
Integrating *Tasawwuf* to Psychotherapy: A Comparative Study of Nursamad Kamba and Abdallah Rothman

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Abstract

The integration of psychotherapy with tasawwuf has become prominent topic in the field of psychology over the past few decades, largely due to the perception that modern psychology has failed to provide solutions for the increasing mental health problems. Classical tasawwuf and Islamic scholarly traditions are now being paid attention as both are considered to offer effective alternatives. This article aims to explore the expansion of tasawwuf discourse from the realm of spiritual-religious experience into an intellectual-discursive dimension. The study focuses on the efforts of two prominent figures, Nursamad Kamba and Abdalla Rothman, in integrating Islamic tasawwuf and conception of soul with modern psychotherapy. Research was conducted through interview and literature review using content analysis methods. The results indicate that the common ground between the two lies in their awareness of the fundamental relevance of Islamic concepts to modern psychology and psychotherapy. However, there are substantial differences between them that can be examined from ontological, epistemological, methodological, and practical aspects. Nursamad Kamba comprehensively integrates the entirety of tasawwuf with psychotherapy, which had been established as a university study program. Whereas Abdallah Rothman formulated his conception as a theoretical model of Islamic Psychotherapy applicable in clinical practice. Theoretically, this study has implications for strengthening the philosophical discourse on the integration of Islamic scholarly tradition of tasawwuf and psychotherapy and encourages cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research. Practically, it promotes collaboration between academics and practitioners trained in both Islamic and Western psychotherapy traditions to address complex mental health issues and improve the overall mental well-being of society.

Keywords: *Tasawwuf Psychotherapy, Islamic Psychotherapy, Nursamad Kamba, Abdallah Rothman*

Abstrak

Integrasi psikoterapi dengan *tasawwuf* menjadi perbincangan hangat dalam diskursus beberapa dekade terakhir. Hal ini akibat psikologi modern yang dianggap gagal dalam menyediakan solusi bagi masalah kesehatan mental yang kian meningkat. *Tasawwuf* klasik dan tradisi keilmuan Islam tentang dianggap menyediakan alternatif yang efektif. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi perluasan diskursus *tasawwuf* dari ranah pengalaman spiritual-keagamaan menuju dimensi diskursus intelektual. Kajian difokuskan pada upaya dua tokoh terkemuka, Nursamad Kamba dan Abdallah Rothman, dalam mengintegrasikan konsep-konsep *tasawwuf* atau jiwa dalam Islam dengan psikoterapi modern. Penelitian dilakukan dengan wawancara dan studi literatur terkait dengan menggunakan metode analisis konten (*content analysis*). Hasil penelitian ini mendapati bahwa titik temu antara kedua tokoh ini terletak pada kesadaran akan relevansi fundamental konsep-konsep Islam dengan keilmuan psikologi dan psikoterapi modern. Keduanya berupaya mengintegrasikan konsep-konsep Islam, khususnya *tasawwuf*, dengan psikoterapi guna memperkaya dan memajukan diskursus di bidang tersebut. Meskipun demikian, terdapat perbedaan substansial keduanya dalam yang dapat ditinjau dari aspek ontologis, epistemologis, metodologis, dan praksis. Nursamad Kamba secara komprehensif mengintegrasikan seluruh konsep *tasawwuf* bersama dengan psikoterapi, yang lahir sebagai program studi di universitas. Sementara Abdallah Rothman memformulasikan model teori *Islamic Psychotherapy* yang dapat digunakan dalam praktik psikoterapi. Studi ini secara teoritis berimplikasi pada penguatan wacana filosofis upaya integrasi *tasawwuf* dan psikoterapi dan mendorong penelitian lintas budaya dan lintas disiplin. Adapun secara praktis, penelitian ini mendorong kolaborasi antara akademisi dan praktisi yang terlatih dalam tradisi psikoterapi Islam dan Barat untuk menyelesaikan kompleksitas permasalahan kesehatan mental hingga meningkatkan derajat kesehatan mental masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *tasawwuf* psikoterapi, psikoterapi Islam, Nursamad Kamba, Abdallah Rothman

INTRODUCTION

Psychotherapy is an applied branch of psychology that emerged in response to the need for interventions in psychological disorders. Historically, the roots of psychology as a scientific discipline can be traced back to the 18th century, when philosophy began to flourish during the Enlightenment period (d'Isa & Abramson, 2023; Ula et al, 2025). In its embryonic phase, psychology was defined as “the science of the soul,” as reflected in the etymology of the term from the Greek *psyche* (soul) and *logos* (study or discourse). However, as positivist philosophy came to dominate the development of modern science, this definition experienced a dramatic shift. Psychology came to be defined as the science of behavior and mental processes (Pérez-Álvarez, 2018; Farmawati, 2025). The meaning of “mental processes” itself became reduced, referring primarily to physiological mechanisms of the body involving the nervous system, measurable in laboratory experiments. As a result,

the immaterial and spiritual aspects of the soul—once central to the study of psychology—were excluded from the epistemological framework of the modern era (Jastrzębski, 2022).

This fundamental shift in the definition of psychology within academic discourse has led to serious implications. Since psychological disorders are now largely viewed as physiological phenomena, treatment tends to focus on medical interventions, which unfortunately are often oriented toward short-term recovery (Nurjanah & Chodijah, 2025). Meanwhile, despite rapid advancements in modern psychology, the prevalence of mental health problems continues to rise. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) showed that 1 in 8 adults globally experienced a mental disorder, along with 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10–19 (WHO, 2022). Suicide has become the third leading cause of death among individuals aged 15–29. This alarming trend raises critical questions about the paradigms of modern psychology in understanding and addressing mental health issues.

Integrating *tasawwuf* and psychotherapy has now emerged as a scientific discourse, as response to the failure of modern psychology in providing holistic approach in tackling global mental health issues. In Indonesia, there have been studies on this topic as written in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1. Review of previous literatures

Author & Year	Title	Research Discussion	Limitations
(Nurjanah & Chodijah, 2025)	Integration of Maqāmāt of <i>Tasawwuf</i> in Islamic Psychotherapy: A Spiritual Approach to Mental Health	Theoretical analysis of <i>maqāmāt</i> characteristics formulated based on scholarly consensus and its therapeutic benefits	The study focuses solely on <i>maqāmāt</i> and relies on scholarly consensus without engaging with specific scholars' views, overlooking the nuanced differences among them.
(Mursalin, 2024)	Integration of <i>Tasawwuf</i> and Islamic Psychotherapy: A Literature Review on the Influence of Spirituality and Mental Health	Theoretical elaboration on <i>taẓkiyatun nafs</i> as mental health cure according to Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyyah	The study only focuses on theoretical concept of <i>tasawwuf</i> by classical scholars
(Asyadily et al., 2025)	Implementation of Dhikr as Psychotherapy at the Griya Sehat Syafaat 99 Clinic	Analyze the <i>zikir</i> therapy from theological, spiritual, and psychological perspective	The study limits its discussion on the outer perspective rather than discussion of the theoretical foundations underlying the therapy
(Anwar et al., 2023)	The Concept of Islamic Psychology in the View of Abdallah Rothman and Coley	Theoretical elaboration Rothman's view on Islamic psychology and its application in psychological practice	The study primarily focuses on theoretical elaboration, with limited attention to assessing the applicability and relevance of Rothman's view in t Indonesian context.

As mentioned in the table, the studies so far had discussed the theoretical concept of *tasawwuf* proposed by classical scholars, its potential for integration with psychotherapy, the practical experience of Islamic-based and *tasawwuf* conception formulated contemporary scholars (Nursamad Kamba, Rothman, and Coley). However, no studies yet attempted to analyse and compare the integration idea proposed by Muslim contemporary intellectuals. Therefore, this study aims to trace the origins of *tasawwuf* psychotherapy integration idea proposed by Nursamad Kamba and Rothman and to comparatively analyse them on ontological, epistemological, methodological, and practical level. The reason behind choosing both of these intellectuals lie on their unique and outstanding contribution in the field of Islamic-based psychotherapy. Nursamad Kamba from Indonesia is the first person to establish *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy as university's study program in the country. Meanwhile, Abdallah Rothman is the first person to propose a theoretical model of Islamic psychotherapy which then served as the foundation of Daar al-Shifaa, an Islamic-based center for counselling and psychotherapy in the United States. Understanding these two prominent figures is critical to internalize the urgency of *tasawwuf* psychotherapy integration, enrich the modern discourse regarding this endeavor, and provide insight to the direction of future studies in this field.

This research employs a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine the ideas of *tasawwuf* psychotherapy proposed by Nursamad Kamba and the Islamic psychotherapy model of Abdallah Rothman. The questions guiding this research are as follows: (1) What are the key concepts in Nursamad Kamba's *tasawwuf* and Abdallah Rothman's Islamic theory of the soul? (2) How are the integration efforts of Nursamad Kamba's *tasawwuf* and Rothman's Islamic theory of the soul compare within the context of psychotherapy? (3) What are the implications of integration idea by both intellectuals? The analytical method used in this study is content analysis, conducted through several stages. Firstly, data were collected from both sides, Nursamad Kamba's and Abdallah Rothman's. On Kamba's side, the researcher obtained data from an interview with Cucu Setiawan (a direct student of Kamba) on June 2025 and from a written document namely "Profile of *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy" study program, which was developed from Kamba's works. On Rothman's side, the data were drawn from his book "*Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: Islamic Theology and Contemporary Understandings of Psychology*" (Routledge, 2021). Secondly, the unit of analysis and the relevant thematic categories to the focus of

comparison were identified. The unit of analysis in this research is the texts gathered from both sides while the thematic categories were based on three research questions: (1) the conception of soul and/or *tasawwuf* (ontology), (2) the process of integrating *tasawwuf* with psychotherapy (epistemology and methodology), and (3) the implications of *tasawwuf* psychotherapy integration conception (praxis). The data were then reduced and interpreted to identify patterns, similarities, and differences between sources using descriptive coding, in which labels or descriptions were assigned to represent the main ideas of the text. Subsequently, the coded data were analyzed thematically based on thematic categories mentioned earlier. Finally, conclusions and verifications were made by drawing theoretical implications from the comparative analysis and ensuring interpretive consistency through data triangulation, which was conducted by cross-referencing the obtained data with relevant supporting literature.

DISCUSSIONS

Biography of Nursamad Kamba

Muhammad Nursamad Kamba, known as Buya Kamba, was an Indonesian intellectual born in Pinrang in 1958 and remembered for his scholarship, spirituality, and public service. Guided early by his father, he developed a strong foundation in Islamic learning before continuing his education at Al Azhar University, where he completed his undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies in Theology and Philosophy. In his autobiographical work, he recalls earning his PhD with the distinction of *Mumtaz* in 1994, an achievement previously reached by only one other Indonesian scholar. After returning home, he worked to connect classical Islamic thought with contemporary needs and began teaching at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. In 1998 he established Indonesia's first academic program in Tasawwuf Psychotherapy and in 1999 helped launch a partnership between UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and Al Azhar University that produced the Faculty of Islamic Studies (Wijdan, 2020).

Kamba's Conception of *Tasawwuf* dan His Pioneering Role in *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy

Nursamad Kamba's conception of Tasawwuf Psychotherapy grew from a personal Sufi experience he underwent while writing his doctoral dissertation at Al Azhar University. According to his student Dr. Cucu Setiawan, he struggled to understand the works of Junaid

al Baghdadi, a struggle that pushed him into a spiritual state known as tawalli within the path of ma'rifah. This experience emerged after he joined the Naqshbandi order under the guidance of Syeikh Muhammad Dhiya al Din al Kurdi and matched Junaid's description of knowing God through God rather than through rational effort. The shift from spiritual exhaustion to a direct sense of divine recognition changed how Kamba understood the lived meaning of tawhid. This moment became the foundation for his distinctive formulation of tasawwuf and later his development of Tasawwuf Psychotherapy (Amal, 2025; Mustofa, 2019).

Tasawwuf as The Essence of Islam.

Nursamad Kamba argues that tasawwuf is not a hidden or peripheral aspect of Islam but the core of the religion together with its shari'ah obligations. He bases this view on the prophetic model, noting that the Prophet practiced tasawwuf through his words, actions, approvals, and character. This position corrects the idea that tasawwuf frees a person from following the shari'ah. Drawing from Junaid al Baghdadi, Kamba explains tasawwuf as a path of spiritual stations and states centered on continuous repentance that leads toward ma'rifah and naturally cultivates virtues such as detachment, trust, patience, and contentment. He links this unending cycle of repentance to the structure of the soul, which includes layers like the qalb, fuad, sirr, and nur, each pointing to the soul's potential for limitless spiritual growth (Kamba, 2018).

Tasawwuf Psychotherapy as A Response to the Contemporary Discourses and Challenges.

Nursamad Kamba treats tasawwuf not only as a spiritual path but also as a growing field of knowledge that can be developed within an academic setting. He bases his model of Tasawwuf Psychotherapy on three key principles, beginning with the intellectual rigor required by its place in the Faculty of Ushuluddin. He clarifies that this program is not part of the Islamization of knowledge movement, because it integrates tasawwuf and psychology in their original forms through a process driven by scientific inquiry. This integration marks a clear distinction from traditional tasawwuf, which often leads to formal affiliation with Sufi orders, while in Kamba's view the real meeting point lies in epistemology and cognitive processes. His third principle positions tasawwuf psychotherapy as an alternative to speculative philosophy, arguing that philosophy should serve the formation of the self rather than remain trapped in skepticism and abstraction (Amal, 2025).

Tasawwuf thus offers a unique epistemological position distinct from what Kamba terms “wild philosophy,” for several reasons: (1) it recognizes the intellect (‘aql) not merely as a material entity—as is often the case in modern psychology—but also as a transcendent faculty; (2) it adopts the concept of *wihdatul wujud* (*unity of existence*) and views accurate perception of reality as inseparable from divine revelation (Kalamullah); and (3) it affirms empirical experience as a valid entry point for exploring the signs of God’s greatness, thereby actualizing human intellectual potential. In short, *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy, as a product of intellectual dynamism and disciplinary integration, offers a comprehensive perspective on reality, particularly within the discourse on the human soul.

Biography of Abdallah Rothman

Abdallah Rothman was born in Los Angeles on November 28, 1975, and embraced Islam in his youth after a personal search for meaning and connection with God. He earned a BA in Community Studies from the University of California Santa Cruz, completed an MA in Psychology and a certification in Art Therapy at Antioch University Seattle, and later obtained a PhD from Kingston University London in 2019. After a decade of practicing as a clinical psychologist, he was inspired to formalize an Islamic approach to psychotherapy, which became the focus of his doctoral work. He also studied with traditional scholars and worked closely with Professor Malik Badri, with whom he co founded the International Association of Islamic Psychology. Today he serves as Principal of Cambridge Muslim College, teaches at several international universities, speaks widely, and has authored multiple books on Islamic psychology while continuing to produce new scholarly works (CMC, 2024; Rothman, 2021).

Rothman’s Model of Islamic Psychotherapy

Abdallah Rothman’s work on building a theoretical framework for Islamic psychotherapy began with his experience as a clinical psychologist who saw the need for treatment aligned with Muslim beliefs and values. He entered his PhD program intending to develop an Islamic approach to psychotherapy, though at first he felt unsure how to handle the scale of the project. He narrowed his focus by comparing Western Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with Islamically oriented CBT through Randomized Control Trials, which led him to realize that a clear definition of Islamic psychotherapy had to be established before any applied work could succeed. This insight brought him to grounded theory, which he used to construct a model based on Islamic scholarly sources and interviews with experts and

practitioners in the field. He then began shaping his theoretical foundation by examining classical Islamic conceptions of the soul from figures such as Al Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra, Ibn Khaldun, and al Tustari (Rothman, 2021).

Below is the table that summarized his research regarding the concept of the self from some of Islamic scholars that write about the concept of the soul.

Table 2. Conception of Soul according to Islamic tradition

Islamic Authors and Scholars	Conception of Soul
Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali	Soul has four qualities: <i>qalb</i> (heart), <i>aql</i> (mind/perception), <i>nafs</i> (ego or 'lower self'), and <i>ruh</i> (spirit)
Ibn Sina	Souls exist independent of the body without any logical dependency between them ("floating man experiment")
Mulla Sadra	Soul is an immaterial substance that has its own properties, and body is nothing but the soul in an extremely dense state (not separate from the soul rather is integrated with it)
Ibn Khaldun and Al-Tustari	Soul has dualistic dimension of fitrah which continuously in fluctuating state of tension (either good or evil) during its period in dunya

From Islamic scholars, Rothman identified some key points and keywords that would help him in dig deeper on his interviews with experts in Islamic psychology and psychotherapy or practitioners that had experience integrating Islamic concepts in their practices. Data collection from the interviews were analyzed and concluded by him as follows.

The Existence of the Soul.

One of the fundamental distinctions between Western psychology and Islamic psychology lies in the recognition of the soul's existence. Western psychology tends to focus on observable and measurable phenomena, often dismissing the soul as a legitimate ontological entity. In contrast, the soul (*nafs*) holds a central and essential place within the Islamic conception of the human being. This divergence in foundational assumptions leads to significant differences in therapeutic approaches. While Western psychotherapy typically relies on medical and behavioral treatments, Islamic psychotherapy centers its interventions on the soul, aiming to restore its harmony and connection to the Divine (Rothman, 2021).

The Concept of Fitrah.

In Islamic psychology, fitrah refers to the original, innate state of the human soul—its natural disposition to recognize and worship Allah as the one true God. A soul that remains within this state of fitrah is one that continuously affirms divine oneness (*tawhīd*) in all aspects of life. Psychological disturbances, from this perspective, signify a disconnection or rupture between the soul and its Creator. Hence, the goal of Islamic psychotherapy is to

guide the soul back to its primordial state. This does not imply a denial of biological or neurological factors that may contribute to mental imbalances; rather, it reflects an integrative view. While acknowledging the material aspects of human existence, Islamic psychology insists that the soul is a vital, inseparable component of human nature.

The Structure and Nature of the Soul.

Islamic scholars, including figures like al Ghazali, describe the soul as having a structured and multi layered nature, a view confirmed by the experts Rothman interviewed. They outline the nafs as the lower self tied to impulses, the aql as the faculty of reasoning, and the qalb as the center of spiritual understanding rather than mere rational thought. This contrasts sharply with Western psychology, which links the mind to the brain and limits it to cognitive functions. They also describe the ruh as the divine element of the soul that can receive knowledge directly from God, a dimension absent in Western models. These four components function together as interconnected parts of a single, unified soul.

Stages of Soul Development.

Islamic psychology describes the soul as developing through distinct stages supported by the Qur'an and classical scholars, a view that Rothman notes is widely accepted among experts. The first stage is nafs al ammarah, where the lower self dominates and weakens the roles of the aql and qalb. The second is nafs al lawwamah, a phase of inner struggle in which the intellect and heart engage but remain unstable. The third and highest stage is nafs al mutmainnah, where a person reaches spiritual calm and lives through a balanced movement between the qalb and ruh. Some scholars compare these stages to Freud's id and superego, yet point out that Western psychology has no counterpart to the tranquil soul, revealing a key limitation in its lack of a transcendent ideal (Rothman & Coyle, 2020).

Character Reform (*Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*).

Given the ontological and developmental framework outlined above, Islamic psychotherapy necessarily involves a process of moral and spiritual transformation. This process is known as *tahdhīb al-akhlāq* (refinement of character). Unlike Western approaches, which often focus solely on alleviating psychological discomfort without reference to moral or spiritual ideals, Islamic psychotherapy aims for the holistic betterment of the individual. The success of therapy is not judged merely by symptom relief but by the soul's return to fitrah and the cultivation of virtues. This ethical framework stands in contrast to the relativism often found in Western psychology, where truth and moral values are seen as

subjective and culturally contingent. Islamic psychology, on the other hand, grounds its moral vision in divine revelation. Al-Ghazālī elaborates on this in his discussions of *mublikāt* (vices) and *munjīyyāt* (virtues), positioning Islamic psychotherapy within the broader goal of spiritual purification and self-realization in accordance with divine guidance (Rothman, 2021).

Comparative Analysis of Kamba’s *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy and Rothman’s Islamic Psychotherapy

The comparison between the integration concepts of *tasawwuf* and psychotherapy as proposed by Nursamad Kamba and Abdallah Rothman can be examined through both their similarities and differences. This study identifies at least one point of convergence and four points of divergence between their respective ideas. The point of convergence include a shared recognition of the urgency of integrating *tasawwuf* with modern psychotherapy. The points of divergence, on the other hand, are explained through four dimensions: ontological, epistemological, methodological, and practical.

In terms of convergence, Kamba and Rothman both acknowledge the significance of integrating Islamic paradigm with psychology or psychotherapy. This convergence underscores the growing urgency to further develop integrative frameworks between *tasawwuf* and Islamic spiritual tradition with modern psychology and psychotherapy in order to promote a more holistic understanding of mental and emotional healing—not only for academics and practitioners, but also for the broader public (Chishti et al., 2022). In regards to point of divergence between Kamba and Rothman, there are four dimensions which can be briefly summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Divergences in the Ideas of Nursamad Kamba and Abdallah Rothman in the Integration of *Tasawwuf* and Psychotherapy

Dimension	Nursamad Kamba	Abdallah Rothman
Ontological	Shows limited engagement in ontological justification of the soul, builds directly on shared assumptions of metaphysical reality	Engages extensively in defending the existence of the soul as a foundation for Islamic psychotherapy
Epistemological	Derives knowledge through a combination of rational reflection and experiential engagement with classical <i>tasawwuf</i> teachings	Grounds knowledge in clinical practice experience combined with spiritual exploration
Methodological	Constructs <i>tasawwuf</i> conception by systematically interpreting, rationalizing, and expanding Junaid Al-Baghdadi’s classical works	Develops Islamic psychotherapy model using contemporary methodological approach (grounded theory), relying on contemporary experts and practitioners who

		are heavily influenced by Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's thoughts
Practical	Pioneering in the establishment of <i>Tasawwuf</i> Psychotherapy as university's study program	Pioneering in the formulation of theoretical foundations for Islamic psychotherapy

In regards to the ontological dimension, both Kamba and Rothman differ in their emphasis towards the discussion of soul's existence and the debate surrounding it. Rothman, since the very beginning, dedicated a huge portion of his book addressing the ontology of the soul, especially within the discourse of modern psychology. Kamba, while acknowledging the advantage of *tasawwuf* paradigm in regards to ontology of 'aql compared to Western philosophy, did not make this matter a primary discussion as Rothman did. He was rather interested directly in rationalizing Junaid Al-Baghdadi's conception of *tasawwuf*, assuming shared understanding about the soul existence.

This differences, the present study argues, are largely shaped by the sociocultural contexts in which Kamba and Rothman operate. Rothman, residing in the West, faces significant challenges within academic discourse. Although his initial intention was to create a framework primarily for Muslim audiences, he nonetheless must engage with academics who were often unfamiliar with, or even unaware of, the Islamic intellectual tradition. He himself notes in his work the frequent difficulty of demonstrating the relevance and validity of Islamic concepts to Western audiences, due to fundamental ontological differences (Rothman, 2021). This finding is in line with previous study which stated that Western paradigm generally assumes that the universe is immanent, not transcendent, therefore tends to prefer the material world at the cost of the immaterial one (Elmessiri, 2013).

In contrast, Nursamad Kamba, operating within an Eastern sociocultural context, particularly in Indonesia—a country with the world's largest Muslim population—did not engage too much in the ontological debates about the existence of the soul. This is because it is generally unproblematic for Eastern societies, especially Indonesian Muslims, to accept the soul as a real essential component of the human self, and to recognize *tasawwuf* as part of an already practiced religious tradition. This is also parallel with other study that argued that Eastern cultural paradigm (in which Indonesia is situated) is known for holding more holistic ontological perspective, acknowledging the transcendent and metaphysical dimensions of reality (Cucchi & Qoronfleh, 2025).

Another important point in comparing Kamba and Rothman's efforts is their epistemological foundation. Rothman's conception of Islamic psychotherapy appears to emerge primarily from empirical clinical experience along with intellectual and cognitive engagement. In contrast, Kamba's conception is deeply rooted in his own spiritual experience. As mentioned in an interview with his student, Cucu Setiawan, Kamba acknowledged that his own intellectual capacity was insufficient to understand the work of Junaid al-Baghdadi. This understanding only emerged after he received *talqin* (recitation) from his teacher and joined the Naqshbandi Sufism order, marking a turning point in his spiritual and intellectual transformation. Kamba's experience was considered valid within the epistemic framework of Sufism and recognized as a path to a form of knowledge (*gnosis*) that goes beyond ordinary rational cognition and scientific approach (Schimmel, 1975).

The source of knowledge in conception between Kamba and Rothman also differ. Rothman—who begins from an ontological point of soul—does not derive his conception directly from classical *tasawwuf* tradition, rather from the interpretations and clinical experience of contemporary experts and practitioners. As shown in Table 1 above, Rothman listed classical scholars who contributed to *'ilm al-nafs* (the science of the psyche) which he derived from previous studies, but unfortunately did not directly refer to their works. In fact, the figure who serves as the primary source for Kamba's conception of Sufi psychotherapy—Junaid al-Baghdādī—did not appear among the classical scholars listed in Rothman's work. This finding is particularly noteworthy, given that within *tasawwuf* tradition Junaid al-Baghdadi is recognized as a pivotal third-century Hijri figure, also known as Sayyid al-Ṭā'ifah (“the leader of the Sufi community”) and one of the founding figures in Sunni Sufism, two centuries prior to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Habib & Saleem, 2023).

The omission of al-Baghdadi's mentioning by Rothman and his informants may be explained by the fact that Abu Hamid al-Ghazali—who is seemingly the main intellectual reference in Rothman's theoretical concept—also did not explicitly discuss the thought of al-Baghdadi in his writings, but instead refers to al-Baghdadi's teacher, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī. This lack of attention to al-Baghdadi's ideas in contemporary Islamic psychology discourse maybe due to the fact that al-Baghdadi did not author any standalone treatise on *tasawwuf*, other than letters which he wrote and sent to Islamic scholars during his time (Ashani et al., 2021). Nonetheless, in the epistemological dimension, Kamba seems to be on the upper hand

by referring directly to primary sources in formulating his integration of *tasawwuf* and psychotherapy compared to Rothman. What Kamba did align with previous literature, which emphasizes that grounding on the works of classical Muslim scholars is one of the essential keys in establishing a solid scholarly foundation for contemporary Islamic disciplines (Elzamzamy et al., 2024). Malik Badri, known as the father of modern Islamic Psychology, also argued that the step in mastering classical works of Islamic intellectuals in the field are mandatory, as it enabled Muslims to formulate its own theoretical frameworks entirely independent to other civilizations (Badri, 2020).

In regards to the methodological dimension, Kamba's methodology in integrating *tasawwuf* psychotherapy is based on integrating both psychotherapy and *tasawwuf* science in its entirety in a consultative and complementary manner. This is recorded in the *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy profile which mentions that graduates from *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy program are expected to master both sciences which lead to transformative *tasawwuf* which rooted in Islamic philosophical paradigm. This method is similar to what is proposed by previous figure such as Al-Faruqi in terms of mastery of both modern science and classical science, although Kamba never to the figure (IIIT, 1989). On the other hand, Rothman's methodology in formulating theoretical framework for psychotherapy is a qualitative method known as grounded theory. Grounded theory is a methodology which enable the researcher to construct new theoretical formulations without relying on any pre-existing theories, drawing instead on input from experts and practitioners in the field to identify key components that can be developed into a systematic model. According to the literature, the advantages of this methodology over others include: (1) being data-driven (derived directly from data), (2) iterative (data collection and analysis occur simultaneously), (3) practical (produce findings that are relevant and applicable to real life settings), and (4) process-oriented (well-suited for understanding complex dynamics and processes) (Devadas, 2017; King et al., 2025; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022).

Diverging in previous three dimensions, both Kamba and Rothman also differ in their practical dimension. Kamba as an intellectual is concerned with establishing an academic discipline designed to engage with and address the evolving discourse within contemporary psychology. Rothman, in contrast, who was coming from the position of practicing psychotherapist is oriented toward the clinical application of Islamic psychotherapeutic models. This finding is aligned with previous studies that notes the coexisting trajectories of

studies in the field of Islamic psychotherapy, with a trend of transition from the theoretical realm towards more practical realm (Elzamzamy et al., 2024; Othman & Mohamad, 2019).

Despite of the divergence of four dimensions in the ideas of both of these figures, there are some potentials for both ideas to be integrated, as they complement each other. Kamba's rigorous grounding on *tasawwuf* tradition can be integrated to Rothman's framework to achieve greater depth and legitimacy. For instance, Kamba—who builds upon the work of classical authorities such as al-Baghdadi—identify more nuanced psychic structures and faculties (e.g., *fu'ād*, *sirr*, *nūr*) along with the concept of *maqamat* and *ahwal* that appear underdeveloped or absent in Rothman's model. A deeper exploration of these classical epistemologies would significantly fortify Rothman's theoretical foundations. On the other hand, Rothman's methodological rigor offers the potential to advance Kamba's conception of *Tasawwuf* Psychotherapy, particularly in the clinical practice domain, thus maintaining its relevance within dynamic modern discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of *tasawwuf* and psychotherapy as carried out by two key figures—Nursamad Kamba and Abdallah Rothman—represents an effort to reaffirm the contemporary relevance of *tasawwuf* as a viable solution for modern psychological and spiritual challenges. The differences between their ideas are significantly shaped by distinct cultural and sociological contexts. This study's theoretical implications lie in the fact that it reinforces the philosophical grounding in furthering the discourse and encourages concerns of cross-cultural and cross-domain analysis for future research. Practically, this study opens pathways for collaboration between academics and clinical practitioners who are both trained in Islamic and Western psychotherapy, thereby expanding its benefits for improving quality of life for the broader public.

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