

MAQAMAT NAWAWI AL-BANTANI: A CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS WITH SELF PSYCHOLOGY IN HANDLING NPD

Rizvan Falah Kamil¹, *Nur Hadi Ihsan², Moh. Isom Mudin³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo, Indonesia

*Email: nurhadihsan@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract

Contemporary discussions on narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) are predominantly framed within clinical psychology, with limited engagement with ethical and spiritual perspectives derived from classical Islamic thought. Existing interdisciplinary studies on Islamic psychotherapy often remain normative and lack systematic conceptual integration with established psychological theories. This study addresses this gap by offering a conceptual synthesis between Heinz Kohut's self-psychology and the maqamat framework of Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani. Using qualitative hermeneutic analysis and a comparative mapping approach, the study examines functional correspondences between Kohut's psychodynamic principles and selected maqamat, focusing on their roles in ego regulation, self-cohesion, and empathy formation in relation to narcissistic pathology. Rather than proposing a therapeutic model, the analysis demonstrates how maqamat Nawawi al-Bantani can be interpreted as structured psychospiritual mechanisms that parallel key psychological functions identified in self-psychology. The originality of this study lies in its method of functional comparison, which enables interdisciplinary dialogue while preserving epistemological boundaries between psychology and Sufism. By reframing Sufi ethical concepts within a systematic analytical framework, the study contributes theoretically to the literature on NPD, self-psychology, and Islamic psychology, without making claims of empirical or clinical effectiveness.

Keywords: Heinz Kohut; maqamat; Nawawi al-Bantani; NPD; sufi psychotherapy

A. Introduction

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed., DSM-V), states that 0.5% of the U.S. population is affected by Narcissistic Personality Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). this means that at least 1 in 200 people in the U.S. may suffer from this disorder. Furthermore, of the sufferers, it is estimated to be found in 2-16% of patients who visit a psychiatrist (Campbell K, 2020).

There is a significant gender difference, where the average sufferer of narcissistic disorder is male. Of that percentage, at least 7.7% are male, while 4.8% are female; this was revealed in an interview session attended by 34,653 adults (as participants) in "the

Wave 2 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions” (Stinson FS et al., 2008). Narcissistic personality is very likely to be owned by everyone; in normal levels, this personality will have a positive effect on their productivity; even a common level of narcissism is sometimes a common occurrence for certain individuals and age groups. However, narcissism that is so extreme can interfere with normal health functions; this case is called Narcissistic Personality Disorder (Stinson FS et al., 2008).

Individuals with NPD exhibit excessive self-love and a strong sense of superiority, making them tend to be selfish, have minimal empathy for others. other people, and even cause problems in interactions with others (Olive, 2015). In interactions with fellow human beings, which in this case is specified to the leadership pattern within a group, organization, company, or even a country, it will cause ongoing effects, as well as unrest for those who are led. For instance, the leadership of President Donald Trump has been analyzed as indicative of NPD traits, such as manipulative behavior and lack of empathy (Oldale, 2020); which manifested in decisions like recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital (Habibilah, 2022), and halting WHO funding during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nainggolan, 2020). Those demonstrate how ego-driven actions can affect global stability.

Despite the growing clinical understanding of narcissistic personality disorder and its social consequences, contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches remain predominantly intrapsychic and secular in orientation. While effective in addressing structural disturbances of the self, these approaches often give limited attention to spiritual meaning, ethical accountability, and transcendental orientation—dimensions that are particularly salient in religious societies. Several scholars argue that neglecting spirituality in psychotherapy may result in partial healing, especially in personality disorders that involve moral orientation, empathy, and self-transcendence (Koenig et al., 2014; Pargament, 2007; Richards & Allen, 2005). This limitation indicates the need for complementary frameworks that integrate psychological insight with spiritual and ethical transformation.

NPD negatively affects social relationships, often leading to stress and conflict, especially in the workplace. Though difficult to treat—since sufferers rarely recognize their condition—Kohut, in *The Analysis of the Self*, proposes a psychotherapeutic approach grounded in four key principles: empathy, creativity, humor, and wisdom

(Kohut, 2009). Kohut conceptualizes narcissistic pathology as a disturbance in self-cohesion rooted in early empathic failure, and thus emphasizes therapeutic responsiveness to restore a cohesive self-structure. However, despite its clinical strength, Kohut's self-psychology remains largely focused on intrapsychic repair and does not explicitly address spiritual transcendence, moral purification, or the ethical orientation of the self toward a higher ontological reference. This theoretical limitation opens space for dialogue with religious psychospiritual traditions that place self-transformation within a broader metaphysical and ethical framework.

The concept of Kohut, when viewed in the context of Islam, found the possibility of integration and reconciliation with the teachings of Sufism, by offering the concept of the maqamat of Nawawi al-Bantani. The researcher wants to present a variety of Sufi teachings of al-Bantani that have the potential to reduce the NPD. According to the researcher, reducing the impact of NPD can be attempted through several maqamat practices, and can be an alternative solution in handling this personality disorder.

Efforts to handle narcissistic personality disorder through a religious perspective have been carried out by several researchers. Koenig, et al. showed that spiritual and religious approaches have a significant impact on mental strengthening and transpersonal psychotherapy, including personality disorders such as narcissism (Koenig & et al., 2014); Also M. Naufal Waliyuddin offers the concept of Sufi teachings as an effort to treat and prevent NPD (Naufal Waliyuddin, n.d.); Not only that, Dewi Purnama Sari sees NPD as having implications for mental health, trying to make society aware of returning to Allah SWT, and stating that no one deserves to be praised except Him (Sari, 2021). Although these studies demonstrate the relevance of spiritual and religious perspectives in addressing narcissistic tendencies, they largely remain normative and thematic in nature. Most of them emphasize moral exhortation or general spiritual awareness without establishing a systematic conceptual integration between classical Islamic psychospiritual constructs and modern psychological theories. Moreover, existing works rarely engage directly with established psychodynamic models, such as self-psychology, in a dialogical and analytical manner (Hamdan, 2008). As a result, the potential of Sufi concepts to function as structured therapeutic mechanisms—rather than symbolic ethical ideals—has not been sufficiently explored in interdisciplinary scholarship (Skinner, 2010). More specifically, the concept of tazkiyatu al-nafs from the perspective of Nawawi al-Bantani

is used as a reference by Nur Hadi Ihsan, et al. to deal with the culture of consumerism that is widespread in society (Ihsan et al., 2024).

In this context, the selection of Shekh Nawawi al-Bantani as the primary Sufi authority in this study is based on clear scholarly considerations. As a prominent Nusantara scholar whose works continue to be widely studied in pesantren and Islamic higher education institutions, Nawawi represents a synthesis of classical Sufism and practical ethical instruction (Azra, 2004; van Bruinessen, 1995). Unlike earlier Sufi theorists who emphasize a rigid and hierarchical progression of *maqamat*, Nawawi conceptualizes *maqamat* as a set of ethical-spiritual commitments that can be practiced contextually and non-linearly (al-Bantani, 2024). This structural flexibility renders his framework particularly compatible with contemporary psychotherapeutic processes, which emphasize adaptive self-regulation rather than ascetic absolutism. Furthermore, Nawawi's emphasis on *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *shuhbah*, and *mahabah* directly addresses core features of narcissistic pathology—namely grandiosity, excessive need for recognition, and lack of empathy—making his *maqamat* framework especially relevant for dialogical integration with Kohut's self-psychology. To date, no study has systematically examined this integration, thereby positioning the present research as a novel contribution to the field of Islamic psychotherapy

B. Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach grounded in textual and conceptual interpretation. The primary aim is to explore the possibility of integrating *maqamat*—as conceptualized by Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani—with the therapeutic principles developed by Heinz Kohut in addressing narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Qualitative design is considered the most suitable for this inquiry, as it emphasizes the depth of meaning and contextual understanding rather than numerical generalization, which aligns with the study's focus on abstract phenomena such as spiritual experience and inner psychological processes (Creswell, 2013).

The unit of analysis in this study consists of key conceptual constructs related to narcissistic pathology and self-transformation, as articulated in both psychodynamic and Sufi texts (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, the analysis focuses on (1) Kohut's four therapeutic principles—empathy, creativity, humor, and wisdom—and (2) selected *maqamat* concepts in the works of Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani, namely *qana'ah*,

muhasabah, shuhbah, and mahabah. These concepts are treated as analytical units rather than merely doctrinal statements, allowing them to be examined for their functional roles in addressing narcissistic traits such as grandiosity, dependency on admiration, and lack of empathy.

In conducting the analysis, the researchers applied a content analysis framework combined with a hermeneutic–interpretive perspective. Through this approach, various classical and modern texts were carefully examined to identify converging ideas and therapeutic implications. The main psychological source analyzed was *The Analysis of the Self* by Heinz Kohut, while several of Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani’s seminal works—*Salālim al-Fuḍalā’*, *Naṣā’ih al-‘Ibād*, *Marāqī al-‘Ubūdiyyah*, and *Marah Labīd*—served as the foundation for understanding Islamic spiritual psychology. Each of these works was analyzed to extract recurring concepts, symbolic meanings, and ethical frameworks that could be dialogued with Kohut’s psychodynamic notions.

The selection of primary texts was based on their canonical status and direct relevance to the study’s analytical focus. Kohut’s *The Analysis of the Self* was chosen as it constitutes the foundational work of self-psychology and explicitly addresses narcissistic pathology (Gadamer, 2013). Nawawi al-Bantani’s works—*Salālim al-Fuḍalā’*, *Marāqī al-‘Ubūdiyyah*, *Naṣā’ih al-‘Ibād*, and *Marah Labīd*—were selected due to their explicit discussion of spiritual discipline, ethical self-regulation, and inner transformation. Textual interpretation followed a thematic-hermeneutic criterion, prioritizing passages that articulate psychological functions (e.g., self-regulation, empathy formation, ego restraint) rather than purely ritual or legal prescriptions (Ricoeur, 1976).

From a hermeneutic–analytical standpoint, the study employed a multi-step analytical procedure to establish conceptual correspondences between Kohut’s self-psychology and Nawawi al-Bantani’s maqamat. *First*, key psychological functions embedded in Kohut’s four therapeutic principles were identified, such as empathy restoration, ego flexibility, affect regulation, and mature self-integration. *Second*, Nawawi’s maqamat concepts were examined to determine their dominant psychospiritual functions, including ego containment, self-accountability, transcendental awareness, and compassion cultivation. *Third*, a comparative mapping process was conducted to align these functions based on structural similarity rather than terminological equivalence. This

procedure ensured that the integration was analytical and functional, not merely analogical or normative.

The study draws upon primary data, namely original writings of Kohut and Nawawi al-Bantani, and secondary data, which include academic discussions on Sufism, psychopathology, and Islamic psychotherapy found in scholarly journals, monographs, and interpretive commentaries. All collected data were analyzed inductively and thematically, allowing the researchers to abstract core therapeutic correspondences from textual material. Furthermore, the classification of spiritual and psychological concepts—such as *mahabah* interpreted as empathy and *muhasabah* as self-reflection—was guided by a conceptual mapping method commonly used in interdisciplinary integration studies between philosophy and psychology (K. Denzin & S. Lincoln, 2011).

To maintain methodological rigor and avoid purely reflective or normative conclusions, the study consistently treated Sufi teachings as analytical data rather than devotional prescriptions. Conceptual claims were derived through cross-textual comparison and functional interpretation, ensuring that each proposed correspondence between maqamat and psychotherapeutic principles was grounded in explicit textual evidence. This approach positions the study within scholarly qualitative research, emphasizing systematic interpretation over personal or theological reflection (Flick, 2014).

C. Result and Discussion

1. Result

This section presents the analytical findings of the study derived from a systematic comparison between Kohut's self-psychology and the maqamat framework of Syekh Nawawi al-Bantani. Unlike the preceding theoretical discussion, the following results do not merely restate conceptual definitions but synthesize the outcomes of textual analysis, highlighting functional correspondences identified through hermeneutic and comparative procedures. The findings are presented as structured analytical results that demonstrate how specific maqamat operate as psychospiritual mechanisms addressing core features of narcissistic personality disorder.

1) Theoretical Basis: *Maqamat* in Islamic Perspective

Maqamat linguistically is the plural form of "maqam", which comes from the root word *qama-yaqumu*, which means "to stand", "to be", or "to have a position". Ibn Manzur

explains that "al-maqam" is a place of standing or a person's position, both physically and meaningfully; it can also refer to a certain level, degree, or condition occupied by a person (Manzur, 1994). In a meaningful context, this word is often used to indicate the spiritual or moral level that a person reaches through certain efforts or experiences.

Abu Nashr al-Thusiy defines *maqamat* as the position of a servant before his Lord, Allah SWT, which is based on his deeds. This practice is analogous to the training of a servant to reach the highest position; where a high position is based on a servant's hard work in worship, his seriousness in fighting lust and other penances, by completely surrendering his body and soul solely to Allah SWT (al-Ṭūsī, 1960)(Jamaludin & Rahayu, 2022). Al-Thusiy interpreted the word of Allah, QS. Ibrahim: 14 (ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ (وَعَبِدَ), also QS. Ash-Shafat: 164 (وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ) to define the *maqam*. Al-Thusiy explains that the soul is likened to an army that is gathered together and bound together (al-Bukhārī, 2001); Their attachment fosters mutual adjustment and harmony; if compatible, they connect and reinforce each other, but if not, discord emerges.

According to Abu al-Qasim al-Qusyairiy, *maqamat* are spiritual levels attained through moral effort and consistent religious practice. Progression requires fulfilling conditions at each stage; for instance, one cannot truly reach *tawakkul* without first embodying *qana'ah*. He equates *maqam* with *muqam* (entrance place), arguing that one cannot leave a stage they have not truly entered (al-Qusyairī, 2017). So, it is clear from al-Qusyairiy that between one *maqam* and another there is a sequential connection (Wahab Syakhrani et al., 2023).

Al-Thusiy and al-Qusyairiy view *maqamat* as spiritual levels attained through *mujahadah*; gradual self-discipline and devotion. They emphasize that *maqam* is not instantaneous, but the result of consistent effort, requiring completion of one level before progressing to the next. As with the levels of *mujahadah* in his second *maqamat* (al-Thusiy and al-Qusyairiy), al-Thusiy in the book *al-Luma'* states that the first station that must be performed is repentance, then *wara'*, *zuhd*, *faqr*, patience, *tawakal*, and finally *ridha* (al-Ṭūsī, 1960)(Nazim et al., 2025). Meanwhile, al-Qusyairiy explains *maqamat* (spiritual levels) as stages that a *salik* (traveler of the spiritual path) must go through gradually, consciously, and through effort (*mujahadah*); these stages are: repentance, *wara'*, *zuhd*, *faqr*, patience, *tawakal*, *ridha* and *mahabah* (al-Qusyairī, 2017)(Nazim et al., 2025).

2) The Maqamat Concept of Nawawi al-Bantani

The previous explanation of the concept of *maqam* makes it clear that a servant can reach the best position in the sight of Allah SWT with his efforts and hard work. In the perspective of Nawawi al-Bantani, the process is described as a “*salik*” (traveler); al-Bantani explains that the way a *salik* reaches his best position is very diverse. His love for worship, noble character, always remembering Allah, praying, fasting, reading the Quran and praying are some examples; in addition, other practices are as practiced by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailani, namely: giving charity, being humble, and always guarding the heart from bad assumptions (al-Bantani, 2024)(Priyanto & Dahri, 2021).

Al-Bantani interprets *maqamat* as the spiritual stages that a *salik* (sufi path follower) must go through to achieve the highest position in the sight of Allah SWT. In his framework of thought, *maqamat* is realized in the form of nine wills, which are seen as basic principles that must be maintained and implemented consistently. The nine wills are repentance, *qana'ah*, *zuhd*, studying the Shari'a, maintaining the sunnah, *tawakal*, sincerity, *'uzlah*, and respecting time (al-Bantani, 2024). These wills are not merely moral advice, but rather form the structure of a systematic spiritual journey, and therefore constitute the core of the concept of *maqamat* in al-Bantani's version of Sufism (al-Bantani, 2024).

The uniqueness of the concept of *maqamat* al-Bantani from the perspective of other Sufi scholars is the absence of an explicit statement that *maqamat* must be carried out sequentially; such as the concept of al-Thusiy and al-Qusyairiy above. This is in line with how Imam Ghazali in his book *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, systematically discusses the implementation of *maqamat*, without explaining that *maqamat* must be passed sequentially. The explanation is contained in the *Rub'u al-Munjiyat* section, namely the last quarter of his book, which discusses things that save the soul, namely *maqamat*, including: repentance, patience and gratitude, *khauf* and *raja'*, *faqr* and *zuhd*, *tawakal*, the last is *mahabah* and *rida* (al-Ghazālī, 2005). Although al-Ghazali does not explicitly define *maqamat*, it can be understood from his explanation that *maqamat* is a morality and a solid spiritual condition that is achieved through *mujahadah* and becomes a ladder on the journey to Allah; similar to al-Bantani who analogizes *maqamat* as a seeker who practices nine wills. With this uniqueness, it is easier for researchers to identify the appropriate *maqamat* al-Bantani, to be reconciled with the concept of Kohut's

psychotherapy model; in order to achieve the objectives of this study, namely the offering of a Sufism-based NPD therapy model.

Based on the comparative textual analysis, the study identifies four dominant maqamat in Nawawi al-Bantani's framework that demonstrate functional correspondence with Kohut's self-psychology in addressing narcissistic pathology. These maqamat—qana'ah, muhasabah, shuhbah, and mahabah—emerge as psychospiritual mechanisms that directly target the core dimensions of narcissistic personality disorder, namely grandiosity, dependency on external validation, and lack of empathy (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Analytically, qana'ah functions as a mechanism of ego containment by fostering contentment and reducing compulsive self-aggrandizement (al-Bantani, 2024). Muhasabah operates as a reflective self-regulatory process that weakens defensive grandiosity through continuous self-evaluation and accountability (al-Ghazālī, 2005). Shuhbah cultivates transcendental awareness, repositioning the self within a relational consciousness centered on divine presence rather than social admiration (Al-Bantani, 2010). Mahabah, as the culmination of spiritual orientation, facilitates empathy formation and emotional attunement, counteracting the affective deficits characteristic of NPD (al-Ghazālī, 2005). These findings indicate that Nawawi's maqamat are not merely ethical ideals but structured modes of inner regulation that parallel the therapeutic functions emphasized in Kohut's model (Kohut, 2009).

3) Narcissistic Personality Disorder

The term narcissistic is defined as being excessively concerned with oneself, characterized by an arrogant, self-confident, and selfish attitude (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (Pusat Bahasa), 2024). The term "narcissism" originates from a Greek myth about Narcissus (Izzati & Irma, 2018), a youth who fell in love with his own reflection (Oldale, 2020), symbolizing obsessive self-love and a lack of empathy (Engkus et al., 2017).

This story represents the behavior of a person who is focused on the needs and admiration of himself, and lacks empathy for others. This person tends to have a very high sense of self-importance, unrealistic fantasies about power, success, or beauty, and often demands attention and praise from others; in short, he has an excessive sense of

self-love (Widiyanti et al., 2017). In today's human life, the above indications are judged as one of the psychological disorders known as: narcissistic personality disorder.

Narcissism is basically the initial symptom of a personality disorder or mental condition of someone who feels superior, selfish, self-admired, and lacks empathy (Chen et al., 2021). In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, NPD is described as “a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy” (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). People who have this trait tend to be selfish, lack empathy for other people, which causes problems in interactions with other people. People with it often use interpersonal relationships just to get attention, gain fame, and do anything aimed at pleasing themselves (Mehdizadeh, 2010); They have excessive fantasies about the success they achieve, without regard for the feelings of those around them (Engkus et al., 2017). So, NPD can be defined as a personality disorder characterized by a sense of superiority, egoism, excessive self-love, lack of empathy, and a tendency to exploit interpersonal relationships for personal gain.

Initially, the term narcissism was used by Paul Nacke and Havelock Ellis with the phrase “narcissus-like” in 1898; later, in 1914 Sigmund Freud introduced this term as “Narzissmus” in his paper. At that time Freud had not yet classified narcissism as a mental disorder, but rather considered this behavior as a libidinal complement to instinctive egoism (Freud, 2014). But his view has a contradictory side that says that the behavior is identical and often found in many sufferers of other disorders such as homosexuality, as revealed by Sadger. Robert Waelder then developed the term into narcissistic personality; while Erich Fromm is more comfortable with the term "narcissism", which is then expanded to the social scale with the term "social narcissism" (Fromm, 2011). From here, narcissism began to be studied as a topic of study in the realm of psychology, highlighted by various disciplines. Ultimately, Heinz Kohut classified it into abnormal psychology, known as narcissistic personality disorder (Kohut, 2009).

a) Characteristics of Narcissistic Personality Disorder

The discourse on narcissism in the contemporary era has been widely discussed by Heinz Kohut through his two books, *The Analysis of the Self* (1971), and *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), which subsequently resulted in the discourse that produced the theory known as self-psychology (Azizurahman et al., 2017). Together with Freud, Kohut explained the symptoms of narcissism as “*people who admire and seek high-status*

roles and are egoistically motivated” (Miller et al., 2010). There are at least six aspects of a person's characteristics as a narcissist according to Robert Raskin and Howard Terry; the six aspects include: having authority, having a sense of self-sufficiency, superiority over others, exhibitionism or sexual disorders by showing off genitals, a tendency to exploit others, and arrogance and self-conceit (vanity) (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

According to the DSM-V, a person is considered to have narcissistic personality disorder if they exhibit five of the following nine characteristics: first, having an exaggerated sense of self-importance; second, being preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success and power; third, believing that they are special and can only be associated with others of their own equal; fourth, needing excessive admiration; fifth, having a sense of entitlement; sixth, being interpersonally exploitative; seventh, lacking empathy; eighth, frequently being jealous of others; and ninth, displaying arrogant and haughty behavior or attitudes (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). These points can be classified into the main characteristics of NPD which are contained in three points: a sense of superiority, a need for recognition, and a lack of empathy for fellow human beings. In addition, there are many factors that underlie the emergence of a narcissistic personality in someone; both from biological factors, psychological aspects, and sociocultural factors (Santoso Dan et al., n.d.).

Biologically, research shows that narcissistic traits such as grandiosity and the need for recognition can be genetically inherited (Luo et al., n.d.), with studies on twins and the influence of the X chromosome strengthening this hypothesis (G. J. Miles & Francis, 2014). From a psychological aspect, parenting styles play an important role; authoritarian, cold, or overly indulgent parenting can form maladaptive schemas in children, such as a sense of underappreciation that is then compensated with a superior attitude (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2011). Meanwhile, from a sociocultural perspective, societies that emphasize individualism, competition, and personal achievement tend to perpetuate narcissistic behavior. In contrast, cultures that uphold collectivism and modesty suppress the expression of narcissism, although other forms such as exploitative traits can still emerge in certain contexts (G. J. Miles & Francis, 2014).

NPD arises from a complex interaction between genetic factors, unsupportive parenting, and a culture that emphasizes individualism and competition. Understanding the interconnectedness of these factors emphasizes the importance of building a warm

and inclusive family and social environment to reduce the negative impact of NPD and promote emotional balance in individuals.

b) The Impact of NPD on Individuals and the Social Environment

NPD negatively affects mental health (Fakhriyani, 2019), leading to anxiety, emotional instability, and difficulty forming genuine relationships (Oldale, 2020). Intrapersonally, they often face emotional instability, an inability to build a solid self-identity, and a deep sense of emptiness. Their need for external validation is very dominant, making it difficult for them to feel satisfied or happy. In addition, overreaction to criticism or threats to their self-esteem often occurs, as a form of rigid psychological defense (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). In interpersonal relationships, individuals with NPD are often manipulative, lack empathy, and use others to satisfy their ego needs. They tend to create shallow and unstable relationships due to their inability to form genuine bonds (Rohmann et al., 2012). Their arrogance and tendency to exploit often trigger conflict and unhealthy power dynamics in their relationships.

In the workplace, the impact of NPD can be seen in two ways. Initially, individuals with NPD may be perceived as confident, ambitious, and charismatic, which often leads to their success in leadership positions (Chatterjee & Pollock, 2017). However, in the long term, manipulative nature and excessive focus on oneself can create a toxic work atmosphere (Wang et al., 2018). They tend to exploit co-workers or subordinates for personal gain, resulting in conflict, high stress levels, and low job satisfaction within the organization (Oldale, 2020). Such work environments, while initially promising, often suffer from uncontrolled narcissistic dynamics.

4) The Relevance of NPD to Heart Diseases (*Amrodhu-l-Qolb*)

From an Islamic perspective, the indications of NPD, as mentioned earlier, can be associated with diseases of the heart (*amrodhu-l-qolb*), which are widely discussed by Muslim scholars. Excessive self-confidence, to the point of causing pride (arrogance) in Islamic terms is called *ujub*. In *Lisanu-l-Arab* dictionary *ujub* is defined as an arrogant, haughty attitude; where someone views what he has as an exaggerated pride (Manzur, 1994). Imam Ghazali in his book *al-Ihya'* explains that the essence of *ujub* is exaggerating a blessing, with an absolute claim to that blessing, but forgetting the giver of the blessing (al-Ghazālī, 2005).

Ujub is one of the many heart diseases that destroy a person's deeds; a disease that can deny a servant's sincerity, to the point of forgetting his God because of his arrogance. A person's sense of *ujub* invites many dangers in his life, this feeling makes a person forget all the sins he has committed, as well as his mistakes, thus making him an arrogant person; feels most righteous, as if his greatness is a gift from God, but in reality, in His eyes it is an injustice (al-'Abd al-Laṭīf, 1993). A person with a sense of pride plunges him into arrogance which leads to the destruction of good deeds and relationship with the Creator.

The need for recognition from others is the next main characteristic for someone with NPD. Someone who always demands recognition from others assumes that every job they do must be appreciated; finally, that person will only do something when seen by others. In Islam, the attitude of showing off explains the similarity of the main characteristic. It means that someone does something because of the desire to be seen and praised in front of the public (Hidayatullah & Nur Fuad, 2024); *Riya*, which is a type of heart disease, can erase a person's good deeds, because its aim is to satisfy oneself, with praise from the public (Hafiun, 2023).

Ibn Rajab explains that people often want to be seen by the public as good, humble people; so that they respect them and praise them (al-'Abd al-Laṭīf, 1993). This is how the trait of showing off plays a role in a person's daily life; whereas in fact it is a despicable trait; a person with this trait will be happy if praised for his advantages, and hate it when he sees other people having a better fate than him (Sari, 2021); Rasulullah SAW even called it hidden (smallest) shirk, with a person's lack of intention to do good deeds for his Lord.

A lack of empathy—seen in self-centeredness, emotional detachment, and exploitative behavior—is a core trait of NPD. In Islamic terms, this aligns with *qaswatu-l-qalb* (hard-heartedness), marked by harshness, lack of compassion, and resistance to sincere counsel (Hasan, 2020). This disease is caused by many factors. Stinginess, love of the world, and only busying oneself in accumulating wealth, are the main factors of *qaswatu-l-qalb* (al-Utsaimin, n.d.). From here, a person begins to do things that often harm others, lack empathy, and are aggressively exploitative. Individuals with minimal empathy often display greed and self-interest, neglecting the common good. In NPD, this

stems from a fragile self-esteem and excessive self-focus, which hinder the ability to build relationships grounded in affection and understanding.

People with this personality disorder, whose indications are very relevant to *amrodhu-l-qulub*, often do not know that they have this disorder; to the point that what they do seems right, even though in reality they are committing a sin, as well as injustice to others; even to their God (Farid, 1985). Those with liver disease will be more drawn to things that are detrimental, rather than things that are beneficial to them (Farid, 1985). Therefore, sufferers of this personality disorder need to be treated immediately; in this study, a *maqamat*-based psychotherapy model will be offered.

The following table outlines the essential correspondence between the psychological features of *narcissistic personality disorder (NPD)* and the spiritual pathology known in Islamic psychology as *amrāḍ al-qulūb*. This synthesis serves to demonstrate that the symptoms of NPD—while clinically categorized as personality dysfunction—can also be understood as manifestations of deeper spiritual imbalance that affect the human heart (*qalb*).

Tabel 1.
 Conceptual Comparison between NPD and Amrodhu-l-Qolb

Aspect	Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)	Amrodhu-l-Qolb (Spiritual Heart Diseases)	Conceptual Relevance
Superiority and arrogance	Feels entitled and superior to others.	‘Ujub – self-admiration that neglects divine dependence.	Both reflect distorted self-view; purified through humility and <i>tazkiyah al-nafs</i> .
Need for external validation	Seeks praise and recognition from others.	Riyā’ – acting for human approval rather than God’s pleasure.	Both indicate ego-dependence; healed through <i>ikhlas</i> and <i>muhāsabah</i> .
Lack of empathy	Insensitive and exploitative toward others.	Qaswah al-qalb – hardness of heart and loss of compassion.	Both reveal spiritual rigidity; cured through <i>dhikr</i> , <i>tawbah</i> , and <i>rahmah</i> .

To enhance analytical clarity, the findings of this study can be summarized within a structured conceptual framework that maps the functional correspondence between Kohut’s therapeutic principles, Nawawi al-Bantani’s *maqamat*, and the core symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder. This framework demonstrates that the integration

proposed in this study is based on functional equivalence rather than terminological similarity (M. B. Miles & Huberman, 2014).

In this model, narcissistic grandiosity is addressed through qana'ah as a spiritual mechanism of ego moderation, corresponding to Kohut's emphasis on creativity and flexible self-expression. The excessive need for admiration is countered by muhasabah and shuhbah, which realign self-evaluation toward internal accountability and transcendental awareness, paralleling Kohut's principles of humor and wisdom. Finally, the affective deficit and lack of empathy characteristic of NPD are addressed through mahabah, which structurally corresponds to Kohut's core therapeutic principle of empathy (Kohut, 2009). This analytical framework represents the primary empirical outcome of the study, translating abstract spiritual teachings into systematic psychotherapeutic functions.

2. Discussion

1) Maqamat al-Bantani and its Implications for Handling NPD

Maqamat al-Bantani is identified through several of his works, including: *Salalimu al-Fudhola*, which explains *the maqamat sufiyyah* with the nine wills (Ihsan et al., 2024); also other works, such as Maroqi al-Ubudiyyah, in its concept of shuhbah; and Nashaihu-l-Ibad, in its concept of mahabah. If examined further with what is written in al-Ghazali's work, the maqamat of al-Bantani has the same essence in its implementation. Some concepts maqamat al-Bantani can be a practical offer to handle some cases of personality disorders, which in this case will be discussed objectively for narcissistic personality disorder; among them are the following

a) Qana'ah

Qana'ah (Contentment) is an attitude of accepting with an open heart all the gifts of Allah SWT. Imam Syafi'i explained that a person's sustenance will not be lost even if it is delayed, and it will not be more difficult to achieve it if a person's heart is able to accept it sincerely. Therefore, both people who seek sustenance and those who are ambitious to rule the world, basically have similarities in this regard (Priyanto & Dahri, 2021). Therefore, it is important for a person to have the quality of contentment by letting go of excessive desires and things that, although pleasant, can lead to evil, such as in terms of food, clothing, and shelter. For those who want to walk the path to the afterlife,

they must be able to leave excessive things and focus on what can be achieved, and avoid excessive worldly pleasures (al-Bantani, 2024)(Priyanto & Dahri, 2021).

The quality of qana'ah that a person has, and is practiced as well as possible, can reduce the greedy (arrogant) nature of NPD sufferers. The sense of superiority within him that allows for acts of oppression, which can have negative consequences in society, as well as the work environment, needs to be minimized by presenting contentment within himself. With it (the quality of contentment) he can create a sense of satisfaction with the smallest pleasure, and will not be crazy in pursuing worldly things; instead, it will bring inner happiness, which is true happiness (Al-Attas, 2019).

b) Muhasabah

Muhasabah is a process of self-reflection that allows a person to evaluate the good and bad deeds that he has done. Through muhasabah, a person can know the strengths and weaknesses in his attitude and behavior, so that he can make improvements and self-improvement (Arroisi & Puspita, 2020). Hasan al-Basri explained that muhasabah is a religious practice that aims to test oneself towards activities that avoid judging the good and bad of worldly things. This practice is carried out by always maintaining vigilance towards the conditions of the world, while trying not to be influenced by subjective judgments or external views. The goal is to achieve inner peace and focus on the relationship with the Creator, without being distracted by temporary or material things (Naufal Waliyuddin, n.d.).

For those who always reflect in their lives, it will be easy to ask their God for forgiveness (repent) for what they have done. al-Bantani classifies repentance into three types: first, the repentance of a servant for fear of the punishment of his Lord; second, the repentance of a servant because he hopes for the pleasure and reward of his Lord; Lastly, a servant who repents to protect himself in worshipping his Lord (al-Bantani, 2024). Through *muhasabah* followed by repentance, a servant will continue to fortify himself from sinful, futile actions, and those that can harm others. This will have a positive effect on individuals and groups, where it will optimally reduce the grandiose-self that thirsts for praise and a sense of superiority.

c) Shuhbah

In the book *Maraqah al-Ubudiyyah*, al-Bantani explains the concept of shuhbah. Simply put, this concept teaches a servant's awareness that Allah is always there and

accompanies him in every activity. Allah never leaves His servants, in fact He is always present and listens when His servant's *dhikr* or remember Him (Al-Bantani, 2010). Although a servant may not always feel His presence, and may not be able to bring Allah into every moment of his life, a servant who wants to practice *suhbah* is encouraged to take time, either at night or during the day, to pray to Allah. In this way, he can envelop himself in prayers offered to the Creator, the Lord of the universe.

At least in the process of *suhbah* there are fourteen manners related to Allah, namely: 1) Respecting Him by bowing the head and gaze; 2) Submitting oneself to Him with full awareness; 3) Keeping silent from useless conversations; 4) Controlling body parts from bad behavior; 5) Carrying out His commands; 6) Avoiding His prohibitions; 7) Accepting destiny patiently; 8) Continuously remembering Him; 9) Contemplating His blessings and greatness; 10) Choosing truth over falsehood; 11) Not depending on His creatures; 12) Humbling oneself before Him; 13) Regretting mistakes and asking for forgiveness; 14) and Surrendering to Him in seeking sustenance (Al-Bantani, 2010). These fourteen adab are an important foundation in building a close relationship with Allah SWT. Those who practice *suhbah* can achieve higher spiritual awareness, increase obedience, and achieve true happiness. Believing that he is incomparable to his Creator will reduce the thirst for recognition from those around him, because in his consciousness there is still the Great Being, who is far more powerful than himself; namely his God.

d) Mahabah

Also known as love, which is often interpreted as a deep feeling, universally recognized as something noble and sublime (Chittick, 1983). With love, a person tends to be more empathetic, has an altruistic attitude, and is reluctant to belittle others (Ihsan et al., 2022). Love and compassion for others begins with a servant's love for his Lord. Sheikh al-Bantani in his book *Nashaih al-Ibad* explains that *mahabah* is the highest spiritual level in a servant's journey towards Allah. This is represented by a servant's love for Allah that exceeds his love for the world; true love is formed from three things that a servant prioritizes from his Lord, namely believing in His words, choosing to always be close to Him, and hoping for His pleasure, compared to others (worldly and human matters) (al-Bantani, n.d.).

These three factors will lead a servant to *mahabah fardu*, as Imam al-Asqalani's explanation, which can encourage a person to carry out Allah's commands and stay away

from His prohibitions (al-Bantani, n.d.). He will feel that the desire for the world makes him forget his creator; he happily carries out all His commands, commands to help others, prioritize the welfare of the people, and so on. Eventually, *mahabah* fosters empathy and suppresses egoistic behavior, promoting spiritual and social harmony. In dealing with NPD, the *maqamat* of Nawawi al-Bantani offers a spiritual approach that can complement Heinz Kohut's practical concept. Through *maqamat* such as *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *shuhbah* and *mahabah*. Individuals are invited to cleanse their souls from greed, arrogance, and the thirst for external recognition, which are the roots of pathological narcissism.

Core NPD Pathology	Kohut's Therapeutic Principle	Psychodynamic Function	Nawawi al-Bantani's Maqamat	Psychospiritual Function	Basis of Correspondence
Grandiosity and inflated self-image	Creativity	Flexible self-expression without compulsive validation	Qana'ah	Ego containment through contentment and acceptance	Regulation of self-expansion
Defensive self-idealization	Humor	Softening rigid self-defenses	Muhasabah	Reflexive self-accountability and humility	Reduction of ego rigidity
Excessive need for admiration	Wisdom	Mature self-evaluation and realistic self-assessment	Shuhbah	Transcendental awareness and divine companionship	Reorientation of self-reference
Lack of empathy and emotional attunement	Empathy	Restoration of affective resonance	Mahabah	Cultivation of love, compassion, and relational sensitivity	Formation of empathic capacity

This concept is in line with Kohut's four practical pillars in building a healthy personality structure (Kohut, 2009). Empathy finds its depth of meaning in *mahabah*, which fosters true love for others and the Creator. Creativity develops through *qana'ah*, encouraging self-acceptance that allows for self-expression without the compulsive urge to be recognized. Humor as a release from excessive self-seriousness is in line with *muhasabah*, which teaches self-reflection without the burden of superiority. Meanwhile, wisdom grows from *shuhbah*, where awareness of the divine presence guides the individual to assess themselves honestly and humbly. The integration of these two

approaches creates a holistic model that not only touches on the psychological aspect, but also strengthens the spiritual dimension as the foundation of complete self-balance.

A further critical issue concerns the epistemological divergence between modern psychology and Sufi spirituality. Self-psychology is grounded in empirical observation, clinical inference, and developmental theory, aiming primarily at functional self-cohesion and adaptive behavior. In contrast, Sufism is rooted in metaphysical assumptions regarding divine reality, moral accountability, and ultimate human purpose. While psychology seeks therapeutic effectiveness within observable parameters, Sufism orients self-transformation toward transcendence and ethical purification. These differences imply that conceptual alignment does not entail epistemological equivalence, and any integration must remain sensitive to the distinct ontological commitments of each tradition (Skinner, 2010).

Critics may argue that translating spiritual concepts into psychotherapeutic functions risks instrumentalizing Sufism and reducing its transcendental depth to psychological utility. Such concerns are valid, particularly when religious teachings are detached from their theological context (Pargament, 2007). To mitigate this risk, the present study does not claim to psychologize Sufism, but rather to explore functional intersections where spiritual practices incidentally support psychological regulation. This approach preserves the autonomy of each discipline while allowing dialogical engagement, avoiding both theological reductionism and psychological overextension.

D. Conclusion

Maqamat Nawawi al Bantani offers a relevant spiritual approach for addressing tendencies associated with narcissistic personality disorder. Practices such as *qana'ah*, *muhatabah*, *shuhbah*, and *mahabah* can help reduce narcissistic traits, including feelings of superiority, an excessive need for recognition, and limited empathy. In this article, the relationship between Kohut's self-psychology and Nawawi al Bantani's *maqamat* is framed as a conceptual and ethical complement rather than a unified therapeutic system. Its value lies in enriching psychological work with spiritual meaning while maintaining clear disciplinary boundaries, acknowledging epistemological limits and clinical constraints, and supporting interdisciplinary dialogue without claiming universal applicability or methodological supremacy.

Conceptually, this study advances the literature by moving beyond purely normative or moralistic uses of Sufism toward a systematic dialogue with established psychodynamic theory. Using comparative mapping based on structural and functional correspondence, it clarifies how *maqamat*, especially *qana'ah*, *muhasabah*, *shuhbah*, and *mahabah*, can be aligned analytically with Kohut's therapeutic principles while preserving distinct epistemological foundations. These findings should not be interpreted as evidence of clinical efficacy in treating narcissistic personality disorder because the proposed framework remains conceptual and is intended to complement, not replace, evidence based psychotherapeutic practices. Future research should build on this foundation through empirical and applied studies, including qualitative clinical research on how *maqamat* inspired self-reflective practices are experienced by individuals with narcissistic traits in therapeutic settings. Interdisciplinary collaboration among psychologists, psychiatrists, and Islamic scholars can also refine operational models that integrate spiritual meaning with clinical practice in an ethically grounded way while maintaining methodological rigor.

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