

## MURQABAH SEBAGAI TERAPI BERBASIS MINDFULNESS DALAM PSIKOTERAPI ISLAM UNTUK MENGATASI ADIKSI PORNOGRAFI

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### ABSTRAK

Keterpaparan dan konsumsi pornografi secara terus menerus mengarahkan pada adiksi pornografi. Psikoterapi Islam mampu menjadi salah satu alternatif solusi atas permasalahan ini, salah satunya muraqabah yang diartikan sebagai kesadaran individu bahwa Allah mengetahui semua yang ada pada hati, pikiran, dan tubuhnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian pustaka dengan tinjauan integratif. Data yang digunakan merupakan hasil dari studi empiris terdahulu, baik secara kuantitatif maupun kualitatif dalam Bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa Inggris. Menerapkan muraqabah, individu mampu untuk lebih sadar akan perasaan dan pikirannya, selanjutnya lebih sadar pula akan pemicu negatif dari tingkah laku sehingga dapat menjadi langkah untuk menghindarinya. Dapat meningkatkan regulasi diri mengarahkan individu untuk menangkal keadaan emosi negatif dan perenungan diri terkait pornografi. Kesadaran yang hadir dari penerapan muraqabah membuat individu menjadi hati-hati dalam tindakan, pikiran, perasaan dan keadaan batinnya.

**Kata Kunci:** Adiksi, Muraqaba, Pornografi

## MURQABA AS A MINDFULNESS – BASED THERAPY IN ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY TO OVERCOME PORN ADDICTION

### ABSTRACT

Continuous exposure and consumption of pornography leads to pornography addiction. Islamic psychotherapy is able to be an alternative solution to this problem, one of which is muraqaba which is defined as individual awareness that Allah knows all that is in the heart, mind, and body. This paper uses a literature review method with an integrative review. The data used is the result of previous empirical studies, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in Indonesian and English. With applying muraqaba, individuals are able to be more aware of their feelings and thoughts, then more aware of the negative triggers of behavior so that it can be a step to avoid them. Can increase self-regulation leads individuals toward negative emotional states and self-reflection related to pornography. The awareness that comes from the application of muraqaba makes the individual to be careful in his actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner circumstances.

**Keywords:** Addiction, Muraqaba, Pornography

## Introduction

Technological developments certainly have positive and negative impacts on adolescents. Access to information nowadays is very easy to obtain. One of the negative impacts of easier access to information is that it makes it easy for adolescents to access pornographic content, which can lead to pornography addiction. Addiction is closely related to brain damage which can be described by the inability to control maladaptive behavior and dysfunctions related to substances or activities that are carried out repeatedly, even though there are negative consequences that accompany it (Harianti et al., 2022). The American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary explains that pornography is writing or images that contain sexual content that aims solely to arouse sexual responses to satisfy the sexual urges of the audience. Meanwhile, pornography addiction indicates an individual's inability to control pornography consumption (Sharma et al., 2021).

Based on the results of a screening conducted by the Ministry of Health of 1,314 respondents who were junior and senior high school students, it was found that 98.3% of students had been exposed to pornographic content. As many as 3.7% had mild addiction, and 0.01% had severe addiction (IdnTimes, 2018). Evaluation using the Negative Content Scavenging Engine (AIS) showed that pornography was the highest negative content in Indonesia (Kominfo, 2018). Mardhatillah's (2017) research on 1,765 junior and senior high school students found that exposure to pornography is quite high in Indonesia due to the accessibility of pornographic content itself. Globally, in 2019 the largest pornographic site announced that there were 42,000,000,000 visitors a year, which averaged 115,000,000 per day (Grubbs & Kraus, 2021). It can be seen that exposure to pornography in adolescents is quite large, and this definitely needs to be a common concern.

Sadly, in Indonesia, the case of a fifth-grade elementary school student who raped his junior classmate who was seven years old or in the first grade of elementary school was carried out in a field (detikjatim, 2022). According to information obtained by the police, this heartbreaking thing can happen because the perpetrator likes to watch pornographic videos with friends or relatives. This makes the actors feel curious and want to practice directly. Another factor that influences the perpetrator is because of the persuasion of his friends, who said there was a "good" sensation when doing it. This case further clarifies the negative impact of the explosion of pornographic content, which has damaged the morals of the nation's children.

Research in 2000 participants who reported experiencing pornography addiction had a greater frequency of spending time accessing pornographic content (Grubbs et al., 2018). It is also said that pornography addiction is related to emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems such as depression, isolating oneself from the social environment, and problems in relationships (Fraumeni-McBride, 2019). It was found that individuals with pornography addiction had an impact on cognitive barriers (Imawati & Sari, 2018), such as decreased concentration (Haidar & Apsari, 2020; Andriyani & Ardina, 2021), disrupted thinking and memory processes (Silalahi & Safitri, 2021). Social barriers, such as increased feelings of isolation (Duffy et al., 2016) and reduced productivity (Andriyani & Ardina, 2021). And can lead to negative behavior, such as increasing abusive sexual behavior (Rachmaniar et al., 2018) and imitating sexual acts, and increasing activity with the opposite sex that leads to sexuality, such as kissing, hugging, and even touching sensitive areas of the opposite sex (Andriyani & Ardina, 2021).

Addictive behavior shows that the individual is not mindful because it only produces pleasure and follows desires without considering the consequences. Goodman (Fraumeni-McBride, 2019) states that addiction is characterized by the powerlessness of individuals to control their behavior and perform continuous behavior despite significant negative consequences. Whereas the role of mindfulness by emphasizing "being in the moment" by being aware of all the feelings that arise leads to self-regulation (Sharma et al., 2021). It is stated that one of the factors that cause adolescents to consume pornography is due to the lack of attention from the family and the lack of religious education (Haidar & Apsari, 2020).

Short, Kasper, and Watterneck's research (2015) found that consumption of internet pornography is related to religiosity, where religious individuals tend to consume less internet pornography. The experience of living in religion makes it possible to establish a strong rejection of the desire to see pornography. This is in line with research by Puspitasari and Sakti (2019), which suggests that the higher the level of individual religiosity, the lower the intensity of accessing pornographic content. It can be seen that religion has an important role in preventing individuals from negative behavior, one of which is watching pornography. The concept of *muraqabah* in Islam is a form of self-monitoring by feeling that oneself is being watched by Allah, which indicates one's piety or religiosity.

Therefore, researchers feel it is interesting to examine the religious approach to addiction, which in this paper aims to explore the Islamic psychotherapy approach as an alternative solution to the problem of pornography addiction. Data from 2015 shows that the Muslim population in the world is around 1.8 billion people (PawResearch, 2019), with Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country. The concept of Islamic psychotherapy is important to be studied as an effort to develop Islamic psychotherapy interventions for the Muslim community itself. Therefore, this research cannot be separated from the values embraced by the Muslim community (Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013). Muraqabah, as a mindfulness-based therapy, offers a perspective from Islamic psychotherapy. Muraqabah itself is defined as the continuous awareness that Allah knows everything in the heart, mind, and body of His servant. This awareness leads individuals to be aware of their actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner states (Parrott, 2017).

One of the basic purposes of Islamic spirituality is to purify oneself and strengthen inner willingness, resilience, and self-control in addicts. The nature of spirituality is basically used as a preventive and helpful step, depending on the spiritualist's commitment to developing strength and resistance to addiction (Bensaid et al., 2021). In line with that, it is said that full awareness of the individual's current self can increase self-regulation, which directs the individual to ward off negative emotional states and self-reflection related to pornography (Sharma et al., 2021). The research found that muraqabah is effective in leading individuals to be obedient in maintaining attitudes and behaviors relating to spirituality and morality (Ummah, 2018). Applying muraqabah leads individuals to maintain attitudes and behaviors to stay away from things that have negative consequences.

This paper is the result of a literature study on how Islamic psychotherapy is able to be an alternative solution to addiction problems. A research question arises in this study, can muraqabah as a mindfulness-based therapy in Islamic psychotherapy is a form of effort to overcome pornography addiction? Because it is felt important to further examine the concept of Islamic psychotherapy, not only using Western theories. The religion of Islam itself is said to be Rahmatan Lil Alamin which means to bring mercy to all its followers, of course, presenting solutions to the problems that arise. Therefore, the difference offered by this study is the use of the concept of Islamic psychotherapy. It is different from previous research which offers the Western concept of mindfulness as an alternative solution to pornography consumption, such as using acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

(Fraumeni-McBride, 2019), meditation (Sniewsk et al., 2020), mindfulness-based relapse prevention (MBRP) (Holas et al., 2021).

## **Methods**

### **1. Data Source**

This study discusses the conceptualization of muraqabah as a mindfulness-based therapy in Islamic psychotherapy, which is an alternative solution to overcome behavioral problems, particularly related to pornography addiction. Using the literature review method with an integrative review. The use of an integrative review aims to combine perspectives in order to re-conceptualize and expand the theoretical model developed (Synder, 2019). The data used in this research is the result of previous empirical studies related to the topics studied, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in Indonesian and English.

### **2. Research Procedure**

There are four stages in this research, i) designing, ii) conducting a review, iii) analysis, and iv) reporting (Synder, 2019). Designing a review is the first stage to formulate and define the objectives, scope, and research questions being studied. The next stage is to conduct a review by searching and selecting articles that are relevant to the subject being studied. The process at this stage is an important part that needs attention because it relates to data to build a conceptual framework. Next, conduct an analysis to provide answers to research questions and the last stage of reporting. This research itself does not focus on presenting the results of the review to provide an overview or a descriptive study but uses the results to develop a new concept.

### **3. Data analysis**

The general purpose of data analysis in integrative reviews is to analyze critically, focusing on extracting information in the form of descriptions or perspective conceptualizations and insights from relevant articles to answer research questions.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Muraqabah According to Islamic Perspective

This study aims to elaborate on the conceptual muraqabah as a mindfulness-based therapy in Islamic psychotherapy as a form of effort to overcome pornography addiction. Previous research suggests muraqabah as Islamic mindfulness (Parrot, 2017; Isgandarova, 2018). Muraqabah is defined as continuous full awareness that Allah knows everything that is in the heart, mind, and body of His servant, where the basis of muraqabah is the understanding that Allah is always watching at all times, which directs individuals to be careful in their actions, thoughts, feelings and inner states the individual himself (Parrott, 2017). It is also said that muraqabah is a method to control the emotions in the heart by realizing that Allah is the true owner of the heart, He is the one who controls the human heart. Therefore, humans try to keep their feelings in their hearts clear because God is present and watching (Sayın, 2015). It can be seen that muraqabah is a form of human effort in maintaining actions, thoughts, and feelings in his heart because he realizes that Allah is watching.

When individuals apply muraqabah in their lives, it will direct them to maintain positive behavior and be wise in their behavior so they can leave things that violate God's provisions (Harianti et al., 2022). Allah created humans with the perfection of their intellect, so humans should be able to distinguish between right and wrong, behaviors that draw closer to Allah and distance them. Al-Sarrāj (Razak et al., 2021) suggests that muraqabah is a noble spiritual state. The concept of muraqabah is widely stated in the Qur'an, one of which is in Q.S Ali'Imran verse 29, which means:

Say *“If you hide what is in your heart or reveal it, Allah will know it.” He knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. Allah has power over all things”*

The verse explains that, indeed Allah knows everything that exists in human life. So, individuals should be careful and introspective in life.

### 2. Muraqabah as an Effort to Overcome Pornography Addiction

Pornography depicts sexual content to fulfill sexual arousal, which can lead to addiction or addiction (Kamaruddin et al., 2019). Durham (Sutatminingsih & Tuapattinaja, 2015) argues that pornography addiction is the compulsive sexual activity of consuming pornographic content

continuously and repeatedly, despite knowing that negative consequences accompany it, such as mental, physical, social, and financial well-being. Symptoms of pornography addiction include consuming high quantities of pornographic content, inability to control oneself not to view pornographic content, and negative behaviors such as impulsivity, compulsion, and frequent masturbation (Mariyati et al., 2017).

Pornography addiction itself is not physically visible but can only be recognized by changes in the brain area. It is said that the brain's reward system becomes activated by pleasurable and arousing stimuli, where dopamine is released during pornography viewing. The dopamine released produces feelings of well-being and satisfaction similar to drug users (Kamaruddin et al., 2018). The dopamine flood activates the amygdala, which is associated with pain processing and fear conditioning. The resulting negative emotional state leads to the activation of the brain's stress system and dysregulation of the anti-stress system. This leads to decreased sensitivity to rewards and increased threshold or tolerance of those rewards. So that it can develop into negative reinforcement for individuals to continue to engage in addictive behavior (Love et al., 2015).

Skinner (Mardhatillah, 2017), in his book "Treating Pornography Addiction," divides porn addiction into seven levels, namely the first level is people who have minimal exposure to pornography or accidentally watch pornography so they do not have problems related to it. Level two is not watching compulsively, but curiosity is increasing, so pornography is slowly becoming a problem in life. The third level, starting to become impulsive due to more robust exposure to pornography, is marked by accompanying fantasies so that you try hard to stop. At level four, pornography begins to impact many aspects of an individual's life, where fantasies and withdrawal symptoms increase. People try to stop but end up watching again. Level five, pornography has an impact on everyday life, where the frequency of viewing increases, the individual tries to stop but feels bound by it, leading to depression. Level six, the individual's life has been dominated by pornography, they feel the negative impact but still watch it. While at level seven, individuals tend to have no control after watching, and thoughts are dominated by pornography.

A study found that there is a strong positive relationship between religiosity and perceived pornography addiction mediated by moral disapproval of pornography use (Grubbs et al., 2015). Islamic psychotherapy with muraqabah is taken because there are two important aspects in overcoming addiction, namely religiosity and spirituality, which considerably impact behavioral

addiction (Harianti et al., 2022). Based on the explanation above, pornography addiction does not just happen. It started from trying to watch pornographic content to an unstoppable desire to do it continuously. Based on the concept of Islamic psychology, Allah created human personality consists of integration between reason, heart and lust that can direct them to behave (Hasanah, 2015).

When a desire arises to watch pornographic content, it must be done immediately. This indicates disturbed self-control (Febriansyah et al., 2022). Internal factors, namely the inability to control oneself, are one of the factors of pornography addiction. The individual does not have complete control over the stimulus that is present, is unable to think about the consequences that accompany it, is unable to control personal desires, and thoughts are only fixed on pornography. It is said that individuals with pornography addiction tend not to be able to control the desire to satisfy sexual stimulation, which is done continuously. There will be a decrease in sensitivity to stimulation so that the threshold of stimulation increases. This makes individuals continue to engage in addictive behavior (Love et al., 2015). Individuals who can control their feelings and thoughts through *muraqabah* can also successfully control their actions (Parrot, 2017).

When individuals are able to apply *muraqabah*, where they can be more aware of feelings, they can also be more aware of negative triggers so that it can be a step to avoid them. Placing a “buffer zone” between self and feelings gives time to respond correctly, such as remembering to take refuge in Allah (Parrott, 2017). It is also said that self-awareness in current conditions can increase self-regulation, which directs individuals to counteract negative emotional states and self-reflection related to pornography (Sharma et al., 2021). In short, when individuals apply *muraqabah* by being aware of themselves at the moment and realizing that Allah is present, it will help increase self-regulation, which can prevent them from consuming pornography because the awareness that comes from applying *muraqabah* makes individuals careful in their actions, thoughts, feelings and inner states (Parrott, 2017). Therefore, it is assumed that *muraqabah* can be a solution to overcome pornography addiction.

### 3. *Muraqabah* as a Mindfulness-based Therapy in Islamic Psychotherapy

Isqandarova (2018) in her writings explains the stages of *muraqaba* as a mindfulness-based therapy as follows:



### 3.1 Preparation phase

Psychotherapists and clients apply the rules before starting therapy, explain instructions and guide clients in preparing. Furthermore, the client is invited to perform ablution, but in this case, the psychotherapist gives the client a choice if the client cannot perform ablution. Then the client is asked to enter into *muraqaba*, or the stage of observing feelings, thoughts, and body sensations that exist in him. This stage lasts about 5–15 minutes initially but can be increased to more extended periods of time, in a room that is not too dark, with dim lighting and a comfortable sitting position. This is useful for increasing relaxation and fostering greater positive feelings. In mindfulness therapy, this stage is the same as the body scan stage.

At this stage, breathing is the most important part. The psychotherapist teaches the client to take slow, deep breaths. Remembrance performed by the client accompanies breathing settings. The most common *dhikr* is "*Allah Hu*". For more profound reflection, psychotherapists can also regulate environmental conditions, for example by lighting candles, dimming the lights, and staying away from all devices that can disturb the client's concentration. This practice aims to increase the client's awareness of sensory experiences such as sound and sight. The preparatory phase should also involve discussing the client's attitude toward the treatment being given. This aims to make the client always in a state of self-reflection.

### 3.2 *Musyahadah* (observation)

One of the important clinical implications of *muraqaba* is to help clients improve their ability to concentrate and focus. At this stage, the psychotherapist teaches the client to be aware of unwanted desires and thoughts and also the ability to control them during *muraqaba*. Different from mindfulness therapy, according to Syed Ghauth Ali Shah, *muraqaba* directs the client to reach a point where the person himself becomes meaningful and becomes self-conscious. The *musyahadah* stage means witnessing or observing, where the heart pays attention to the presence of God. When the individual can become more aware of the Creator, all his mental and physical organs will attain a state of consciousness. Similar to mindfulness therapy, decentering is used to help clients remove the focus from themselves on others.

Psychotherapists can use various objects, such as nature, so clients can focus on observing the flow of emotions, feelings, and thoughts without getting stuck, reactive, or distracted. The

right musyahadah stage will help the client remain still and not move and feel the emotional burden without reacting to it. Letting go of unwanted thoughts or desires will lead to more positive feelings. This stage can be done in 3-5 minutes, after which the psychotherapist asks the client to describe his experience of pleasant and unpleasant body sensations, feelings, and emotions without judging the client. As well as, being told clients that there may be times when they cannot control unwanted thoughts, desires, and memories should not discourage them. The goal at this stage is to help the client accept whatever comes to the client during the muraqaba process and then reflect to gain insight.

### 3.3 *Tasawwuf* (imagination)

This stage involves feeling that God is present. Here it is not a matter of imagining a form, but for example, imagining light spreading throughout the body. In the clinical setting, the client learns to acknowledge his or her unpleasant and painful state of being, recognizing the thoughts, sensations, and emotions felt. The psychotherapist must create an environment where the client can openly imagine all forms of self and experience.

### 3.4 *Dhikr*

At this stage, the psychotherapist can teach the client specific prayers or dhikr and how to use them properly. The dhikr is recited with a combination of specific postures, such as closing the eyes and taking a deep breath. As written in the Qur'an (2:152), Allah's words state, "*Remember Me, and I will remember you*". It is said that at this stage, it is a process of "asking and requesting" (*tālīb wa maṭlūb*), which involves important elements such as prayer and dhikr to Allah.

### 3.5 *Tafakkur* (contemplation of creation) & *Tadabbur* (contemplation of God's name/attributes)

The muraqabah aspect, reflected in the tafakkur and tadabbur process, can be interpreted theologically. Tafakkur means the activity of thinking deeply, systematically, and in detail. Meanwhile, tadabbur is the contemplation of remembering Allah or thinking about Allah. Imam Ahmad Al Haddad interprets tafakkur as a movement of the heart and mind that focuses on meaning to achieve a goal. Tafakkur in muraqabah involves integrating thoughts, cognition, imagination, emotions, sentiments, and spirituality. Psychotherapists can direct clients to contemplate negative thoughts, where these thoughts prevent them from enjoying life, carrying out daily activities, and concentrating on other aspects of life. During this stage, the client is

invited to reflect on inner thoughts that can formulate harmful behaviors or actions that bring sin, strong emotions, or are filled with lust.

### 3.6 Tahap *Muhasabah* (self-assessment)

During this stage, the client is directed to identify and control the positive and negative potentials within him. Associated with negative aspects or mental weaknesses, psychotherapists can help clients so that they can recognize and identify them and teach ways to improve them. Furthermore, the psychotherapist can assist the client in exploring appropriate coping mechanisms.

## Conclusion

Previous empirical studies found that Islamic psychotherapy with muraqabah was taken because there are two essential aspects in overcoming addiction, namely religiosity and spirituality, which considerably impact behavioral addiction. It is known that by applying muraqabah, individuals can be more aware of their feelings and thoughts, then they are also more aware of the negative triggers of behavior so that it can be a step to avoid them. Can increase self-regulation directs individuals to ward off negative emotional states and self-reflection related to pornography. The awareness that comes from applying muraqabah makes individuals careful in their actions, thoughts, feelings, and inner states. Muraqabah, as a mindfulness-based therapy in Islamic psychotherapy, has several stages, including the preparatory stage, the musyahada stage, the tasawwuf stage, the dhikr stage, the contemplation and tadabbur stage, and the muhasaba stage.

## Suggestion

This paper aims to combine perspectives to re-conceptualize and expand the theoretical models developed related to pornography addiction and muraqabah as mindfulness-based therapies in Islamic psychotherapy. It is expected to be a basic reference in further research. Because this paper is still a theoretical framework, it needs to be studied more deeply to understand the phenomenon more clearly. So that future researchers are expected to be able to explain the phenomenon of pornographic addiction and make muraqabah an alternative solution that can be studied through quantitative and qualitative research.

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