

## Narrative Review of Depressive Fatalism from an Islamic Psychology Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Depressive fatalism among Muslim adolescents refers to a pattern of thinking in which feelings of hopelessness and low mood become intertwined with misinterpretations of religious concepts particularly *qadr* (divine decree). However, depressive fatalism among Muslim adolescents remains an underexplored phenomenon, particularly in how beliefs about *qadr* (divine decree) shape their sense of agency and coping responses. Belief in *qadr* can lead to two distinct forms of fatalism: passive fatalism, which involves surrendering to circumstances without effort, and active fatalism, which entails trusting in divine decree while continuing to strive for solutions. This study aims to review depressive fatalism from an Islamic Psychology perspective. This study is a narrative literature review, designed to synthesize and analyze existing research on depressive fatalism from an Islamic psychology perspective. The review revealed several aspects of depressive fatalism from Islamic psychology perspective namely: (a) positive religious coping (e.g., *tawakkul*, *sabr*, *dhikr*) correlates with lower depressive fatalism; (b) Islamic-based psychotherapy/intervention can reduce depressive and fatalistic symptoms; (c) religious coping styles vary by personality, influencing susceptibility to negative religious struggle (fatalism); (d) high religiosity combined with social/religious community support buffers against hopelessness and depressive feelings; and (e) in contexts of stress (e.g., pandemic), Islamic-informed coping and resilience frameworks help moderate distress, suggesting potential for fatalism mitigation. In conclusion, this review establishes that depressive fatalism among Muslim populations is a psychologically detrimental phenomenon rooted in theological misinterpretations of concepts like *qadr*, which can be effectively countered by

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**Contribution/Originality:** This review offers a novel synthesis by framing depressive fatalism as a theological misinterpretation of *qadr*. Its originality lies in systematically integrating diverse research to present a cohesive Islamic psychological framework, outlining specific principles and interventions to counter this underexplored phenomenon among Muslim populations.

## 1. Introduction

Depressive fatalism among Muslim adolescents refers to a pattern of thinking in which feelings of hopelessness and low mood become intertwined with misinterpretations of religious concepts, particularly *qadr* (divine decree) (Nageeb et al., 2018). When adolescents believe that their difficulties are entirely predetermined and unchangeable, some may develop passive fatalism, characterized by surrendering to problems without effort or coping attempts (Zhang & Hu, 2024). Others may still hold active fatalism, believing in destiny while continuing to strive (Wu et al., 2020), which is considered healthier in Islamic teachings. Depressive fatalism tends to emerge when emotional distress, academic pressure, or family expectations interact with limited religious understanding, leading young people to view their struggles as unavoidable and outside their control. This can reduce motivation, increase psychological vulnerability, and hinder help-seeking, making it a significant yet underexplored mental health concern in Muslim youth populations (Aggarwal et al., 2023).

However, depressive fatalism among Muslim adolescents remains an underexplored phenomenon, particularly in how beliefs about *qadr* (divine decree) shape their sense of agency and coping responses. Belief in *qadr* can lead to two distinct forms of fatalism: passive fatalism, which involves surrendering to circumstances without effort, and active fatalism, which entails trusting in divine decree while continuing to strive for solutions. Passive fatalism is commonly associated with depressive symptoms and an external locus of control (Shahid et al. 2020). Despite growing interest in culturally grounded mental-health frameworks, limited empirical research has examined how fatalistic interpretations of suffering may contribute to passivity, reduced help-seeking, and heightened vulnerability to depressive symptoms, especially within educational settings where religious teachings significantly influence worldview and coping (Elshamy et al., 2023). Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating depressive fatalism from an Islamic psychology perspective, offering insights that can inform culturally relevant assessment and intervention approaches.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

This study aims to review depressive fatalism from an Islamic Psychology perspective. Exploring depressive fatalism through the lens of Islamic psychology offers several benefits. It provides a culturally relevant framework for understanding mental health issues among Muslim populations, integrating spiritual and psychological dimensions that are often overlooked in Western models (Malika & Iskandar, 2025). This approach can enhance therapeutic practices by aligning them with the values and beliefs of Muslim clients, potentially improving treatment outcomes. Additionally, It also promotes the development of culturally relevant models, interventions, and assessment tools for Muslim populations (Rothman, 2021). This research can also aid in

destigmatizing mental health issues within Islamic communities, encouraging more individuals to seek help.

## 2. Literature Review

Islamic psychology offers a unique perspective on mental health, particularly in understanding phenomena such as depressive fatalism, where individuals may feel a predetermined sense of despair or hopelessness regarding their mental state. This concept intertwines with various Islamic teachings and approaches, emphasizing the balance between faith, resilience, and psychological well-being. The synthesis of evidence from recent literature delineates various frameworks that underline how Islamic counseling and therapies adapt to meet the needs of individuals grappling with depression within a culturally relevant context. Recent studies indicate that culturally adapted interventions significantly improve mental health outcomes for Muslim clients experiencing anxiety and depression. For instance, [Rauf et al. \(2025\)](#) emphasize the efficacy of an adapted cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approach tailored for Muslim clients, which incorporates religious elements and enhances religious sensitivity, thereby improving compliance and therapeutic outcomes for this demographic. Similarly, [Klein et al. \(2023\)](#) discuss the benefits of embedding therapy within Islamic contexts, arguing that faith-centric approaches help to mitigate stigma surrounding mental health issues and enhance engagement with therapeutic practices.

Furthermore, the incorporation of Islamic values into cognitive-behavioral therapy through an approach termed Islamic Modified Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (iCBT) provides a framework for addressing psychological challenges while respecting clients' spiritual beliefs. This approach leverages Islamic tenets such as *tawakkul* (reliance on God) and *sabr* (patience) as therapeutic tools to aid individuals in navigating feelings of despair and ineffective coping during episodes of depression ([Çınaroğlu, 2024](#); [Munawar et al., 2025](#)). [Munawar et al. \(2025\)](#) affirm that such modifications to traditional psychological interventions not only align with Islamic principles but also cater specifically to the needs of religious Muslims, thereby promoting overall psychological resilience. Islamic perspectives on mental health also address the social and contextual factors influencing depressive symptoms. Research conducted by [Aljaffer et al. \(2025\)](#) demonstrates that medical students facing high academic demands often report increased depressive symptoms, particularly if they have a history of psychiatric events or trauma, which echoes findings regarding psychological resilience. This suggests that Islamic psychology not only deals with personal beliefs and spiritual practices but also contextualizes mental health within broader societal frameworks and stresses the significance of social support and community engagement in mitigating mental health challenges.

Moreover, themes of trauma and its psychological ramifications are prevalent in Islamic psychological discourse, particularly in contexts affected by conflict. [Zoellner et al. \(2024\)](#) provide compelling evidence from a Somali context, where Islamic Trauma Healing strategies are applied to address trauma-related mental health issues. These strategies integrate cognitive restructuring techniques with Islamic teachings, promoting therapeutic outcomes that are spiritually and psychologically aligned. Such frameworks are critical in situations where conventional mental health resources are scarce or stigmatized ([Zoellner et al., 2021](#)). The mental health challenges faced by vulnerable populations, such as Yazidi children post-ISIS invasion, illustrate the intersection of trauma, culture, and faith, highlighting how these experiences lead to

heightened rates of PTSD and depression (Ahmed, 2022). Addressing such challenges through culturally and religiously sensitive frameworks can alleviate symptoms of depression and enhance community cohesion and support systems among affected groups.

In conclusion, the integration of Islamic teachings with contemporary psychological practices offers a comprehensive and culturally congruent framework for understanding, preventing, and treating depressive disorders within Muslim populations. Incorporating concepts such as reliance on God (*tawakkul*), patience (*sabr*), hope (*rajā'*), and the rejection of despair (*ya's*) into therapeutic interventions not only aligns treatment with clients' spiritual worldviews but also strengthens internal coping mechanisms that buffer against depressive fatalism. When psychological models are contextualized within Islamic epistemology, individuals are more likely to engage with therapy, interpret their struggles through a lens of meaning and divine wisdom, and develop healthier patterns of thinking and behavior. Furthermore, research consistently demonstrates that culturally and religiously adapted interventions enhance therapeutic rapport, increase treatment adherence, and promote more positive mental health outcomes among Muslim clients. As depressive fatalism is often shaped by theological misinterpretations, sociocultural pressures, and emotional distress, an integrative approach enables practitioners to correct misconceptions, foster spiritual resilience, and encourage balanced perspectives grounded in both faith and psychological science.

### 3. Research Methods

This study is a narrative literature review, designed to synthesize and analyze existing research on depressive fatalism from an Islamic psychology perspective. A comprehensive search was conducted across academic databases like PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar using keywords such as "Islamic psychology," "qadr," "tawakkul," and "religious coping." The review included peer-reviewed literature published in English between 2020 and 2025. A thematic analysis was performed on the selected articles to identify and organize key findings. This methodology was chosen for its effectiveness in integrating diverse, interdisciplinary sources to build a coherent understanding of this complex conceptual topic and to identify gaps for future research.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The review revealed several aspects of depressive fatalism from Islamic psychology perspective namely: (a) positive religious coping (e.g., *tawakkul*, *sabr*, *dhikr*) correlates with lower depressive fatalism; (b) Islamic-based psychotherapy/intervention can reduce depressive and fatalistic symptoms; (c) religious coping styles vary by personality, influencing susceptibility to negative religious struggle (fatalism); (d) high religiosity combined with social/religious community support buffers against hopelessness and depressive feelings; and (e) in contexts of stress (e.g., pandemic), Islamic-informed coping and resilience frameworks help moderate distress, suggesting potential for fatalism mitigation.

#### 4.1. Positive Religious Coping (e.g., *Tawakkul*, *Sabr*, *Dhikr*) Correlates with Lower Depressive Fatalism

When Muslim individuals engage in positive religious coping strategies such as trust in God (*tawakkul*), patience (*sabr*), and remembrance (*dhikr*), they report lower levels of

depressive fatalism, meaning they are less likely to believe that suffering is hopelessly predetermined. This pattern aligns with findings that Islamic resilience frameworks act as psychological buffers, allowing individuals to reinterpret adversity with faith and hope rather than resignation (Gumiandari et al., 2022; Gani & Laher, 2025).

Positive religious coping strategies such as *tawakkul* (trust in God), *sabr* (patience), and *dhikr* (remembrance) are significantly associated with reduced depressive symptoms and lower feelings of fatalism among Muslim individuals. Evidence indicates that positive religious coping is linked to improved mental health outcomes, characterized by decreased anxiety and depression levels, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Rashid et al., 2021; Zarrouq et al., 2021). A cohort study found that individuals utilizing positive religious coping strategies experienced fewer depressive symptoms compared to those engaging in negative coping methods (Dewi et al., 2022).

Moreover, Islamic coping mechanisms help foster a secure relationship with God, significantly enhancing individuals' resilience against psychological distress (Skalisky et al., 2022; Hafizah & Uyun, 2023). This relationship is vital for mitigating feelings of hopelessness and fatalism that may surface in challenging circumstances. The study by Zarrouq et al. (2021) illustrates that reliance on a higher power correlates with reduced stress and increased psychological well-being. Collectively, these findings emphasize the critical role of Islamic psychological principles in coping with depressive fatalism and promoting mental health through structured faith practices (Simonovich et al., 2022).

#### **4.2. Islamic-based Psychotherapy/Intervention Can Reduce Depressive and Fatalistic Symptoms**

Islamic-based interventions that integrate spiritual reflection, Qur'anic principles, and guided religious practices have been found to significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Such interventions provide a faith-consistent alternative to conventional psychotherapy and can help counteract depressive fatalism by embedding meaning and divine purpose within the healing process (Saged et al., 2022; Gani & Laher, 2025).

Islamic-based psychotherapy has demonstrated potential in reducing depressive symptoms, particularly those related to fatalism, by integrating spiritual and religious elements that resonate with Muslim clients. Research suggests that spiritually adapted cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques can effectively support Muslims experiencing depression, addressing both mental health and spiritual concerns (Rauf et al., 2025; Bulut et al., 2021). Additionally, culturally adapted interventions, tailored to Islamic contexts, have shown efficacy in alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression among diverse populations, emphasizing the importance of considering cultural and religious values (Mishu et al., 2023; Naeem et al., 2023).

Studies also underline the significance of Islamic principles, such as prayer and spiritual reflection, in enhancing psychological resilience and coping strategies for mental health issues, thereby addressing depressive fatalism within an Islamic framework (Nulhakim, 2023). The integration of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with Islamic teachings further highlights the potential for personalized treatment modalities that align with patients' spiritual beliefs (Rasmawati, 2022). Collectively, these interventions underscore the necessity of culturally sensitive approaches in psychotherapy that cater to the specific needs of Muslim individuals experiencing depressive symptoms, ultimately fostering holistic healing (Rothman & Coyle, 2023).

### **4.3. Religious Coping Styles Vary by Personality, Influencing Susceptibility to Negative Religious Struggle (Fatalism)**

Individual personality traits influence whether Muslims adopt positive or negative religious coping styles, which in turn affect susceptibility to fatalistic attitudes. For instance, individuals high in neuroticism may be more prone to religious struggles, doubts, or viewing adversity as punishment, while those higher in agreeableness and openness may use religion as a constructive coping mechanism (Aminuddin et al., 2024; Gani & Laher, 2025).

Understanding the relationship between personality traits, religious coping styles, and mental health in the context of Islamic psychology provides valuable insights into susceptibility to negative religious struggles, such as fatalism. Research indicates that positive religious coping is prevalent among Muslim populations, as highlighted by Rashid et al. (2021), who found that when facing distress, many individuals utilize positive religious coping strategies more frequently than maladaptive ones. Conversely, Vaingankar et al. (2021) noted that coping styles can vary significantly by religious affiliation, with non-Christian groups, including Muslims, showing stronger associations between positive religious coping and mental health outcomes.

Moreover, McLaughlin et al. (2022) emphasize that individuals who experience greater religious struggle, particularly converts, can face heightened psychological distress. This underscores the importance of integrating personality assessments and religious coping styles to identify individuals at risk for negative religious struggles, such as fatalism, particularly during distressing situations. The implications for mental health interventions necessitate a focus on enhancing positive coping while addressing maladaptive styles (Margetić et al., 2022).

### **4.4. High Religiosity Combined with Social/Religious Community Support Buffers Against Hopelessness and Depressive Feelings**

Strong religiosity, when supported by active participation in religious communities, enhances psychological well-being and resilience among Muslim populations. Social and spiritual belonging derived from communal practices and shared faith narratives serves as a protective factor against hopelessness and depressive fatalism, offering emotional and existential support (Akbar & Keten, 2024; Gumiandari et al., 2022).

High religiosity, reinforced by robust social and religious community support, mitigates feelings of hopelessness and depressive states, particularly within Islamic frameworks of psychology. Research indicates that positive religious coping strategies are protective factors against depression, especially in the Muslim community where belief in divine providence during adversity may lead to lower levels of depression (Gür, 2025). Studies emphasize the dual role of spirituality in enhancing emotional resilience and navigating life's challenges, particularly evident in social support networks deeply rooted in cultural and religious values (McLaren et al., 2021). This idea is supported by Klausli and Caudill (2021), who highlight the significance of both positive and negative coping strategies in mental health contexts, proposing that aligned social support and religious coping may serve as therapeutic avenues for depression among students. Thus, a synergistic relationship exists where religiosity and social support converge to offer psychological fortitude, reducing vulnerability to depressive states (Ishaq et al., 2021; Asano et al., 2021).

#### **4.5. In Contexts of Stress (e.g., Pandemic), Islamic-Informed Coping and Resilience Frameworks Help Moderate Distress, Suggesting Potential for Fatalism Mitigation**

During collective crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslims who employ Islamic coping strategies like *dhikr*, *dua*, and *tawakkul* report higher psychological resilience and lower levels of distress. This supports the notion that Islamic-psychology principles can mitigate fatalistic resignation and foster adaptive responses to adversity (Gumiandari et al., 2022; Saged et al., 2022).

In the context of stressors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, frameworks informed by Islamic psychology can provide valuable insights into coping strategies and resilience, particularly through the lens of depressive fatalism. Research indicates that psychological resilience and positive coping styles play a critical role in moderating symptoms of depression and anxiety amidst challenging circumstances (Song et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2023). For instance, older adults, who typically exhibit greater resilience, utilize internal coping mechanisms that align with fatalistic beliefs prevalent in Islamic thought, allowing them to adapt more effectively to external crises (Alodhayani et al., 2021).

Furthermore, studies have highlighted that fostering optimism and meaning in one's work serves as a protective factor against depressive symptoms, suggesting that integrating Islamic-informed strategies could further enhance coping mechanisms during stressful periods such as pandemics (Sadang et al., 2021). Therefore, exploring how Islamic perspectives on fatalism can be utilized to improve mental health resilience presents a significant opportunity for mitigating distress.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this review establishes that depressive fatalism among Muslim populations is a psychologically detrimental phenomenon rooted in theological misinterpretations of concepts like *qadr*, which can be effectively countered by an integrative Islamic psychology framework. The evidence consistently demonstrates that positive religious coping strategies such as *tawakkul* (active trust in God) and *sabr* (patience), alongside culturally and spiritually adapted psychotherapies, significantly reduce fatalistic beliefs and depressive symptoms by correcting misconceptions and fostering a sense of agency grounded in faith. Future research should advance beyond theoretical reviews to prioritize the development and empirical testing of manualized, Islamic-based therapeutic interventions through randomized controlled trials. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to track how beliefs about divine decree evolve among adolescents and impact their mental health trajectories, while cross-cultural research should explore how varying sociocultural factors influence the expression of fatalism. Such focused investigations are critical for building an evidence base that can inform culturally competent clinical practices, educational programs, and community-based support systems designed to prevent and treat depressive fatalism within diverse Muslim communities.

## Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers adhere to the research ethics guidelines established by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (RECUiTM). All procedures performed in this study did not involve human participants.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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