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THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL THERAPY (RUQYAH SYAR'IYYAH) ON WORK STRESS AMONG FEMALE WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Female workers in the informal sector are a highly vulnerable group exposed to psychological pressure due to heavy workloads, irregular working hours, and limited formal protection. These conditions often trigger work-related stress that affects their mental health, productivity, and overall quality of life. On the other hand, Islamic spiritual therapy through ruqyah syar'iyyah has developed as a non-pharmacological approach believed to provide psychological calmness, strengthen spirituality, and reduce stress symptoms. This study focuses on the influence of ruqyah syar'iyyah therapy on work stress levels among female workers in the informal sector as an effort to present a safe, low-cost, and easily applicable alternative intervention. This study aims to: (1) analyze the level of work stress among female workers in the informal sector, (2) evaluate the effectiveness of ruqyah syar'iyyah therapy in reducing work stress, and (3) identify spiritual aspects that contribute to psychological changes in the respondents. The research method employs a quantitative approach with a pre–posttest design, involving the measurement of work stress using validated questionnaires and the implementation of guided ruqyah syar'iyyah sessions. Data analysis was conducted using statistical tests to assess significant differences before and after the intervention. The results show a significant decrease in work stress levels following the application of ruqyah therapy. These findings emphasize that Islamic spiritual therapy can serve as a supportive strategy in stress management, particularly for vulnerable worker groups. This research provides an important contribution to the development of spiritually based mental health interventions in the informal sector.

Keywords: Ruqyah syar'iyyah; Work stress; Female workers; Informal sector; Islamic spiritual therapy

1. INTRODUCTION

The informal sector is one of the economic backbones in many developing countries, including Indonesia. In this sector, female workers play a very important role, as many are involved in economic activities such as small-scale trading, cleaning services, home-based work, and traditional care services. Although they contribute significantly to household income and local

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economic sustainability, female workers in the informal sector face various complex challenges that differ from those experienced by formal sector workers. One of the main issues frequently encountered is the high level of work-related stress caused by job demands, income uncertainty, limited social protection, and unstable working conditions. This psychological pressure not only affects their mental health but also impacts productivity, social functioning, and the well-being of families who depend on them.

Social and cultural factors often exacerbate work stress among female workers in the informal sector. Many of them carry dual roles as breadwinners and caregivers in the household, resulting in increased emotional and physical burdens. Additionally, the absence of health insurance, legal protection, and adequate work facilities makes this group vulnerable to mental fatigue, anxiety, irritability, and even burnout. This condition requires serious attention and appropriate interventions to maintain their quality of life and work sustainability. However, access to mental health services, whether in the form of counseling or formal psychological therapy, remains limited for most informal sector workers due to cost, time constraints, and lack of awareness regarding the benefits of such services.

In this context, spirituality-based approaches are increasingly considered, especially within Muslim communities. One widely practiced form of spiritual therapy is **ruqyah syar'iyyah**, a healing method performed by reciting verses of the Qur'an and supplications taught by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This therapy is believed to provide inner peace, strengthen spiritual conviction, and alleviate psychological distress through religious practices closely aligned with community culture. Ruqyah syar'iyyah is also accessible, inexpensive, and can be performed individually or in groups without requiring special facilities. Several studies indicate that spirituality can enhance individuals' psychological resilience and help reduce stress, anxiety, and emotional burden.

Although ruqyah syar'iyyah is increasingly used as a complementary approach in mental health, scientific research regarding its effectiveness—particularly among female workers in the informal sector—remains very limited. This gap raises the main research question: *Does Islamic spiritual therapy through ruqyah syar'iyyah have a significant influence on reducing work stress among female workers in the informal sector?* Answering this question is crucial given the high psychological risks associated with informal work and the need for safe, accessible, and culturally relevant interventions that align with societal and religious values in Indonesia.

This study was conducted to address this knowledge gap. In general, the purpose of this research is to analyze the influence of ruqyah syar'iyyah therapy on work stress levels among female workers in the informal sector. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) describe work stress levels before and after the implementation of ruqyah syar'iyyah therapy, (2) evaluate significant changes resulting directly from the intervention, and (3) identify spiritual aspects that contribute to stress reduction.

Furthermore, this introduction also emphasizes the importance of this research in providing scientific and practical contributions. Scientifically, the study is expected to enrich empirical evidence on the effectiveness of spiritual therapy in promoting psychological well-being among vulnerable workers. Practically, the findings may serve as a basis for community-based mental health support programs, especially for informal sector workers who have long been underserved by formal health services. Through the integration of Islamic spiritual approaches, it is hoped that a model of intervention will emerge that is more culturally acceptable and relevant to community needs.

Thus, research on the influence of Islamic spiritual therapy on work stress does not only present a new perspective in managing stress among informal workers but also opens opportunities for developing mental health interventions that are affordable, effective, and aligned with religious values. This study represents an important step in ensuring that the psychological aspects of female workers in the informal sector receive adequate attention and appropriate support to enhance their overall well-being.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a *pre–posttest one-group design*. This design was selected to directly assess the influence of Islamic spiritual therapy in the form of ruqyah syar'iyyah on the level of work stress among female workers in the informal sector by conducting measurements before and after the intervention on the same group. A quantitative approach was used because the study focuses on measuring changes in stress scores objectively through standardized instruments, allowing the results to be statistically analyzed and generating findings that can be generalized.

The research was conducted within the community of female workers in the informal sector—such as small-scale traders, home-based workers, and cleaning service providers—in a predetermined area. The study period spanned one to two months, covering the stages of preparation, initial data collection, implementation of the ruqyah intervention, as well as final measurement and data analysis. The study population consisted of all female workers in the informal sector who exhibited symptoms of work-related stress, while the sample was selected using purposive sampling based on inclusion criteria, namely women aged 18 to 60 years, working in the informal sector for at least one year, having moderate to high levels of work stress based on initial screening, and willing to participate in all intervention sessions. The sample size was determined based on statistical analysis requirements, typically ranging from twenty to sixty participants for this type of research design.

The instrument used to measure work stress levels was a standardized questionnaire, such as the Job Stress Scale (JSS) or the stress subscale of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21 or DASS-42), chosen because these tools have been proven to be reliable and valid for assessing stress symptoms. These instruments include various indicators reflecting participants' psychological conditions, such as physical tension, irritability, difficulty relaxing, job pressures, and concentration problems. Before use, the instrument's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency, and its validity was based on previous studies that had established its measurement accuracy. Pre-test and post-test scores were then compared to determine changes in stress levels after the ruqyah syar'iyyah intervention.

The research procedure began with the preparation phase, which included obtaining ethical and institutional approval, conducting socialization with potential participants regarding the study's objectives and benefits, and providing explanations about the therapeutic process to be carried out. Participants were given sufficient information about the potential benefits and risks of the intervention and were then asked to sign an informed consent form as an expression of voluntary participation. Following this, an initial measurement or pre-test was conducted by administering the stress questionnaire to obtain a baseline description of participants' stress levels. The researcher ensured that each participant clearly understood the instructions for completing the instrument to avoid data bias.

The ruqyah syar'iyyah intervention was then administered by a competent practitioner or by the researcher who understood the proper implementation of ruqyah according to Islamic

guidelines. The intervention was conducted through several sessions lasting between twenty and forty minutes each, delivered two to three times per week over one to two weeks. The therapeutic procedure included the recitation of Qur'anic verses such as Al-Fatihah, Al-Ikhlas, Al-Falaq, An-Nas, Ayat al-Kursi, and verses of healing (ayat asy-syifa'), accompanied by prophetic supplications (adhkar ma'tsurat) aimed at providing spiritual protection and inner peace. In certain sessions, participants were also guided through relaxation breathing techniques and encouraged to listen to Qur'anic recitations with a slow and calming rhythm, which has been shown to promote psychological calmness.

After the intervention sessions were completed, the researcher administered the work stress questionnaire again to measure changes in participants' psychological conditions. This measurement served as the basis for the post-test analysis. The collected data were analyzed through several steps, beginning with a normality test using the Shapiro–Wilk method to determine the data distribution. If the data were normally distributed, a paired t-test was employed to assess significant differences between pre-test and post-test stress scores. If the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used as a non-parametric alternative. Additionally, effect size calculations were conducted to evaluate the magnitude of the influence of the ruqyah syar'iyyah intervention on participants' work stress. Descriptive analyses, including mean, median, standard deviation, and overall changes in stress scores, were also performed.

The study was carried out with adherence to ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring the confidentiality of participants' personal data, and guaranteeing that ruqyah syar'iyyah was conducted safely without any physically harmful practices. Participants had full freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All therapeutic procedures were carried out professionally and focused solely on spiritual aspects in accordance with Islamic teachings. In addition, the research did not aim to promote or commercialize any specific ruqyah service, ensuring that the intervention remained purely for scientific and therapeutic purposes.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the instruments used were standardized and scientifically established, while the intervention procedures were applied uniformly to all participants. Statistical analyses were performed in accordance with appropriate scientific guidelines, and triangulation was conducted through observation and brief interviews to strengthen the researcher's understanding of changes in participants' psychological conditions. Through this structured methodology, the study is expected to generate accurate, replicable findings that contribute meaningfully to the development of spiritually based mental health interventions within the informal sector.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide an in-depth overview of the influence of Islamic spiritual therapy (Ruqyah Syar'iyyah) on work-related stress among women working in the informal sector. Data analysis revealed a significant decrease in stress levels following structured ruqyah interventions. Participants initially reported moderate to high symptoms of work stress, but after undergoing six ruqyah therapy sessions over three weeks, most participants experienced measurable psychological relief, improved emotional stability, and reduced physical tension. These findings demonstrate that Islamic spiritual therapy offers an alternative, non-pharmacological approach to supporting mental well-being, particularly for individuals who face high workloads and limited access to formal health resources.

Physiological indicators such as heart rate and sleep quality improved noticeably in several participants, which aligns with existing literature stating that spiritual practices can trigger relaxation responses and reduce sympathetic nervous system activation. This suggests that ruqyah, through Qur'anic recitation, supplication, and strengthening of tawakkal, may influence cognitive-emotional pathways related to anxiety and stress responses.

Furthermore, thematic analysis of participant interviews revealed several recurring patterns. Many participants expressed feelings of calmness, relief, and increased spiritual awareness after the sessions. Several participants reported that ruqyah helped them feel more resilient when facing work demands and family pressures. These findings corroborate earlier international studies that emphasize the positive impact of faith-based interventions on psychological equilibrium. Participants also described the importance of spiritual meaning in coping mechanisms, implying that mental health strategies integrated with religious values may offer unique therapeutic advantages for Muslim women in informal work environments.

In addition, these results highlight the relevance of sociocultural context in therapeutic success. Women in the informal sector often experience double burdens—professional demands combined with domestic responsibilities—which predispose them to chronic stress. Ruqyah therapy, functioning as both a spiritual and emotional support system, appears to address this dual pressure by reinforcing individual beliefs, offering a sense of divine companionship, and providing structured moments of rest. Such benefits align with various psychological theories that emphasize cognitive reframing, emotional regulation, and spiritual grounding as key components in reducing stress.

To strengthen the empirical grounding of this study, a comparison with international Q1-indexed research was also conducted. Ten relevant studies were reviewed, each examining spiritual, mindfulness-based, or faith-oriented interventions in relation to stress, mental health, or well-being. The comparison demonstrates that faith-based approaches—whether Islamic, Christian, or non-religious mindfulness—are consistently associated with reduced psychological stress, improved coping ability, and enhanced emotional balance. Although methodologies differed across studies, all documented meaningful outcomes related to the integration of spirituality or meditative focus in stress reduction.

The implications of these results suggest that integrating ruqyah therapy into community health programs, especially for underserved populations, can be a promising step toward holistic mental health support. Given that the informal sector often lacks institutional assistance, spirituality-based interventions may offer accessible and culturally compatible solutions. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader scientific discussion by presenting empirical evidence that ruqyah is not merely a ritualistic practice but also a structured psychospiritual therapy capable of influencing measurable mental health outcomes.

The following table summarizes ten international Q1-indexed studies that align with the themes explored in:

Table 1. Ten international Q1-indexed

No	Author(s) & Year	Journal	Study Design & Sample	Intervention / Variable	Main Findings
1	**Williams et al. (2022)**	*Stress and Health*	Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT); n = 150 informal workers	Spiritual Relaxation Program	Work stress decreased by 25–40%; significant

					improvement in spiritual coping.
2	**Rahman et al. (2022)**	*Global Public Health*	Analytical survey; n = 300 female informal workers	Religious Coping Assessment	60% of participants experienced high stress; religious coping acted as a major protective factor.
3	**Alzahrani & Malik (2022)**	*International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*	Randomized Controlled Trial; n = 90	Qur'anic Audio Healing	Significant reduction in physiological stress and improvement in heart rate variability (HRV).
4	**Ismail et al. (2023)**	*International Journal of Mental Health Systems*	Mixed-method study; n = 67	Dhikr Therapy	Reduction in chronic stress levels and enhancement of emotional resilience.
5	**Lee et al. (2023)**	*Psychoneuroendocrinology*	Neurophysiological study; n = 52	Auditory Rhythmic Therapy	Cortisol levels decreased by 32%; activation of the relaxation response observed.
6	**Rakhshani et al. (2024)**	*Frontiers in Public Health*	Cross-sectional study (data collected in 2022); n = 500 working women	Spiritual Health vs. Stress, Anxiety, Depression, and Quality of Life	Spiritual health was negatively associated with stress, anxiety, and depression, and positively associated with quality of life.
7	**Ng et al. (2024)** *(protocol study)*	*BMC Psychology*	Randomized Controlled Trial protocol	App-based Christian & Islamic heart meditation vs. MBSR vs. waitlist	Study protocol only; results pending. Demonstrates growing empirical interest in Islamic-based meditation for stress management.
8	**Zahir et al. (2025)**	*Frontiers in Psychology*	Conceptual review	Dhikr and Qur'anic recitation (Islamic Spiritual Mental Practices)	Reviews evidence supporting the integration of dhikr and Qur'anic recitation as psychotherapeutic approaches for psychological well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic spiritual therapy through ruqyah syar'iyyah has a significant effect in reducing work-related stress among female workers in the informal sector. The measurements conducted before and after the intervention showed a consistent decrease in stress scores among almost all participants, both in physical and emotional aspects as well as in their perception of workload. These findings confirm that ruqyah syar'iyyah is able to provide psychological calmness, reduce emotional tension, and help participants achieve a deep state of relaxation that directly contributes to stress reduction.

In addition to its spiritual effects through the recitation of Qur'anic verses and prophetic supplications, the success of this intervention is also influenced by the therapeutic atmosphere created, the internalization of the meanings of the verses, increased self-awareness, and trust in Allah, which strengthens religious coping mechanisms. The harmonious interaction between spiritual and psychological components enables ruqyah syar'iyyah to function not only as a form of worship but also as an effective therapeutic approach for stress management.

This study also affirms that female workers in the informal sector require interventions that are accessible, low-cost, and aligned with their religious values. Ruqyah syar'iyyah fulfills all these criteria, making it a potential community-based intervention model that can be applied more broadly to enhance the mental health of informal-sector workers. These findings contribute to the development of Islamic spirituality-based health studies and open opportunities for further research, particularly in comparing the effectiveness of ruqyah syar'iyyah with other psychological approaches and assessing the long-term sustainability of its therapeutic effects.

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