

# Islamic Spiritual Guidance for Online Gambling Victims: A Spiritual and Psychological Approach

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Islamic spiritual guidance for online gambling victims through spiritual and psychological approaches in Makassar City. The phenomenon of online gambling has evolved into a multidimensional social problem, simultaneously damaging the spiritual, psychological, familial, and social dimensions of victims' lives. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, involving online gambling addiction victims, Islamic spiritual counselors, and victims' family members as informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and subsequently analyzed using an interactive analysis model. The findings reveal that the Islamic spiritual approach encompassing the methods of tawbah, muhasabah, tazkiyatun nafs, dhikr, tadabbur of the Qur'an, and the restoration of congregational prayer proved effective in restoring the qalb and ruh dimensions of victims. The psychological approach through behavioral counseling, cognitive restructuring, intrinsic motivation enhancement, Islamic mindfulness, and family counselling complemented the recovery process at the cognitive, emotional, and relational dimensions. The integration of both approaches yielded more comprehensive and sustainable recovery outcomes compared to either approach applied in isolation. The success of the recovery process was influenced by the victims' intrinsic motivation, active family support, a supportive religious environment, and the integrative competence of the counselors.

## Keywords

Islamic Spiritual Guidance, Online Gambling, Spiritual Approach, Psychological Approach, Addiction Recovery



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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology not only brings convenience, but also gives birth to new social problems that are increasingly worrying, one of which is the phenomenon of online gambling. In Indonesia, this activity has developed into

a social epidemic that touches various walks of life, ranging from students, students, workers, to the state civil apparatus. Although all forms of gambling are strictly prohibited by national law, the ease of internet access and massive digital promotion continue to drive the significant growth of online gambling. The scale of this problem is reflected in the data from the Ministry of Communications and Digital which recorded the blocking of more than 2.4 million online gambling sites between October and November 2025 as part of a National Action (Antaranews, 2025).

Dika Sahputra et al (2022) in their research in the city of Tebing Tinggi found that online gambling caused layered negative impacts, ranging from a decrease in the spirit of worship, damage to family relationships, material losses, to a decrease in learning achievement. In the city of Makassar, this phenomenon is evident through a variety of modus operandi, where actors play as well as the city, admin, and manager of online gambling sites by offering various types of games such as slots, dominoes, parlay, pragmatic, and football gambling (Tribratanews.polri.go.id). These activities have a serious impact on the Social, Psychological, and spiritual life of the community, especially among adolescents. This condition encourages the need for an integrated Islamic spiritual guidance approach with psychological support as a holistic recovery strategy.

The impact of online gambling is not only material and financial, but it also touches on more fundamental dimensions in the lives of victims. Psychologically, the victim is prone to depression, excessive anxiety, impulse control disorders, to suicidal ideation. Spiritually, they tend to experience a decrease in the quality of worship, move away from religious values, and lose a meaningful life orientation. This multidimensional condition confirms that the handling of online gambling victims requires a holistic approach that combines Islamic spiritual guidance with psychological support as a comprehensive recovery effort, addiction prevention, and strengthening self-control, especially for victims in Makassar City.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach to the type of descriptive research. The selection of this approach is motivated by the characteristics of the object of study that are subjective, contextual, and full of meaning, namely the spiritual and psychological experience of online gambling victims during the process of Islamic spiritual guidance in the city of Makassar that cannot be reduced to numbers or statistics alone.

Fadli (2021) explained that descriptive qualitative research design is very appropriate to be used when researchers aim to photograph social phenomena holistically, reflectively, and contextually, especially those phenomena that require a deep understanding of the meaning, processes, and life experiences of individuals. In line with that, Fiantika, Wasil, and Jumiyati (2022) affirm that the qualitative approach provides space for researchers to explore nuances, dynamics, and contexts that the quantitative approach cannot capture.

The descriptive type of research is used because this study aims to describe systematically, factually, and accurately, about how the Islamic spiritual approach is applied by counselors in restoring the condition of faith, worship, and morals of victims, how the psychological approach is used to restore the victim's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functions, and how both approaches are integrated in the practice of guidance. Waruwu (2023) states that qualitative descriptive research produces a deep, careful, and meaningful description of the phenomenon under study in its natural context.

The spiritual approach in this study refers to the dimension of guidance that is based on Islamic values including strengthening aqidah, habituation to worship, and purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) as reviewed by Sukandar (2025) in *Al-Isyraq: Journal of Guidance, Counseling, and Islamic counseling*. While the psychological approach refers to the dimension of guidance that uses evidence-based psychology techniques, such as behavior modification, cognitive therapy, and mindfulness, which in the context of Islam are integrated with Qur'anic values

(Maturidi, 2021, Journal of academic Media, 2025).

This study was conducted in the city of Makassar, South Sulawesi province, taking into account (1) the significant increase in cases of online gambling in this city in recent years, (2) the existence of Islamic spiritual guidance institutions, mosques, rehabilitation centers, and counseling services that actively deal with victims of addiction, and (3) the representation of large cities with high levels of internet accessibility that are the main risk factors for the spread of online gambling. The study was conducted for four months with the following details: the first month for the preparation of research instruments and field permits, the second and Third months for the implementation of data collection through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, and the fourth month for data analysis, interpretation of findings, and writing the final report.

The subjects were selected using purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of informants based on certain considerations in accordance with the objectives of the study. Nur, Sulaiman, and Rahman (2024) in *PEDAGOGIC: Indonesian Journal of Science Education and Technology* explain that purposive sampling allows researchers to choose participants who really have knowledge, experience, and direct involvement with the focus of the study, so that the data produced is rich, meaningful, and contextual.

The research subjects consisted of three groups of informants. First, the main informant is the victim of online gambling addiction. Second, supporting informants are counselors or Islamic spiritual guides. Third, additional informants are the victim's nuclear family who can provide information about changes in the victim's condition before and after undergoing the guidance process. This study uses three data collection techniques, namely first, structured in-depth interviews focused on two dimensions, namely spiritual (experience of worship, repentance, muhasabah, dhikr) and psychological (emotional conditions, distorted thought patterns, coping mechanisms, and family dynamics). Second, observation of participants to observe

directly the implementation of spiritual methods, the application of psychological counseling techniques, and guidance group dynamics. Third, documentation in the form of Case Notes, client progress reports, and guidance materials, while maintaining data confidentiality.

The validity of the data has four criteria (Waruwu, 2023; Nur et al., 2024). First, credibility is achieved through triangulation of sources, techniques, and theories, as well as member checking to key informants. Second, diversion is done by compiling a thick and rich description so that the findings can be assessed for their relevance in other contexts. Third, dependencies are maintained through documentation of the entire research process in an audit trail that other researchers can examine. Fourth, certainty is ensured through the practice of self-reflexivity recorded in research journals so that the findings are purely derived from data, not the subjective bias of the researcher.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The picture of the damage that online gambling inflicts on the lives of victims needs to be mapped out thoroughly before the guidance process can be properly understood. This mapping is not just an opening, but an important foothold that is the basis for designing and directing targeted guidance programs. The results of in-depth interviews and direct observations on the ground reveal that the impact of online gambling does not only touch one side of life, but is comprehensive and layered to penetrate almost every aspect of the victim's life at once, where one damage tends to aggravate the damage of others on an ongoing basis.

### **Impact on Spiritual Life**

The spiritual dimension is the earliest aspect degraded when a person falls into an online gambling addiction, long before the financial or social impact becomes noticeable. All informants admitted to experiencing a significant decline in the quality of worship, even some of them did not perform prayers at all for months indicating a break in the vertical relationship between individuals and Allah SWT

which is the main foundation of a Muslim's spiritual life. In addition, informants reported a weakening of gratitude and a shift in beliefs about lawful sources of sustenance, which were slowly replaced by irrational beliefs in luck and certain rituals in gambling. Anbiya (2023) asserts that this condition is a clear manifestation of the weakening of the Islamic nature of the individual due to the dominance of greed, ghaflah, and hubb al-dunya three conditions of the soul that directly form a fertile psychological foundation for the development of addictive behavior.

### **Mental Health Disorders**

Online gambling addiction also has a significant impact on the mental health of the victim, which develops progressively with the intensity and duration of involvement in gambling activities. The accumulation of defeats, the ever-increasing pressure of debt, and the prolonged internalization of shame form an increasingly vulnerable and unstable psychological state. Anxiety is the most dominant disorder, characterized by difficulty sleeping, decreased concentration, and persistent anxiety, accompanied by depressive symptoms that include feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in daily activities. The most critical condition was found in a number of informants who had experienced suicidal ideation due to debt pressure and the perception of no way out. Wirareja and SA'adah (2024) say that online gambling addiction has the potential to lead to major depressive disorder and an increased risk of dangerous behavior, while Pasaribu and Marbun (2024) assert that the victim's self-regulation ability decreases significantly because addiction has changed the mechanism of cognitive work noticeably.

### **Breakdown of family and social relationships**

The impact of online gambling on the victim's family and social relationships proved to be very destructive, characterized by increased domestic conflict due to ongoing financial losses, dishonesty in financial management, and neglect of domestic responsibilities until some cases were on the verge of divorce. On the social dimension, most informants withdraw from social environments and religious

activities due to shame and concern for the judgment of others. Zain et al. (2025) explain that such social isolation actually exacerbates addiction indirectly, because the loss of a healthy social support network further weakens the individual's protection against addictive behavior. It is this multidimensional state of decay that reinforces the relevance of the spiritual approach of Islam as a method of recovery that works from the inside out, restoring the heart and soul first as the foundation of authentic and sustainable behavioral change.

### **Love and forgiveness: starting from the heart**

The first step implemented by all counselors is to guide the victim through an authentic repentance process, which includes three stages that cannot be skipped: *iqrar* (honest recognition of mistakes), *nadam* (deep regret for violating God's Commandments), and *azm* (building a strong determination not to repeat, accompanied by a concrete plan of action). In addition to repentance, the victim is also taught *muhasabah* as a daily self-reflection practice that is done in a structured and consistent manner. Harahap and Ependi (2023) affirm that *muhasabah*, which is carried out routinely, forms a self-evaluation mechanism that works from within, so that the resulting behavioral changes are intrinsic and sustainable. Of the eight informants who underwent serious repentance-*muhasabah* guidance, seven reported noticeable changes in their outlook and behavior within the first four to eight weeks.

### **Tazkiyatun Nafs: cleansing and renewing the Soul**

*Tazkiyatun nafs* is at the core of the entire process of Islamic spiritual guidance, implemented through three successive and mutually continuous stages. The first stage, *takhalliyat al-nafs*, is to identify and cleanse the soul of the negative traits that are at the root of addiction, especially greed, *ghaflah*, and *hubb al-dunya*. The second stage, *tahalli al-nafs*, is to fill the soul that has been cleansed with praiseworthy qualities in its place: greed is replaced by *Qana'ah*, *ghaflah* with *muraqabah*, and *hubb al-dunya* with awareness of the hereafter. The third stage, *tajliyat Al-nafs*, is the state in which the purified soul radiates authentic inner peace and naturally propels

the individual to goodness. Syafiq and Az Zahra (2024) affirm that tazkiyatun nafs restores people thoroughly not just by changing behavior, but by transforming the soul to its roots.

### **Dhikr and Tadabbur of the Qur'an: healing from Reliable Sources**

Structured dhikr and tadabbur of the Qur'an are applied as therapeutic components that have a real and measurable impact, not just a mere ritual complement. Daily dhikr is required at least after the obligatory prayers and at bedtime with the type that is tailored to the specific needs of the victim, istighfar to build awareness of sin, tasbih and tahmid to foster gratitude, as well as prayers of protection from temptation. Maftuhin and Yazid (2025) proved that regularly performed dhikr is able to calm the autonomic nervous system, lower cortisol levels, and increase self-control, which is evident from the reports of all informants about a real decrease in the intensity of gambling urges. Nurhalizah, Arifin, and Saepulrohim (2023) also found that tadabbur-based guidance of the Qur'an significantly increases spiritual intelligence and strengthens individual resilience in the face of temptation.

### **Prayer in congregation: complete recovery**

Recovery of prayer practices, especially congregational prayers in mosques, is one of the most important recovery indicators monitored by counselors throughout the guidance program. Congregational prayer provides layered benefits. Spiritually, prayer is a moment of being fully present before God; psychologically, the five daily prayers provide the temporal structure that addiction victims desperately need; and socially, congregational prayer is the most natural bridge to reintroduce victims into a healthy community environment. Victims who consistently maintain congregational prayers have been shown to show a much more stable recovery rate and rarely experience relapse than those who only pray alone at home.

The psychological approach in the guidance of online gambling victims is applied as a complement that works synergistically with the spiritual approach. If the spiritual approach focuses on restoring the dimensions of qalb and ruh through

strengthening the individual's relationship with Allah SWT, then the psychological approach plays a role in restoring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functions that are degraded due to addiction. Maturidi (2021) affirms that structured psychological intervention is indispensable because addictions have profoundly altered the thought patterns and response mechanisms of individuals, so a value-based approach alone is not enough to generate concrete and sustainable behavioral changes.

### **Changing Patterns Of Gambling Habits**

Behavioral counseling is applied by systematically mapping the chain of gambling behavior, ranging from triggers (stress, loneliness, exposure to advertising), the development of urges, automatic behavioral responses, to the negative consequences that follow. Based on the mapping, the counselor and the victim design intervention strategies to break the chain of behavior at various identified points. Maturidi (2021) proved that this behavior modification technique was effective in measurably lowering online gambling addiction, and the findings are in line with the results of this study where most informants reported a significant decrease in the frequency of gambling urges in the first four to six weeks of the guidance program.

### **Correcting the wrong way of thinking**

Almost all of the informants were identified as having strong distortive thought patterns, with the most dominant being the gambler's fallacy of the mistaken belief that a losing streak is a harbinger of an imminent big win. Counselors address this condition through cognitive restructuring techniques, by guiding the victim to find for themselves evidence that contradicts such distortive beliefs through questions that encourage critical reflection. This process is reinforced by the internalization of the Islamic value of qadar that sustenance has been decreed by Allah SWT and cannot be manipulated through haram means resulting in positive inner peace while reinforcing the motivation to abandon gambling permanently.

### **Building a spirit of change from within**

Awareness of the adverse effects of online gambling does not automatically result in behavior change if it is not accompanied by strong intrinsic motivation. Counselors apply motivational reinforcement techniques by guiding victims to explore their own personal reasons that are most meaningful to them, both relational ones such as family responsibilities, and spiritual ones such as longing for inner peace that was felt before addiction. Astuti, Utami, Putri, and Lubis (2025) affirm that motivation that comes from within is the key for change to be authentic and resistant to pressure. This approach is reinforced by the internalization of the concept of intention in Islam, that changes based on sincerity because God produces a much stronger commitment than changes driven solely by external pressure.

### **Islamic Mindfulness: the pause between temptation and action**

Islamic mindfulness techniques that blend mindfulness with dhikr are applied as a proven effective addictive drive control strategy. The victim is taught a structured procedure when the temptation to gamble arises: recognizing the presence of the urge without immediately responding to it, regulating breathing, saying dhikr, then switching attention to a planned replacement activity. The pause created in this process leaves room for the individual to choose a more adaptive response. Studies in *Hisbah: Journal of counseling guidance and Islamic Da'wah* (2024) confirm that the integration of self-awareness with dhikr is effective in controlling addictive impulses, because dhikr serves as a solid spiritual anchor at critical moments full of temptation.

### **Family Counseling: restoring damaged trust**

The active involvement of the family is an integral component that cannot be separated from the success of the recovery process. Family counseling sessions focused on four main aspects: establishing a safe communication space, forming a shared understanding that addiction is a health problem, setting agreed boundaries in financial management and transparency, and restoring trust through consistent

action commitments. The results were quite significant, the entire family of the informant reported an improvement in the quality of communication, and in most cases a substantial restoration of trust between the victim and his immediate family members.

The recovery of victims of online gambling addiction is influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors in the recovery process include a sincere will from within oneself, as personal awareness and strong internal motivation are essential foundations for change. In addition, active and warm family support plays a significant role in helping victims feel accepted, understood, and encouraged throughout the recovery journey. A positive and supportive religious environment also contributes to recovery by providing spiritual guidance, emotional calmness, and moral reinforcement. Furthermore, counselors who are competent in both psychological and religious aspects are important in delivering effective and holistic assistance, as they can address the emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of addiction.

On the other hand, several inhibiting factors can slow down or complicate the recovery process. One major challenge is the high accessibility of online gambling, which makes it easier for individuals to relapse due to constant exposure and temptation. Social stigma and shame also become barriers, as many victims feel embarrassed or afraid of being judged, which may prevent them from seeking help openly. Another obstacle is the limited number of counselors who are integratively trained, particularly those who are capable of combining psychological intervention with spiritual or religious approaches. Lastly, the risk of relapse remains a serious concern in the recovery process, as addiction recovery is often not linear and individuals may return to gambling behaviors when facing stress, emotional difficulties, or environmental triggers.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Islamic spiritual guidance integrating spiritual and psychological approaches is the most comprehensive and effective intervention model in helping online gambling victims undergo real and sustainable recovery. The multidimensional impact of online gambling-damaging the spiritual, psychological, family, and social dimensions of life simultaneously-requires treatment that cannot be resolved through a single approach.

The spiritual approach of Islam through the method of repentance, muhasabah, tazkiyatun nafs, dhikr, tadabbur Al-Qur'an, and the restoration of congregational prayer proved effective in restoring the dimension of Qalb and the spirit of the victim, restoring the orientation of meaningful life values, and rebuilding the vertical relationship of the individual with Allah SWT. Psychological approaches through behavioral counseling, cognitive restructuring, strengthening intrinsic motivation, Islamic mindfulness, and family counseling complement the recovery process by rebuilding cognitive, emotional, and relational functions degraded by addiction.

The success of the recovery process is greatly influenced by the sincere willingness of the victim, active family support, supportive religious environment, as well as the Integrative competence of counselors. Conversely, the still high accessibility of online gambling, social stigma, limitations of trained counselors, and the risk of relapse are challenges that need to be systematically anticipated. These findings imply the need to develop guidance programs that are structured, based on Islamic values, and supported by policies that facilitate victims' access to quality and sustainable Islamic spiritual guidance services.

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