THE THOUGHTS OF SAHL AL-TUSTARI IN EXTERNALLY DEVELOPING THE SOUL OF DRUG ADDICTS

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ABSTRACT
The issue of mental illness is increasingly receiving global attention, particularly with the rise of cases involving emotional disturbances, life stress, and mental instability. This spiritual crisis is often associated with various factors such as social pressures, economic problems, and the lack of moral and spiritual support. In Malaysia, the rising statistics of depression and severe anxiety, which contribute to drug addiction, are becoming more alarming, affecting individuals and society as a whole. The increase in cases involving relapse or repeated addiction is rising by nearly 40 to 50 percent each year. In this context, the study aims to examine the relationship between the teachings of Sahl al-Tustari, a prominent Sufi figure, and the practices of former drug addicts who have fully recovered and have not experienced relapse for more than 20 years. The methodology of this study involves content analysis and interviews with former drug addicts who have successfully maintained long-term recovery. The study found that 8 of advices from Sahl al-Tustari align with the practices of former drug addicts in combating addiction, which are: (i) obedience to Allah's commands, (ii) seclusion, (iii) seeking forgiveness, (iv) prayer, (v) dhikr (remembrance of Allah), (vi) choosing good companions, (vii) seeking knowledge and (viii) engaging with the Quran. These findings suggest that these spiritual practices not only aid in the recovery process but can also serve as a basis for developing drug addiction recovery modules. The study recommends integrating a psychospiritual approach based on Sahl al-Tustari's advices into drug addiction recovery efforts to enhance the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation programs.

Keywords: Sahl al-Tustari, Sufi Scholar, Rehabilitation, Soul Development, and Drug Addiction.

INTRODUCTION
Soul development plays a crucial role in an individual well-being and societal progress. It encompasses spiritual and mental aspects that help individuals achieve balance and harmony in life. The importance of soul development cannot be underestimated, as it is closely linked to mental health, quality of life, and an individual's ability to face life's challenges.

At the individual level, the development of soul provides a strong basis in managing stress, conflict, and personal issues. It helps individuals build mental and emotional resilience, which is essential for long-term well-being. Individuals with strong soul development tend to have a more positive outlook on life, are better equipped to overcome difficulties, and are more competitive in achieving their personal goals (King & Boyatzis, 2015).

The development of soul is a key to social harmony and stability for the society. It contributes to the reduction of social problems such as drug addiction, violence, and mental instability that can damage social structures. By promoting positive spiritual and mental values, society can foster a healthier and more productive environment (Mansor, 2019).
Additionally, in the context of education and rehabilitation, soul development plays a vital role in helping individuals recover from various issues, including addiction and mental disorders. Rehabilitation programs that emphasize spiritual and soul development aspects are often more effective in helping individuals address their problems and achieve full recovery.

Overall, soul development is fundamental to individual well-being and societal progress. It ensures that individuals are not only physically healthy but also mentally and spiritually strong, preparing them to face life's challenges more effectively.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A nation will naturally develop by having a generation that is physically and mentally healthy. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the country's leadership to ensure the balance of its generations to maintain harmony and the well-being of its people (Ali et al., 2009). However, the issue of drug abuse is highly concerning. Every year, the Royal Malaysia Police faces more than 100,000 cases of drug misuse and addiction. Crimes related to drug abuse also increase annually. Even more worse, 98 percent of those involved in drug addiction are of Malay ethnicity (Jasni et al., 2018). If this problem is not curbed, its effects will hinder progress, destroy peace, and weaken the nation’s economy.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the advice of Sahl al-Tustari in the development of the soul and to examine its relationship with the practices of former drug addicts. It is hoped that this study will provide valuable input to module and curriculum developers involved in drug addiction rehabilitation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of the soul or spirituality has been extensively studied. Some researchers have discussed the development of the soul according to Islam or the Quran and Hadith, as well as the views of specific scholars such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Ibn Bajah, and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. Among the researchers are Mahadzir et al., (2019), Hamzah et al., (2010), Sulaiman et al., (2013), Othman et al., (2017), and Mohd Manawi, (2018).

There are also researchers who have discussed the management and education of emotions or mental health as essential elements in teaching. Some of these researchers include Makmudi et al., (2018), Diana, (2018), and Omar & Abdullah, (2018). Among the findings presented in the studies is that approaches used to treat the soul, which is affected by mental illness, include istighathah (seeking help from God), zikir (remembrance of God), istighfar (asking for forgiveness), supplication, prayer, reading the Quran, and attending religious gatherings.

More interestingly, there are also studies that discuss human capital development and problem-solving. Among the issues discussed are moral decay, stress, mental health, neglect of affection, and other criminal offenses such as drug abuse and the use of prohibited substances. Some of the researchers include Norfadilah & Stapa, (2014), Masroom et al., (2013), Yuwono, (2010), Haryati Shafii, (2009), and Hamat & Che Nordin, (2012).

However, specific studies related to soul development according to Quranic commentators have not been widely explored. As we know, Quranic commentators are scholars closest to the Quran. Therefore, studies on soul development through the thoughts of these commentators represent a gap in the research on this subject.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method, which involves procedures that generate descriptive data (Rukin, 2019). Since the researcher aims to explore the relationship between the 8 advices from Sahl al-Tustari and the practices of former drug addicts, a qualitative approach is used to identify the common meanings of concepts or phenomena experienced by a group of individuals. The researcher also uses an inductive approach, as the study involves the collection and interpretation of information related to factors of involvement, even with limited knowledge sources for making generalizations and conclusions. For sampling, the researcher employs purposive sampling to collect data. Information can be obtained through interviews. Drug addiction is a negative labell and is often associated with deception, theft, robbery, and various other crimes, whether minor or major, in all places and countries (Awang Drahman et al., 2017). This labell makes them less trusted and subject to prejudice from society. Therefore, statements from them must be obtained from former addicts who meet the criteria set by authoritative bodies. Among the criteria established for this study are being Muslim and having been relapse-free for 20 years or more. The data obtained will be analyzed thematically using NVivo software as a tool to facilitate the analysis process. Nine (9) participants were selected, given the strict criteria established.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This study selected 9 participants who met the established criteria. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants' information.

Participants	Age	Duration of Recovery	State
1	54	22	Terengganu
2	61	21	Pahang
3	62	2	Kuala Lumpur
4	61	25	Pulau Pinang
5	53	20	Perak
6	63	22	Pahang
7	68	35	Melaka
8	72	32	Pahang
9	63	20	Pahang

Table 1: Background of Study Participants

The study participants consist of operators of private rehabilitation centers and chairpersons of drug rehabilitation associations from across the country. All participants are male, aged over 50 years, and have been free from addiction for more than 20 years.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings analyzed by the researcher from the book *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim* by Sahl al-Tustari, there are eight advices that help an individual in externally developing a fallen soul. These eight pieces of advice are (i) Obedience, (ii) Isolation (Khalwah), (iii) Asking Forgiveness, (iv) Prayer, (v) Remembrance (Dhikr), (vi) Choosing Companions, (vii) Seeking Knowledge, and (viii) Engaging with the Quran. These practices can be pursued according to the individual's ability who is undergoing trials.

The researcher will further test all of Sahl al-Tustari’s advice through interviews with study participants. The researcher found that all participants were not involved in any self-rehabilitation modules; instead, they largely managed their own changes. This is because most of them are over 50 years old and did not have the opportunity to engage with the rehabilitation modules run by AADK or the latest modules available in rehabilitation centers at that time. All efforts were their own to ensure they remained positive and safe from relapse.

This finding is very important and central to the study, as it relates to the practices followed by former addicts, thus addressing the objectives of the research.

1. Obedience

All nine study participants reported feeling strengthened by fulfilling the obligatory duties required of Muslims. Each participant mentioned that they performed the obligatory acts of worship to Allah SWT after they resolved to quit using drugs.

> *"It's about praying. I used to neglect my prayers and even missed fasting. Honestly, it's hard to perform all five daily prayers completely. It still takes time to complete all five prayers now. However, even though it's difficult and sometimes late, I still pray. If I miss a prayer, I will make it up later. I never skip this, no matter what." (P-1)*
> *"For me, it's just about the five daily prayers. Prayer is important. I also fast, Alhamdulillah." (P-2)*
> *"My practice is to be honest about stopping. Religion helps. I don't neglect the obligatory acts. Alhamdulillah, Allah gives me the strength to maintain them." (P-3)*
> *"Prayer is essential; it has to be performed at each time. I attend religious lectures daily. However, I learned a lot about religious knowledge at Persada—memorized Surah Yassin, performed Qiyamulail, and learned how to call the Azan, among other things." (P-4)*
> *"I have to change, so I always remind myself. No matter how bad I am, I must not neglect my prayers. Even if I'm late, I will still pray. If I can't make it in time, I will make it up later. Fasting is the same. I used to miss many fasts, only fasting on the first and last days. Now, I fast as much as I can. I also give Zakat and charity according to my ability." (P-5)*
> *"People say that religion is the foundation. If it's religion, then it's about practice. It's true that from my teenage years until I was involved, I neglected my prayers, sometimes even missing Eid prayers and Friday prayers. Only when I had drugs did I attend prayers; otherwise, I wouldn't go. The enthusiasm wasn't there. Eid was just another day, but when I had drugs, I'd look for traditional Malay clothes. When trying to stop, the foundation was built on religion. One of the key practices is to maintain prayers. Although sometimes it was irregular initially, at least if I missed, was late, or realized late, I felt guilty. So, till now, that's what I stick to." (P-6)*
> *"When dealing with me, I don't say that going to pray will make you recover, but it is one of the components you need to maintain." (P-7)*
> *"We may not study much, but it's important to listen to religious lectures, especially during Maghrib and Isha. Even if we don't study, we listen, and we can ask close friends for guidance." (P-8)*
> *"What I see is that we need to return to religion, specifically prayer. That's the number one priority; as Muslims, we pray and ask for prayers. The previous non-prayers are what led to drug use." (P-9)*

2. Khalwah.

Khalwah means seclusion from the external world. Khalwah is one of the initial steps to recognizing Allah and avoiding things that might trigger a desire to return to drug use.

> *"Stay away, don't meet friends you know; if you do, you'll definitely feel tempted to relapse. Also, seclusion helps us remember our sins and feel a genuine desire to repent. When we're not interacting with others, we can complain to Allah, seek change, and ask for strength from Allah. Ask for Allah's help, and inshaAllah, Allah will assist us." (P-1)*
> *"When we lack strength, don't seek it from others; it won't work. Find strength by being alone and reflecting on yourself. InshaAllah, this is better than meeting people who give advice but hurt your feelings." (P-3)*
> *"You know, during that time, the effects of the HIV medication made me feel agitated. I needed to be alone; I didn't want to see anyone. I had to be alone to find peace. Even my wife, I didn't let her into the room. I felt sorry for her, but I knew she understood. Sometimes, I would feel the urge to relapse because I couldn't endure it, but I strengthened myself. I stayed alone and thought about not wanting to go back to how I was before. Alhamdulillah, I recovered from HIV after that." (P-5)*
> *"For me, it's important to take time, reflect on what you want. This is something you can't do in front of others; you need time and to think, as religion advises, seclusion, right?" (P-7)*
> *"I always distance myself from others. When I don't see people, I feel calmer and can focus on worship and self-improvement." (P-8)*

3. Asking Forgiveness

Asking forgiveness is an act or expression of feelings that involves vocalizing sadness, suffering, or distress with a soft voice, often sounding like a moan or cry. It is a way of expressing pain, hardship, or sorrow audibly.

> *"Just sit quietly, don't meet with friends that you know. If you meet them, you'll definitely feel the urge to relapse. Additionally, being alone helps us remember our past sins, and during that time, we genuinely feel the need for repentance. When we're not mingling with others, we can turn to Allah for help, seeking strength from Him. Ask Allah for assistance, and insha'Allah, Allah will help us." (P-1)*
> *"Who else can listen to our complaints if not Allah? Complaining to people sometimes doesn't feel relieving because we hold back, not sharing everything with them. But with Allah, we know that He understands all our weaknesses." (P-2)*

"I once cried in front of my wife when I was feeling weak, but it was a man's cry, to make her understand. Alhamdulillah, my wife knows me very well." (P-6)
"In religion, they call it khalwat. During this time, you speak to Allah, asking for guidance and change. Speaking to Allah is a good thing." (P-7)
"Without the right intention, I don't think it would work. When we act for the sake of Allah, all our focus is on Him. When we have problems, we don't talk to people; we confide in Allah. People might not fully believe in us, but Allah does." (P-8)

4. Prayer

Prayer is the act of communicating with Allah with the intention of seeking help, protection, guidance, or expressing gratitude.

"We want to change, but we need strength from Allah. Ask Allah for help, and inshaAllah, Allah will assist us." (P-1)
"Next, changing will always involve challenges. You must not give up; keep trying. It's normal to be strong today and weak tomorrow. Keep working at it until it happens. Allah will help. Ask Allah regularly." (P-4)
"I'm not very pious or learned, but I pray a lot asking Allah for strength. I didn't used to have faith in Allah, but after the Tabligh brother guided me, I started to be sincere." (P-5)
"I am very grateful because that's why I have the strength to keep enduring until now. I ask my friends to pray for me to remain steadfast, and I ask you to pray as well, that I remain free from these substances until death." (P-6)
"Just pray; if you have a problem, always make prayer your number one priority because we know we are weak." (P-8)
"Even if they say they have drugs, the temptation is still there, but it's Allah's will and help that guides us. Allah assists through prayer and supplication. We pray, perform our prayers, and then do our work. We simply rely on Allah, do our work well, help others, and assist those with problems as much as we can." (P-9)

5. Remembrance (Dhikr)

Remembrance (Dhikr) involves reciting the names of Allah, praising and glorifying Him, and reflecting on His attributes and qualities. Dhikr can be practiced in various situations, whether alone or in a group.

> *"Allah is present when we intend to change. Always remember Allah. Surely, Allah will provide a way if you are lost." (P-2)*
> *"Alhamdulillah, Allah gives strength to maintain it. I do some tasbih. I sometimes drop the beads, but I do it as much as I can." (P-3)*
> *"To stay strong, remember Allah always. Sometimes when the urge comes, I do istighfar repeatedly. Alhamdulillah, Allah continues to help me until now." (P-5)*
> *"After Fajr, I always do some tasbih to remind myself that we are on this earth because of Allah, then read two pages of the Quran every morning, whether alone or with others." (P-8)*
> *"Remember Allah always. Allah loves those who remember Him. When we remember Him, we are less likely to commit sins again." (P-9)*

6. Choosing Companions

Choosing companions wisely is an effective way to soothe the soul, as good friends can provide support, understanding, and trust throughout our journey in life.

> *"Alhamdulillah, Allah gives strength to maintain it. I do some tasbih. I sometimes drop the beads, but I do it as much as I can. It's very important to have a recovery partner who understands, whether it's a spouse, children, siblings, or close friends if you are not married. My wife and children have sacrificed so much for me. They don't force me if I don't want to, and they cover for me, keeping me away from friends or relatives with negative influences. Alhamdulillah." (P-1)*
> *"What really helps is our communication. We need support from friends and support groups. They will talk and help calm us down. Sometimes when I sit alone, I feel nostalgic. So, it's important to find friends who understand and talk things through." (P-2)*
> *"My strength comes from meeting peers who are also in recovery. It's important to have a support group. Nowadays, it's easier with cell phones to find support." (P-3)*
> *"In the past, the sound of friends' motorcycles would be a major trigger for me. I had to avoid those friends. I am grateful for staying with Pengasih for a long time. At Pengasih, there is a positive committee that understands. So, when I feel weak, being in a positive environment helps me regain my strength." (P-6)*
> *"Friends are crucial; to stay strong, you need supportive friends. Even after stabilizing, it's essential to stay away from previous*

environments. Here, we have many lecturers, so friends are nearby. It means we have companions, even if they are not very close, who provide support and guidance. I occasionally ask them for advice." (P-8)

"Yes, back in the year 2000, I would see people relapsing, but some of them, like Wan and Zaidi, wanted to start an association. I had already stopped smoking by then, after being released from prison. I was free because I followed the TC program in prison, where smoking was not allowed. Back then, they smoked, but now they've all stopped. Cigarettes are available for sale, which makes it difficult. Even though it's not wrong, nicotine addiction is still a challenge." (P-9)

7. Gaining Knowledge

Drug addicts who wish to repent can also protect themselves from committing sins by becoming members of knowledge circles or scholarly gatherings.

"Additionally, you need to go to the mosque and attend classes. I'm not very diligent about studying, but when I sit and learn, it keeps me occupied and strengthens me. I don't constantly think about those things, even though sometimes the thoughts still come. I used to be like that, but I knew I needed to seek Allah, which is why I went to the mosque. However, many mosques have members who seem to consider themselves guaranteed to be in paradise, which is why mosques often face criticism." (P-3)

"I started going to the state mosque when I was okay. I wore a tracksuit instead of traditional attire because I felt embarrassed, but I went every day. I attended prayers and listened to legal lectures they taught. For heavier topics, I didn't stay; I couldn't handle them. Even though we may not achieve much, at least we gain knowledge. I continued my studies and even pursued a master's degree through special intake, based on experience and certificates, with a lot of support." (P-4)

"I continued my education, took an English certificate, and worked to help other addicts so I would stay busy and think less about the substances." (P-5)

"At my age now, I need to find other things and listen to beneficial content. I listen to lectures on YouTube, but I have to be selective because not everything is appropriate. I'm cautious and only listen to useful content, such as preparation for death, but I skip anything that criticizes others or is too extreme." (P-6)

"Also, it's important to stay close to the mosque. Even if we don't learn a lot, attending religious lectures, especially at Maghrib and Isha prayers, is important. Even if we don't learn extensively, we listen and have close friends to ask questions." (P-8)

8. Engaging with Al-Quran

The Quran is indeed the word of Allah SWT that brings tranquility to its holders, readers, and those who reflect upon it.

> *"But what I gained more from religious knowledge was at Persada, where I memorized Surah Yasin, practiced qiyamullail, and learned to recite the adhan, among many other things. There, I became closer to my faith." (P-4)*
> *"I started keeping myself busy with Quran studies. I didn't know anything before. When I learned the Quran and understood a bit of its meanings, it felt different. I began enjoying being closer to my religion." (P-5)*
> *"I wondered how to change, so I took the initiative to read and learn, even joining tafsir classes. Just a little, not to become an expert but to understand better. To this day, I'm grateful and can read the Quran, understand some meanings, and if I get stuck, I review videos of people reciting and teaching. I managed to complete a recitation during Ramadan. I was particularly moved when I heard my second daughter reciting. Sometimes my family would say, 'Let's read Yasin together,' and I felt left behind while others were quick. That's when I realized I needed to catch up, and I've been working on it ever since." (P-6)*
> *"I became more serious about changing when I sought out a Quran teacher." (P-7)*
> *"After Fajr, I make sure to recite a few tasbih to remind myself of our existence on this earth and then read two pages of the Quran every morning. If I can't do it with others, I do it alone." (P-8)*

CONCLUSION

The application of soul-development principles based on the advice of Sahl al-Tustari from his work Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim has proven to hold great potential in assisting drug addicts in Malaysia. His counsel, which emphasizes 13 key aspects, provides profound guidance for the rehabilitation process. Among these aspects are constant remembrance of Allah (dhikr), self-purification, and the cultivation of inner spiritual awareness, which aim to cleanse the heart and soul of worldly attachments and harmful desires. Sahl al-Tustari's teachings highlight the importance of surrendering oneself to divine will, seeking forgiveness (istighfar), and maintaining a disciplined lifestyle through acts of worship such as prayer and reflection on the Quran. These spiritual exercises not only help in strengthening the addicts' resolve to break free from their dependencies but also assist them in developing resilience and a deeper connection to their faith. By internalizing these practices, drug addicts can gradually transform their outward behaviors, leading to long-term recovery and the rebuilding of their lives with a stronger sense of purpose and moral grounding. The holistic approach presented by Sahl al-Tustari is therefore highly relevant

and offers a complementary path alongside conventional rehabilitation methods, focusing on both spiritual and mental healing.

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