every perceived failure reinforced feelings of inadequacy. However, when invited to revisit her educational experiences through reflective dialogue, HAF began recognizing that many of these meanings had been constructed through years of internalizing parental expectations rather than through her own authentic aspirations. During one reflective moment, she quietly stated,

"I have spent so much time trying to prove that I am good enough. I rarely stopped to ask whether I had ever appreciated myself."

As the dialogue continued, she reflected further,

"Maybe the person who deserves my gratitude the most is myself—for surviving all of this."

Rather than simply replacing negative thoughts with positive affirmations, HAF gradually reconstructed her personal narrative. Academic achievement was no longer interpreted solely as evidence of worthiness but as one aspect of a broader life journey characterized by perseverance, growth, and gratitude. This narrative shift reduced the dominance of external expectations in defining her identity.

A similar process unfolded in HNI's counseling sessions. Initially, HNI perceived interpersonal criticism as confirmation of personal failure. He believed that maintaining harmony required constant compliance with others' expectations, even when these contradicted his own feelings. During reflective dialogue, however, he began examining the emotional consequences of continuously suppressing his own voice. At one point he acknowledged,

"I always thought that making other people happy was the right thing to do. But I never asked whether I was hurting myself."

Later in the counseling process he added,

"Maybe disappointing people is not always wrong. Ignoring my own conscience is what really makes me suffer."

These reflections marked a significant narrative shift. Rather than organizing his identity around others' approval, HNI gradually began recognizing the legitimacy of his own inner experiences. The counseling conversations enabled him to reinterpret interpersonal conflict not as evidence of personal inadequacy but as part of healthy boundary formation and authentic self-development.

SKN demonstrated a different yet equally meaningful process of narrative reconstruction. At the beginning of counseling, she consistently described herself through achievements, leadership positions, and academic productivity. Although these accomplishments reflected genuine competence, reflective conversations gradually uncovered persistent anxiety regarding the sustainability of this identity. During one session she reflected,

"If one day I stop achieving, who will I become?"

After several counseling meetings she continued,

"I think I have confused productivity with identity. I want my life to be meaningful, not simply impressive."

This statement represented a turning point in her narrative development. Achievement was no longer interpreted as the defining characteristic of her existence but became repositioned as one expression of meaningful contribution rather than the foundation of personal identity.

Across all three participants, reflective dialogue facilitated a movement from automatic interpretations toward conscious meaning reconstruction. Rather than accepting long-held assumptions as objective truths, participants increasingly recognized that their identities had been shaped by narratives that could be questioned, reinterpreted, and reconstructed. Cross-case analysis therefore identified reflective narrative inquiry as the central process through which participants transformed their understanding of themselves, their struggles, and their future.

These findings strongly support Bruner's (1990) proposition that human beings actively construct reality through narrative rather than merely recording objective events. Personal identity develops through interpretive stories that organize experience into coherent patterns of meaning. The present findings demonstrate that these organizing stories are not fixed but remain open to revision when individuals critically revisit the assumptions underlying their narratives. Mattingly et al. (2008) similarly argued that narrative reflection enables individuals to renegotiate personal identity by creating new interpretive possibilities that transcend previous limitations. The participants in this study illustrated precisely this process, as they gradually shifted from deterministic self-understandings toward more flexible and meaningful interpretations of their experiences.

The findings also reinforce White and Epston's (1990) concept of narrative therapy, particularly the importance of externalizing problem-saturated narratives. Through counseling conversations, participants increasingly recognized that anxiety, perfectionism, fear of rejection, and excessive achievement orientation were not intrinsic aspects of who they were but narratives that had become dominant over time. Externalization created psychological distance between participants and their problems, allowing alternative interpretations to emerge.

However, the present study also reveals an important extension to conventional narrative therapy. Within White and Epston's framework, alternative narratives primarily emerge through social reconstruction of meaning. In contrast, the present findings indicate that among Muslim students, alternative narratives became substantially more stable only when reflective dialogue also involved spiritual interpretation. Participants did not merely construct more adaptive personal stories; they reconstructed these stories in relation to divine purpose, *fitrah*, and their relationship with Allah. Consequently, narrative reconstruction functioned not only as cognitive reinterpretation but also as existential and spiritual reorientation.

This extension becomes particularly relevant when interpreted through contemporary Islamic psychology. Rothman and Coyle (2020) argued that psychological healing in Islamic psychotherapy involves releasing blockages occurring within the integrated dimensions of the *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *ruh*, thereby enabling individuals to return to their original God-oriented nature. Rather than focusing exclusively on symptom reduction, Islamic psychotherapy seeks alignment with *fitrah*. The present findings provide empirical support for this proposition. Participants' narratives demonstrated that healing occurred not simply because distressing memories were revisited but because these memories were reconstructed within a broader spiritual understanding of human existence.

Skinner (2019) similarly argued that Islamic psychology should move beyond translating Western therapeutic techniques into Islamic terminology. Instead, psychological interventions should emerge from an authentic Islamic anthropology in which human beings are fundamentally spiritual creatures. The present findings illustrate this principle by showing that narrative reflection

became transformative precisely when participants interpreted their life stories through concepts such as sincerity (*ikhhlās*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), gratitude (*shukr*), and *fitrah*, rather than relying solely upon psychological self-improvement.

These observations also resonate with broader empirical literature concerning spirituality and mental health. Lucchetti et al. (2021) demonstrated that spirituality contributes to resilience, hope, meaning-making, and psychological well-being, while Gonçalves et al. (2015) found that spiritually integrated interventions significantly reduce anxiety and psychological distress. More recent evidence likewise indicates that spiritual orientation promotes psychological health indirectly through enhanced life meaning and existential acceptance (Söylev et al., 2025). Nevertheless, most of these studies conceptualize spirituality primarily as a protective or coping resource. The present findings suggest a deeper interpretation. Spiritual reflection did not merely buffer psychological distress but fundamentally transformed participants' narratives concerning identity, suffering, and purpose.

The findings further extend previous educational counseling studies. Nissa and Primana (2023) demonstrated that narrative counseling effectively reduced academic anxiety by enabling students to reinterpret stressful experiences, while Wijaya et al. (2025) showed that narrative counseling facilitates meaning-making and self-understanding among university students. The present study supports these conclusions but also demonstrates that meaning reconstruction within Islamic educational contexts may involve an additional layer of transformation in which students reinterpret themselves through spiritual consciousness rather than through psychological reflection alone.

From a ruhiological perspective, this narrative transformation can be understood as the beginning of a gradual shift from externally constructed identity toward ruh-centered consciousness. Earlier formulations of Ruhiology proposed that the *ruh* constitutes the deepest center of human awareness and the source of Ruhani Quotient (RQ), distinguishing it from intellectual, emotional, or conventional spiritual intelligence (Ushuluddin et al., 2021). The present findings extend this conceptual framework by demonstrating the mechanism through which RQ begins to emerge. Reflective dialogue functioned as a medium through which participants critically examined inherited narratives, recognized incongruence between external expectations and their authentic selves, and gradually reconstructed personal meaning in accordance with their deepest spiritual orientation. Thus, narrative reflection served as a bridge connecting psychological meaning-making with the awakening of *ruh*-consciousness.

Accordingly, the findings suggest that the mechanism of change within Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling is not limited to narrative reconstruction itself. Rather, the counseling process follows a sequential pathway in which reflective dialogue facilitates meaning reconstruction, meaning reconstruction awakens awareness of the *ruh*, and this awakening subsequently becomes the foundation for deeper psychological and spiritual transformation. This emerging process forms the basis for the final theme of this study, which examines how reconstructed narratives ultimately culminate in the activation of Ruhani Quotient and enduring spiritual transformation.

Awakening Ruh Consciousness: From Meaning Reconstruction to Spiritual Transformation

The most distinctive finding of this study lies not merely in participants' ability to reconstruct the meaning of their experiences, but in the gradual emergence of ruh consciousness as the deepest foundation of psychological and spiritual transformation. While reflective dialogue enabled participants to reinterpret their personal narratives, the counseling process ultimately facilitated a deeper shift in which participants no longer viewed themselves primarily through external

achievements, social approval, or emotional experiences. Instead, they increasingly understood themselves through awareness of the ruh as the innermost center of human existence.

Across all counseling sessions, this transformation did not occur suddenly. Rather, it emerged progressively as participants repeatedly reflected upon the origins of their fears, questioned previously unquestioned assumptions, and examined the relationship between their inner experiences and their relationship with God. As participants reconstructed the meanings attached to failure, achievement, rejection, and self-worth, they gradually reported an increasing sense of inner peace that could not be explained merely by cognitive reframing or emotional catharsis. Instead, they described experiencing what may be interpreted as an awakening of deeper spiritual awareness.

This process was clearly reflected in HAF's narrative. During the initial counseling sessions, HAF perceived herself almost exclusively through academic success and parental expectations. Her identity had become inseparable from achievement, leaving little space for self-acceptance independent of external performance. However, after several sessions of reflective dialogue, she began describing a different kind of awareness.

"For the first time, I realized that Allah has never measured my worth by my grades. Perhaps I have been the one doing that to myself."

Later she reflected,

"I used to ask whether I was successful enough. Now I ask whether I am becoming a better person."

These reflections indicate a fundamental transformation in the source of self-evaluation. Rather than continuously seeking validation through external achievement, HAF gradually repositioned her identity within a relationship of spiritual accountability toward God. Success was no longer interpreted as the foundation of personal value but as one possible consequence of living sincerely according to her deeper purpose.

A similar transformation emerged in HNI's counseling journey. Earlier counseling sessions revealed that HNI habitually prioritized other people's expectations above his own psychological well-being. Fear of rejection had become the organizing principle of his interpersonal relationships. Nevertheless, sustained reflective dialogue gradually shifted his perspective. Toward the end of counseling he stated,

"I thought my life belonged to other people's opinions. Now I realize that my heart also has rights that I have ignored for too long."

He later added,

"When I became closer to Allah, I felt less dependent on people's acceptance."

These statements demonstrate that HNI's transformation involved more than improved self-confidence. His growing awareness reduced the psychological dominance of social evaluation because his primary reference point gradually shifted from external approval toward spiritual consciousness. Consequently, interpersonal acceptance became less central in defining his identity.

SKN's experience likewise illustrates the emergence of ruh consciousness from a different psychological pathway. Unlike HAF and HNI, SKN's struggles were rooted less in fear of rejection than in continuous productivity and achievement. Throughout counseling she repeatedly questioned whether her accomplishments genuinely reflected her authentic aspirations or merely fulfilled social expectations.

Near the conclusion of counseling she reflected,

"I still want to achieve many things, but now I want every achievement to come from sincerity, not from fear of becoming insignificant."

She further explained,

"I finally understand that peace does not come from constantly proving myself, but from remembering why Allah entrusted me with these abilities."

Here, achievement itself did not disappear. Rather, its existential meaning changed. Productivity was reconstructed from being a mechanism for self-validation into an expression of responsibility (*amanah*) and gratitude toward God. This narrative transformation illustrates how ruh consciousness does not eliminate worldly aspirations but reorients their underlying intentionality.

Cross-case analysis demonstrates that although participants entered counseling with different presenting problems, all three eventually experienced a similar transformation characterized by a gradual relocation of the center of consciousness. Initially, participants interpreted themselves through external standards such as academic performance, interpersonal acceptance, or public achievement. By the conclusion of counseling, however, these external standards no longer functioned as the primary basis of identity. Instead, participants increasingly referred to inner sincerity, divine purpose, gratitude, and awareness of their relationship with Allah when describing themselves. This shared developmental pattern suggests that the deepest outcome of narrative-based Islamic counseling was not merely psychological adaptation but the awakening of ruh consciousness.

These findings both support and extend Bruner's (1990) theory of narrative identity. Bruner proposed that personal identity develops through stories individuals construct about themselves and continually revise throughout life. The present study confirms this proposition by demonstrating that participants' identities changed through narrative reinterpretation. However, the findings also suggest that narrative identity within Islamic educational contexts extends beyond autobiographical coherence alone. Participants did not merely create more adaptive stories; they reconstructed those stories around a different ontological understanding of the self grounded in the *ruh*.

Similarly, White and Epston (1990) argued that narrative therapy facilitates change by separating individuals from problem-saturated identities and encouraging preferred narratives. The present findings support the importance of externalization and narrative reconstruction but indicate an additional dimension that has received limited attention within conventional narrative therapy. In the current study, participants' preferred narratives became psychologically sustainable only when they were simultaneously integrated with spiritual awareness and their relationship with God. Thus, alternative narratives were not generated solely through social discourse but through existential reconnection with transcendental meaning.

This distinction represents an important theoretical extension of narrative counseling. Within many constructivist approaches, reality is understood primarily as socially constructed through language and interpersonal interaction. By contrast, the present findings suggest that from a ruhiological perspective, narrative reconstruction also involves recovering an ontological reality that transcends subjective interpretation. In other words, participants were not simply inventing new stories; they were rediscovering dimensions of the self understood to have existed prior to social conditioning through *fitrah* and the *ruh*.

These findings resonate strongly with developments in contemporary Islamic psychology. Rothman and Coyle (2020) conceptualized Islamic psychotherapy as facilitating the realignment of the *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *ruh* in order to restore harmony within the human soul. Psychological suffering was interpreted as arising from blockages or imbalance across these interconnected dimensions rather than from isolated emotional symptoms. The experiences of HAF, HNI, and SKN provide empirical illustrations of this conceptual framework. Their emotional distress gradually diminished as they realigned their personal narratives with deeper spiritual awareness rather than merely correcting maladaptive cognitions.

Skinner (2019) likewise argued that Islamic psychology should be grounded in Qur'anic anthropology rather than functioning as a superficial adaptation of Western psychological models. The present findings support this position by demonstrating that participants' transformation became meaningful only after the counseling process shifted attention from psychological symptoms toward the spiritual structure of the human person. This suggests that authentic Islamic counseling requires more than incorporating religious language into existing therapeutic models; it requires reorienting the therapeutic process toward the spiritual ontology of human existence.

The findings are also consistent with Al-Karam's (2018) proposal that Islamic psychology should be understood as an integrated, multidimensional paradigm rather than a collection of isolated religious interventions. Likewise, Tanhan and Young (2022) emphasized that culturally responsive psychological services for Muslim populations must incorporate the biopsychosocial and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. The present study contributes empirical evidence supporting these perspectives by demonstrating how narrative reflection becomes increasingly transformative when integrated with Islamic spiritual anthropology.

Recent studies concerning spirituality and mental health further reinforce this interpretation. Lucchetti et al. (2021) and Rosmarin et al. (2022) demonstrated that spirituality contributes significantly to resilience, hope, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being. Similarly, Söylev et al. (2025) reported that spiritual orientation indirectly reduces depression, anxiety, and stress by strengthening meaning in life. Nevertheless, these studies primarily conceptualize spirituality as a protective psychological resource. The present findings suggest a deeper mechanism. Participants experienced transformation not simply because spirituality reduced distress, but because spiritual awareness fundamentally reorganized the way they understood themselves and interpreted reality.

From a ruhiological perspective, this deeper reorganization reflects the activation of Ruhani Quotient (RQ). Earlier works by Ushuluddin et al. (2021) proposed RQ as a distinct dimension of human intelligence rooted in the *ruh* rather than in cognition, emotion, or conventional notions of spiritual intelligence. Unlike Spiritual Quotient, which generally emphasizes spiritual competencies or adaptive capacities, RQ refers to the awakening of the *ruh* as the deepest center of consciousness through which human beings orient themselves toward divine truth. Subsequent work by Ushuluddin et al. (2021) further identified the *ruh* as the original source of spiritual intelligence, while Ushuluddin et al. (2023) demonstrated its practical application within stress-management counseling.

The present study extends these earlier conceptual and procedural contributions by providing phenomenological evidence of how Ruhani Quotient begins to emerge within lived counseling experiences. Rather than measuring RQ as a psychological variable, this study identifies observable indicators of its awakening, including reduced dependence on external validation, increased alignment with *fitrah*, strengthened awareness of God's presence in daily decision-making, greater sincerity (*ikhlas*) in action, and the reinterpretation of suffering as part of spiritual growth. These experiential indicators provide an important bridge between the theoretical foundations of Ruhiology and its practical manifestation in narrative-based counseling.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the ultimate outcome of narrative-based Islamic counseling is not merely improved coping or emotional adjustment. Rather, the counseling process facilitates a progressive movement from external validation, toward meaning reconstruction, and ultimately toward ruh-centered consciousness, through which individuals reinterpret themselves, their suffering, and their life purpose in relation to God. This progression represents the central transformative mechanism proposed by the present study and forms the basis for a new conceptual

model of Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling from a Ruhiological Perspective, in which narrative reflection serves as the pathway leading from psychological reconstruction to enduring spiritual transformation.

Toward a Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model: Integrating Narrative Counseling and Islamic Psychology

The final and most significant finding of this study is the development of a conceptual model describing how narrative-based Islamic counseling facilitates psychological and spiritual transformation through a ruhiological perspective. While previous studies have demonstrated that narrative counseling promotes meaning-making (Bruner, 1990; White & Epston, 1990; Nissa & Primana, 2023; Wijaya et al., 2025) and that spirituality contributes to psychological well-being (Lucchetti et al., 2021), the present study suggests that these two domains can be integrated within a single transformative framework grounded in Islamic psychology. The resulting model conceptualizes psychological healing as a progressive movement from externally constructed identity toward ruh-centered consciousness through a series of interconnected narrative and spiritual processes.

Cross-case analysis of HAF, HNI, and SKN revealed a remarkably consistent developmental pattern despite differences in their presenting problems. Each participant initially entered counseling with a dominant problem-saturated narrative organized around external standards of self-worth. For HAF, personal value depended primarily upon academic achievement and parental approval. HNI organized his identity around maintaining interpersonal acceptance and avoiding disappointment. SKN's narrative centered upon continuous achievement, productivity, and social recognition. Although the specific contents differed, all three participants demonstrated a common psychological structure characterized by dependence on external validation as the primary reference point for identity construction.

The counseling process gradually interrupted these dominant narratives through structured reflective dialogue. Rather than directly challenging participants' beliefs or prescribing religious advice, counseling encouraged participants to revisit emotionally significant experiences, identify recurring narrative patterns, and critically examine the meanings attached to those experiences. This reflective process enabled participants to distinguish between objective life events and the subjective interpretations that had gradually become internalized as unquestioned truths.

As reflective dialogue deepened, participants increasingly reconstructed the meanings underlying their experiences. Academic failure, criticism, rejection, and achievement were no longer interpreted solely through the lens of personal inadequacy or social evaluation. Instead, participants gradually reframed these experiences within broader understandings of personal growth, responsibility, gratitude, sincerity, and divine purpose. Meaning reconstruction therefore functioned as an intermediate process connecting psychological reflection with spiritual awareness.

A particularly important observation was that reconstruction of meaning alone did not fully explain participants' transformation. Lasting psychological change appeared only after participants experienced an emerging awareness of the ruh as the deepest center of their identity. During this stage, external standards gradually lost their psychological dominance as participants increasingly referred to their relationship with Allah, their *fitrah*, and their inner spiritual awareness when interpreting themselves and their life experiences. Consequently, psychological stability was no longer derived primarily from successful performance or social acceptance but from a growing sense of spiritual alignment.

Within the present study, this awakening of ruh consciousness subsequently generated observable changes in participants' emotional regulation, self-understanding, interpersonal relationships, and future orientation. Participants demonstrated greater self-acceptance, reduced dependence on external approval, increased emotional resilience, stronger awareness of personal responsibility, and deeper commitment to spiritual practices such as prayer, remembrance (*dhikr*), gratitude, and sincerity. These outcomes suggest that psychological transformation became sustainable because it was supported by an underlying transformation of consciousness rather than by temporary emotional improvement alone.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model consisting of six sequential yet dynamically interconnected stages. The first stage is problem-saturated narrative, in which individuals organize their identity around stories dominated by fear, perfectionism, rejection, achievement pressure, or external validation. At this stage, psychological distress emerges because the individual's self-understanding becomes dependent upon unstable external conditions.

The second stage is reflective dialogue, during which counseling creates a safe relational space for participants to narrate, revisit, and critically examine emotionally significant experiences. Rather than functioning as directive advice, reflective dialogue encourages deeper awareness of implicit assumptions embedded within personal narratives.

The third stage is meaning reconstruction. Through continuous reflection, participants begin separating objective experiences from previously unquestioned interpretations. Old narratives become open to reinterpretation, allowing individuals to construct more coherent and compassionate understandings of themselves and their life journeys.

The fourth stage is ruh awareness. This stage represents the principal contribution of the present study. Participants gradually recognize that their deepest identity cannot be reduced to achievement, emotion, cognition, or social evaluation. Instead, they become aware of the *ruh* as the innermost center of human consciousness and the primary source of existential orientation toward God.

The fifth stage involves the activation of Ruhani Quotient (RQ). Within the ruhiological perspective, awareness of the *ruh* generates a new mode of consciousness characterized by sincerity (*ikhhlās*), truthfulness (*ṣiddīq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), wisdom (*faṭānah*), responsibility, gratitude, and awareness of divine presence. These characteristics extend beyond conventional emotional intelligence or spiritual coping by representing a deeper transformation in the orientation of the self.

Finally, the sixth stage is psychological and spiritual transformation. At this stage, participants demonstrate increased emotional resilience, healthier identity construction, greater autonomy from external validation, more adaptive interpersonal functioning, stronger spiritual commitment, and renewed life meaning. Transformation therefore represents not merely symptom reduction but an enduring reorganization of identity grounded in ruh-centered consciousness.

This proposed model extends several existing theoretical traditions simultaneously. First, it extends Bruner's (1990) theory of narrative identity by suggesting that narrative reconstruction within Islamic educational contexts involves not only autobiographical coherence but also spiritual ontology. Second, it extends White and Epston's (1990) narrative therapy by proposing that externalization and preferred narratives become more sustainable when integrated with spiritual reconnection rather than remaining exclusively within social-constructivist discourse. Third, it supports Rothman and Coyle's (2020) conceptualization of Islamic psychotherapy by providing

empirical evidence that narrative reflection may facilitate the reintegration of *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *ruh* during therapeutic processes.

Most importantly, however, the proposed model contributes directly to the continuing development of Ruhiology. Previous studies by Ushuluddin et al. (2021, 2023) established the ontological foundations of the *ruh*, introduced Ruhani Quotient as a distinct form of human intelligence, and demonstrated the practical application of ruhiological principles within stress-management counseling. The present study extends this body of work by identifying the phenomenological mechanism through which ruhani consciousness emerges during narrative counseling. Rather than positioning Ruhiology merely as an educational philosophy or counseling technique, the findings support its conceptualization as a comprehensive paradigm of human consciousness capable of explaining how psychological transformation unfolds through the dynamic interaction between narrative reflection and spiritual awakening.

Accordingly, the Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model offers a theoretical bridge connecting Western narrative counseling and Islamic psychology. Conventional narrative counseling contributes powerful methods for exploring personal stories, externalizing problems, and reconstructing meaning, whereas Islamic psychology contributes a deeper understanding of human ontology grounded in *ruh*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *fitrah*. Ruhiology integrates these complementary strengths by proposing that narrative reconstruction reaches its fullest transformative potential only when individuals reconnect their reconstructed narratives with their deepest spiritual identity before God.

The present model also provides practical implications for counseling within Islamic educational institutions. Rather than limiting counseling to problem-solving, emotional regulation, or academic adjustment, counselors may facilitate students' long-term psychological development by guiding reflective dialogue toward deeper spiritual awareness and authentic self-understanding. Consequently, narrative-based Islamic counseling becomes not merely a therapeutic intervention but a process of restoring human consciousness to its original orientation toward truth, meaning, responsibility, and divine presence.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling from a Ruhiological Perspective represents more than an adaptation of existing counseling approaches. Instead, it offers an integrative paradigm that combines narrative inquiry, Islamic psychology, and ruh-centered consciousness into a coherent framework for understanding psychological healing and spiritual transformation within contemporary educational contexts.

Theoretical Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research

The present study offers several theoretical contributions to the growing scholarship on narrative counseling, Islamic psychology, and ruhiology. Rather than merely demonstrating the effectiveness of narrative-based counseling for reducing psychological distress, the findings advance a broader understanding of how psychological and spiritual transformation unfolds through narrative reflection within an Islamic educational context. The proposed Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model provides a conceptual framework that integrates narrative inquiry, Islamic psychology, and ruh-centered consciousness into a coherent explanation of transformative counseling.

First, this study extends the theoretical development of narrative counseling. Existing narrative counseling literature has primarily emphasized externalization, meaning reconstruction, and identity re-authoring through social and linguistic processes (Bruner, 1990; White & Epston, 1990). The present findings support these perspectives while suggesting that narrative

reconstruction among Muslim students involves an additional spiritual dimension. Meaning reconstruction did not become transformative merely because participants produced alternative narratives, but because these narratives were gradually reoriented toward their relationship with Allah, their *fitrah*, and their awareness of the *ruh*. Accordingly, this study proposes the concept of Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling, in which reflective dialogue functions simultaneously as psychological meaning-making and spiritual awakening.

Second, this study contributes to the continuing development of Islamic psychology by providing empirical support for contemporary calls to reconstruct psychological theory from an Islamic anthropological perspective rather than merely adapting Western therapeutic approaches (Skinner, 2019; Rothman & Coyle, 2020; Al-Karam, 2018). While previous conceptual works have emphasized the interrelationship among the *ruh*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *'aql*, empirical illustrations of how these dimensions operate during actual counseling processes remain limited. The present findings demonstrate that participants' psychological healing was accompanied by progressive spiritual realignment, in which emotional stability emerged through renewed awareness of their relationship with God rather than solely through cognitive restructuring. In this regard, the study contributes empirical evidence supporting the practical application of Islamic psychological theory within educational counseling.

Third, and most importantly, this study significantly advances the theoretical maturation of Ruhiology. Earlier works by Ushuluddin and colleagues established the ontological position of the *ruh*, introduced Ruhani Quotient (RQ) as a distinct dimension of human intelligence, and developed procedural applications through Ruhiology-based counseling modules for stress management (Ushuluddin et al., 2021; Ushuluddin et al., 2023). However, those studies primarily focused on philosophical foundations and practical implementation. The present study extends this body of knowledge by explaining how ruhani consciousness emerges phenomenologically during counseling. Through narrative inquiry, the study reveals that the awakening of *ruh* is neither an abstract theological concept nor merely a counseling technique, but an experiential process in which individuals gradually shift the center of their consciousness from external validation toward divine orientation. This finding positions Ruhiology not simply as an educational philosophy, but as a comprehensive paradigm for understanding human consciousness and psychological transformation.

The integration of these three perspectives also produces a new conceptual pathway for counseling within Islamic educational settings. Based on the findings, psychological transformation may be understood as a progressive sequence consisting of problem-saturated narrative, reflective dialogue, meaning reconstruction, ruh awareness, activation of Ruhani Quotient, and ultimately psychological and spiritual transformation. This sequential framework extends existing narrative counseling models by identifying *ruh awareness* as the pivotal mechanism linking narrative reconstruction with enduring psychological change. Consequently, the present study offers not only an empirical description of counseling experiences but also a theoretical model that may inform future developments in Islamic educational psychology and spiritually integrated counseling practice.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved only three university students, which is consistent with the depth-oriented nature of narrative inquiry but inevitably limits the transferability of findings to broader educational populations. The purpose of the study was to generate rich, contextualized understanding rather than statistical generalization. Second, participants were recruited from relatively similar sociocultural and religious backgrounds. Students from different educational institutions, cultural

contexts, or levels of religious commitment may experience narrative transformation in different ways. Third, the counseling process focused primarily on short-term narrative development during individual counseling sessions. The study therefore does not examine the long-term sustainability of ruh-centered transformation or the extent to which these changes influence future psychological adjustment, academic engagement, or interpersonal functioning.

Future research may expand the proposed model in several directions. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the stability of ruh consciousness and Ruhani Quotient over extended periods following counseling. Comparative studies may investigate differences between conventional narrative counseling and narrative-based Islamic counseling to identify specific mechanisms associated with spiritual transformation. Future researchers may also develop valid and reliable instruments to operationalize the dimensions and indicators of Ruhani Quotient, allowing empirical examination through mixed-method or quantitative approaches. In addition, broader investigations involving diverse educational levels, cultural settings, and Muslim communities across different countries would provide stronger evidence regarding the applicability of the proposed model.

Overall, the present study demonstrates that psychological healing within Islamic educational contexts involves more than reducing symptoms of anxiety or emotional distress. Narrative reflection becomes genuinely transformative when it enables individuals to reconstruct the meaning of their experiences through renewed awareness of the *ruh* as the deepest center of consciousness. In doing so, this study introduces Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling from a Ruhiological Perspective as an emerging theoretical framework that bridges contemporary narrative counseling and Islamic psychology while offering a practical foundation for future counseling research and practice grounded in spiritual consciousness.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students' psychological distress cannot be adequately understood solely in terms of academic stress, emotional instability, or cognitive maladjustment. Rather, the participants' experiences revealed deeper existential struggles characterized by fragile self-worth, fear of rejection, dependence on external validation, and disconnection from their inner spiritual awareness. These findings suggest that psychological suffering within Islamic educational contexts is inseparable from the way individuals construct meaning about themselves, others, and their relationship with God.

The findings further indicate that narrative-based Islamic counseling facilitates transformation through a progressive process of narrative reflection, meaning reconstruction, awakening of ruh consciousness, activation of Ruhani Quotient (RQ), and ultimately psychological and spiritual transformation. Unlike conventional narrative counseling, which primarily emphasizes reconstructing personal stories through social and psychological meaning-making, the ruhiological perspective positions narrative reflection as a pathway toward reconnecting individuals with the ruh as the deepest center of human consciousness. Psychological healing therefore emerges not only from changing personal narratives but from reorienting those narratives toward *fitrah*, divine awareness, and transcendental meaning.

Theoretically, this study extends three interrelated fields of scholarship. First, it expands narrative counseling by introducing a spiritually grounded framework that integrates reflective dialogue with Islamic ontology. Second, it contributes empirical support to contemporary Islamic psychology by illustrating how the dimensions of *ruh*, *qalb*, *nafs*, and *'aql* interact during counseling processes. Third, it advances the development of Ruhiology by moving beyond its previous philosophical and procedural formulations toward a phenomenological explanation of how

ruh-centered consciousness emerges through lived counseling experiences. The proposed Ruhiological Narrative Transformation Model therefore offers a conceptual bridge between Western narrative counseling and Islamic psychology, while positioning Ruhiology as a comprehensive paradigm of human consciousness rather than merely a counseling technique.

Although the findings are context-specific and not intended for statistical generalization, they provide an important conceptual foundation for future counseling research and practice in Islamic educational settings. Further studies involving more diverse populations, longitudinal designs, and quantitative validation of the dimensions of Ruhani Quotient are needed to refine and expand the proposed model. Nevertheless, this study suggests that narrative-based Islamic counseling offers a promising alternative for supporting students who experience anxiety, identity-related struggles, perfectionism, and existential uncertainty by facilitating not only psychological adjustment but also deeper spiritual transformation.

Ultimately, this study argues that the deepest form of educational counseling is not simply helping students solve problems, but helping them reconstruct the meaning of their lives by reconnecting with the *ruh* as the authentic center of consciousness. In this sense, Narrative-Based Islamic Counseling from a Ruhiological Perspective represents an emerging paradigm in Islamic Educational Psychology that integrates narrative inquiry, Islamic psychology, and spiritual consciousness into a coherent framework for fostering holistic human development.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT (OpenAI) to assist in developing reflective counseling instruments, organizing participant profiling, and supporting academic writing. The author reviewed, revised, and interpreted all research data independently and takes full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Methodology; Counseling Process; Validation; Writing original draft.

Author 2: Literature Review; Theoretical Framework; Language and Narrative Analysis.

Author 3: Data Curation; Resources; Academic Editing; Writing – review and editing.

Author 4: Conceptual Review; Arabic Language and Literature Analysis; Cross-cultural Validation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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