



Islamic University of
Applied Sciences Rotterdam

MASTER'S THESIS · EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Psycho-spiritual processes among Dutch Muslims

A quantitative study of heart-based cognitive disruption, spiritual coping and spiritual heart balance from the perspective of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya

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Executive Summary

This master's thesis examines how existing psychological constructs concerning harmful thoughts, religious coping, and spiritual well-being can be reconceptualized from the psycho-spiritual perspective of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. The study specifically focuses on Dutch Muslims and aims to bridge Western psychological models with Islamic spiritual concepts such as qalb (heart), nafs (self/desires), tawakkul (trust in Allah), tazkiyah (spiritual purification), and sakīnah (inner tranquility).

Within the existing scientific literature, harmful thoughts are generally conceptualized from the perspectives of cognitive psychology and psychopathology. Religious coping is commonly distinguished into positive and negative coping strategies, whereas spiritual well-being is typically associated with meaning-making, inner peace, and existential balance. However, these models do not always adequately reflect the religious and spiritual experiences of Muslims. Therefore, the existing constructs were reconceptualized in this study as follows:

- ◆ Heart-Based Cognitive Dysregulation
- ◆ Positive Spiritual Coping
- ◆ Negative Spiritual Coping
- ◆ Spiritual Heart Balance

The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design among Dutch Muslims aged 18 years and older. Data were collected entirely online using Google Forms. Participants were recruited through social media platforms, Islamic networks, chaplaincy organizations, and personal networks. A total of 346 valid respondents participated in the study.

The sample consisted predominantly of women (81.8%), while men represented 18.2% of the respondents. The largest age group comprised participants between 25 and 34 years old. Most respondents had a Turkish background and possessed vocational (MBO), higher professional (HBO), or university (WO) educational qualifications. Religion was reported to be important or very important in the daily lives of nearly all participants.

For this study, new psycho-spiritual measurement scales were developed based on Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's theoretical framework. These scales were subsequently evaluated psychometrically using exploratory factor analyses, reliability analyses, and mediation analyses conducted in SPSS.

The results demonstrate that the newly developed measurement scales are both valid and reliable. Meaningful factor structures consistent with the theoretical framework were identified across all scales. Furthermore, all scales demonstrated high levels of internal consistency, as reflected by their Cronbach's alpha coefficients:

- ◆ Heart-Based Cognitive Dysregulation — $\alpha = .890$
- ◆ Positive Spiritual Coping — $\alpha = .866$
- ◆ Negative Spiritual Coping — $\alpha = .883$
- ◆ Spiritual Heart Balance — $\alpha = .889$

These findings indicate strong psychometric properties and high internal consistency of the developed instruments. Additionally, common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test. The first factor explained only 32.924% of the total variance, which is well below the critical threshold of 50%. Consequently, the dataset was considered suitable for further statistical analyses.

The study hypotheses were subsequently tested using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4. The analyses revealed that Heart-Based Cognitive Dysregulation was significantly associated with both Positive Spiritual Coping and Negative Spiritual Coping. Furthermore, Positive Spiritual Coping demonstrated a strong positive relationship with Spiritual Heart Balance.

A particularly noteworthy finding was that Negative Spiritual Coping also showed a positive association with Spiritual Heart Balance, whereas a negative relationship had originally been hypothesized. This finding suggests that, from an Islamic psycho-spiritual perspective, inner struggle, doubt, and spiritual hardship do not necessarily indicate an absence of faith or poor spiritual health. On the contrary, according to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, such inner struggles may constitute an essential component of spiritual awareness, moral development, and tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul).

The mediation analyses further confirmed that both Positive Spiritual Coping and Negative Spiritual Coping partially mediated the relationship between Heart-Based Cognitive Dysregulation and Spiritual Heart Balance. These findings indicate that spiritual coping plays a significant role in explaining how inner thoughts, emotions, and desires relate to individuals' perceived spiritual balance.

Participants' open-ended responses also yielded valuable insights. Many respondents described spiritual struggle, doubt, and inner unrest as recognizable and integral aspects of their religious lives. At the same time, participants emphasized that faith, tawakkul, dhikr, and a close relationship with Allah serve as important sources of inner peace and psychological stability. Several respondents additionally expressed a need for Islamic chaplaincy services and religiously sensitive psychological support within the Dutch context.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's psycho-spiritual model offers a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the mental, emotional, and spiritual processes of Dutch Muslims. The newly developed measurement scales provide an initial scientific foundation for the further development of Islamic-oriented diagnostic instruments, spiritual care, and therapeutic interventions within mental healthcare.