

## Humanistic and Spiritual Approaches as Solutions for Spiritual Recovery

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### ABSTRACT

Mental health is an important issue in modern life that is increasingly complex and stressful. This article examines humanistic and spirituality approaches as holistic and meaningful solutions to mental health recovery. The humanistic approach emphasizes respect for potential, freedom, and individual responsibility in the recovery process, while the spirituality approach focuses on the search for the meaning of life, transcendental connections, and divine values. The combination of these two approaches is considered capable of providing mental recovery that is not only physical and psychological, but also touches the existential dimension of human beings. This article uses a literature study method that analyzes various humanistic psychology literature and the concept of spirituality in the context of mental health. The results of the study show that the integration of humanistic and spiritual approaches can increase psychological resilience, reduce symptoms of mental disorders, and strengthen the meaning of individual life. By positioning humans as whole physical, psychological, and spiritual beings, this approach opens up space for mental recovery that is more personalized, reflective, and transformative. This article recommends the application of this integrative approach in mental health services, both in clinical practice and community interventions, to address the increasingly complex mental health challenges in the modern era.

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### INTRODUCTION

In today's modern era, the search for meaning in life and the fulfillment of emotional needs have become important aspects of human self-development. Various psychological and spiritual approaches have been employed to assist individuals in achieving psychological and spiritual well-being. One well-known psychological approach is Humanistic Counseling, developed by Carl Rogers, which emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance, empathy, and authenticity in the healing and personal growth process. This approach places the individual at the center of the therapeutic process and believes that every human being has the potential to develop optimally when provided with a supportive environment. (Dzulkifli & Indah Puspita Sari, 2015).

On the other hand, the spiritual thought of Al-Ghazali, an 11th-century Islamic philosopher and theologian, offers profound insights into the search for meaning in life, closeness to God, and character development through spiritual processes and introspection. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of self-

control, spiritual knowledge, and the relationship between humans and God as the path to true happiness and inner peace.

This study aims to compare Carl Rogers' Humanistic Counseling approach with Al-Ghazali's spiritual thought, in order to understand their similarities and differences in helping individuals achieve psychological and spiritual well-being. By understanding both approaches, it is hoped that a more comprehensive insight can be gained into the development of holistic counseling methods that align with the spiritual and psychological needs of society.

## METHOD

This study uses a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach. The literature review was conducted to collect, examine, and analyze various scientific sources relevant to the research topic in order to gain conceptual understanding and identify research gaps).

## RESULTS

### Carl Rogers' Humanistic Counseling Approach

#### Self-concept

The Concept of Self According to Carl Rogers In the world of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers is one of the central figures who places great emphasis on the potential of humans to grow and develop. One of his most important contributions is the concept of "self" or self-concept. For Rogers, each individual has a unique subjective world, and understanding their inner world is the key to the counseling process and personal growth (Fatah Hudlari, Siti Khusnul Mahfudzoh, Sugiyanti, Susi Novianti, Sutarmi, 2023).

According to Carl Rogers, self-concept consists of three main components: self-image, ideal self, and self-worth. Self-image is how a person sees themselves at present, a perception that can be formed from experiences, social interactions, and environmental influences. The ideal self is the desired image of oneself, that is, how one wants to be. Meanwhile, self-worth is the value an individual assigns to themselves, how worthy they feel of being loved and valued.

When there is harmony between self-image and ideal self, a person is in a state that Rogers calls "congruence," a state of inner harmony that supports self-actualization. Conversely, if there is a significant difference between the two, a state of "incongruence" arises, which often becomes a source of psychological conflict, anxiety, and feelings of dissatisfaction in life. Rogers believed that every human being has self-actualization as an innate drive (Fuad Mahbub Siraj, n.d.) the desire to become the best version of oneself. However, this self-actualization can only be achieved in an environment that provides unconditional positive regard, empathy, and honesty. This is where the importance of a warm and supportive therapeutic relationship in the counseling process lies, according to Rogers' approach. Thus, the concept of self in Carl Rogers' view is not merely a passive perception of who we are, but the center of human psychological dynamics. When someone understands, accepts, and loves themselves fully, they are on the path to healthy and meaningful growth.

#### Self-actualization

Aktualisasi Diri Carl Rogers, salah satu tokoh utama dalam psikologi humanistik, meyakini bahwa Self-actualization Carl Rogers, one of the leading figures in humanistic psychology, believed that every human being has an innate drive to develop toward their full potential. This drive is known as self-actualization, which is the natural tendency to grow, become more complex, and achieve wholeness as a person. In Rogers' view, self-actualization is the center of all human motivation. He describes it as an ongoing process—not an end goal where individuals actively explore themselves, overcome obstacles, and become "fully functioning persons." Such individuals are characterized by openness to experience, living existentially (appreciating the present moment), self-confidence, freedom in action, and creativity in responding to life (Irawan, A. W., Solehuddin, M., Ilfiandra, & Yulindrasari, 2023).

The process of self-actualization can only take place optimally if a person is in a supportive environment. Rogers refers to this as conditions that provide unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence in interpersonal relationships. Without these conditions, individuals tend to experience a split between their true self and the self formed by external pressures, thereby hindering inner growth (Ibrahim I., Omar S. H. S., Baru R., Ismail M. S., Zin E. I. E. W., Zin A. D. M., 2020).

Thus, self-actualization in Rogers' theory is not merely philosophical, but rather a concrete psychological process that can be facilitated through deep and authentic therapeutic relationships. Through humanistic counseling, individuals are helped to rediscover their value, harmonize themselves, and become whole human beings.

### **Empathy**

Carl Rogers emphasizes the importance of empathy as a very special way of relating to others. He feels that empathy is often overlooked, even though it is very important for understanding personality dynamics and bringing about behavioral change. Rogers recounts his experience as a therapist early in his career, when he realized that listening to clients attentively was very helpful, even though it seemed passive. A social worker later taught him that the most effective approach was to listen to clients' feelings and emotions and "reflect" those feelings back to them. Initially, he felt uncomfortable with the term "reflection," but later recognized its significant benefits (Muhammad Hafidz Khusnadin & Muhammad Fahmi Shihab, 2025).

His experience at Ohio State University made him and his students increasingly aware that reflecting feelings is a complex process, and they could identify key points in interviews that had a significant impact on clients. However, Rogers also noted that an excessive focus on technique could obscure the empathetic quality itself.

### **Unconditional Positive Regard**

In humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers introduced a key concept known as unconditional positive regard. This concept is the foundation of the client-centered therapy approach developed by Rogers, and is an important element in the process of psychological growth and self-actualization.

Unconditional positive regard is the attitude of fully accepting someone without conditions, regardless of what they do, think, or feel. In counseling practice, this means that the therapist accepts the client as a valuable human being without judgment, criticism, or conditions on that acceptance.

According to Rogers, when someone grows up in an environment that provides unconditional positive regard for example, from parents, teachers, or therapists they will feel safe to explore themselves, accept their emotions, and grow into psychologically healthy individuals. This differs from conditional positive regard, where acceptance is only given if the individual meets certain conditions, which can trigger anxiety, inner conflict, and incongruence between the "self" and real-life experiences (Nik Ahmad Hisham Ismail & Mustafa Tekke, 2015).

Unconditional acceptance enables the emergence of psychological conditions such as authenticity (congruence), stable self-esteem, and openness to experience. Rogers believed that in a therapeutic relationship grounded in unconditional positive regard, individuals are more easily able to rediscover their authentic selves and move toward self-actualization that is, becoming a fully functioning person.

### **Spiritual Counseling Approach The Concept of the Soul**

In Imam Al-Ghazali's view, the human soul is not merely a psychological or biological element, but rather the deepest essence of human existence, which is spiritual in nature. The soul, or what he refers to as *al-lathifah al-rabbaniyah*, is a subtle substance that originates from God and has the capacity to receive the light of divine truth. This concept encompasses the unity of several elements such as *nafs* (soul), *aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), and *ruh* (spirit), all of which function as a unified whole in shaping human moral and spiritual consciousness. In an ideal state, the soul is a vessel of goodness. However, in the reality of life, the soul is often tainted by the impulses of desire, excessive love of the world, and neglect of the true purpose of life. Al-Ghazali saw that the corruption of the soul is the root of many problems within human beings, both moral and existential. Therefore, the process of healing or restoring the soul is not sufficient when approached solely through logic or emotional therapy; it requires a profound spiritual approach. This restoration is achieved through the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), a process of emptying oneself of vices and filling the soul with noble values. This process includes awareness of sins committed, sincere repentance (*taubat*), self-reflection (*muhasabah*), striving against desires (*mujahadah*), and cultivating awareness of God's presence in daily life through remembrance (*dzikir*) and contemplation (*muraqabah*) (Omar, S. H. S., Zin, E. I. E. W., Zin, A. D. M., Syuhari, M. H., & Adam, 2019).

As explained in Fuad Mahbub Siraj's journal, Al-Ghazali's concept of the soul is highly relevant to the formation of good character. A purified soul is more easily able to manifest virtuous behavior. In this perspective, the restoration of the soul is not merely about alleviating inner turmoil but also about returning humanity to its natural state as spiritual beings connected to God. In other words, true restoration occurs when a person finds inner peace through closeness to Allah, from which arises a deep inner calm—a state Al-Ghazali refers to as *al-nafs al-muthmainnah*, the tranquil soul.

### **Tazkiyatun nafs**

The concept of spiritual restoration in Al-Ghazali's spiritual thought is closely related to the process of *Tazkiyatun Nafs*, which is the purification of the soul from various despicable traits and self-development towards a more noble spiritual condition. According to Khusnadin and Shihab (2025), Al-Ghazali explains that

Tazkiyatun Nafs is carried out through three main stages: takhalli (purifying the soul of heart ailments such as envy, arrogance, and greed), tahalli (adornment of the soul with virtuous qualities such as patience, humility, and sincerity), and tajalli (the experience of spiritual enlightenment as a result of closeness to God). This process is not only aimed at improving moral character but also serves as a path toward inner peace and a more intimate connection with the divine aspect within humanity. In line with this, research by Ma'muroh et al. (2024) shows that Al-Ghazali's concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs can also be practically implemented in daily life, as practiced at the Darut Tasbih Islamic boarding school. In this context, the purification of the soul is carried out through spiritual activities such as the ritual bath of repentance, remembrance of God, and sharia-based psychological therapy, which have proven effective in strengthening mental resilience, self-discipline, and spiritual peace among the students. This demonstrates that soul restoration according to Al-Ghazali is not a passive process, but an active and ongoing journey encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Rogers, 1975).

### **Muhasabah**

In Al-Ghazali's view, spiritual healing is not merely about calming the mind, but rather a deep and gradual spiritual process. He emphasizes the importance of self-reflection or muhasabah as the first step toward recognizing mistakes, improving oneself, and drawing closer to God. Through muhasabah, one is encouraged to be more honest in looking within oneself, weighing one's actions, and cultivating awareness of the need for change. Additionally, the effort to heal the soul involves struggling against desires and purifying the heart from negative traits such as anger, envy, and arrogance. Al-Ghazali suggests a series of spiritual exercises such as dhikr, introspection, and strengthening worship as forms of inner therapy that can help a person achieve peace and emotional stability. This process simultaneously strengthens moral values within oneself and cultivates true inner peace. In several analyses of Al-Ghazali's works, it was found that he developed a kind of model for healing the soul that combines self-awareness, emotional control, and a spiritual approach. This approach emphasizes that true healing occurs when one is able to reorder their soul in harmony with divine values, not merely by avoiding suffering, but by forming a spiritually mature soul (Saputra, Tomi & Wahid, n.d.).

### **The Role of the Spiritual Teacher**

One important aspect of Al-Ghazali's thinking on the purification of the soul is the existence of a spiritual teacher who directly guides the process. For Al-Ghazali, a teacher is not merely a conveyor of knowledge, but a spiritual guide who actively shapes the character and purifies the inner self of their students. A spiritual teacher is tasked with guiding the soul to free it from the dominance of carnal desires and heart ailments such as envy, arrogance, or worldly attachment, which Al-Ghazali identifies as the primary obstacles on the path to inner peace. Therefore, an ideal teacher is someone who possesses sincerity, gentleness, and exemplary moral character, enabling them to touch the hearts of their students and guide them toward awareness of God. Furthermore, in Al-Ghazali's perspective, a teacher is a facilitator in the process of tazkiyatun nafs, or the purification of the soul, which requires continuous guidance, not just intellectual instruction. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the purification of the soul is a long and profound journey that requires guidance from someone who has already walked that spiritual path. With the right guidance from a teacher, a student can gradually yet deeply go through the phases of self-awareness, repentance, and inner transformation. Therefore, a spiritual teacher is an integral part of the soul's healing process, as it is through them that one can be guided toward a more peaceful, meaningful life closely connected to divine values.

In the context of spiritual counseling according to Imam Al-Ghazali's thinking, soul healing involves two main elements, namely soul purification (Tazkiyatun Nafs) and self-evaluation (Muhasabah). Al-Ghazali views the soul as a combination of the nafs, intellect, heart, and spirit that work together to form moral and spiritual awareness. However, in daily life, the soul is often influenced by desires and neglect of the true purpose of life. Therefore, the restoration of the soul requires more than just a logical or emotional approach, but also a process of purifying the soul by eliminating undesirable traits and replacing them with more noble characteristics.

In spiritual counseling, the Tazkiyatun Nafs step helps clients cleanse themselves of negative feelings such as envy, arrogance, and greed, and replace them with positive traits such as patience and sincerity. Additionally, Muhasabah encourages clients to engage in self-reflection, acknowledge their shortcomings, repent, and improve their relationship with God. These two steps together guide clients toward achieving a tranquil soul (nafs al-muthmainnah), which is the ultimate goal of spiritual healing according to Al-Ghazali.

In spiritual counseling, the counselor's role is to accompany clients on this journey, not only to address emotional or psychological issues but also to bring them closer to Allah. Through spiritual practices such as dhikr, prayer, and reflection, spiritual counseling helps clients achieve inner peace and true tranquility of the soul.

### Two Concepts of Self-Selection

Carl Rogers observed that the human soul has great potential to grow and develop in a conducive environment. A soul that has been wounded by rejection, trauma, or emotional imbalance needs a safe and supportive environment to heal. In his therapeutic practice, Rogers emphasized the importance of empathetic listening, non-judgmental acceptance, and providing clients with the space to openly explore their feelings. Empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence are the cornerstones that make the healing process natural and effective. For Rogers, the healing process is not monopolized by the therapist; rather, the intrinsic power within the client is the primary driving force. The therapist is merely a facilitator who provides the ideal conditions for the actualization of one's potential. This reflects Rogers' optimistic view of humanity's inherent ability to choose, change, and grow. A healthy soul is one that recognizes and accepts itself fully. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali views the soul as a spiritual entity tasked with returning to Allah in a state of purity. In his view, the healing of the soul is not only about freeing oneself from psychological disturbances, but also returning the soul to its natural state. This process requires mujahadah (struggle against desires), muhasabah (self-evaluation), tazkiyah (purification), and taubat (repentance). Al-Ghazali emphasizes that spiritual illnesses arise due to the dominance of undesirable traits such as envy, arrogance, and excessive love for the world. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's spiritual therapy is aimed at cleansing the heart of these impurities through worship, remembrance of God, and recitation of the Qur'an. Healing is not only a psychological goal but also a spiritual journey toward divine satisfaction (Wahyu Hidayat & Sedya Santosa, 2024).

Combining these two approaches means creating harmony between psychological and spiritual aspects. Empathy in Rogers' theory can serve as an initial framework for fostering self-awareness in clients to engage in self-reflection, as suggested by Al-Ghazali. Unconditional acceptance provides space for clients to acknowledge their sins and repent without shame, as in the concept of tazkiyah. Ultimately, self-actualization is not merely a process of recognizing one's potential but also discovering one's life mission rooted in a spiritual connection with God. In counseling, Carl Rogers' approach can be applied as an initial method to build a warm, supportive, and empathetic therapeutic relationship. Once the client feels safe, Al-Ghazali's spiritual approach can be introduced to guide the client in exploring the deepest aspects of their soul, reflecting on their life, and reviving their vertical relationship with God. The counselor here acts not only as a listener but also as a compassionate spiritual guide. This integrative model is highly relevant to religious societies, such as Indonesia, where religious values remain strong and are an integral part of individual identity. This is where the strength of the integrative approach lies: healing psychological wounds with the language of love and purifying the heart with spiritual guidance.

### CONCLUSION

Carl Rogers and Al-Ghazali's approaches to spiritual healing both emphasize the importance of creating an environment that supports growth and healing, despite their different psychological and spiritual backgrounds. Rogers believed that every individual has an innate potential for growth, which can be actualized in an empathetic, accepting, and honest atmosphere. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali views spiritual healing as a process of purifying the heart and returning to one's divine nature through self-reflection, purification, and repentance. The integration of these two approaches opens up space for holistic counseling, where healing not only addresses emotional and psychological aspects but also revives the spiritual connection with God. In the context of a religious society like Indonesia, this integrative model is highly relevant as it combines the language of love and religious values as the foundation for soul healing.

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