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ADDICTION AMONG ADOLESCENT AND YOUNG ADULT:  
THE INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC PRACTICES**Afidatul Hanim Abdul Razak<sup>1</sup>, Tengku Mohd Saifuddin Tengku Kamarulbahri<sup>2\*</sup><sup>1</sup> Department of Psychiatry, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia  
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**DOI:** 10.35631/IJEPC.955013This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

Internet addiction is increasingly recognized as a significant mental health concern, and is now included in DSM-5 TR as internet gaming disorder. Cybersexual addiction, a subtype of internet addiction, presents unique treatment challenges due to the pervasive need for online activities. This paper examines the incorporation of Islamic principles in the treatment of internet addiction among Muslim patients. The aim is to explore culturally sensitive approaches that align with Islamic practices to effectively address internet addiction. To highlight the specific challenges and benefits of integrating Islamic principles in managing internet addiction, a review of various databases was conducted. Key search terms included "internet addiction," "Islamic principles," "religious therapy," and "psychospiritual treatment." A detailed case vignette was included to demonstrate the practical application of integrating Islamic principles in treatment, highlighting the psychospiritual aspects and their impact on patients' emotional well-being. This paper discusses the principles of treatment, patient suitability, therapist preparedness, and potential limitations. Integrating religious principles as part of a psychospiritual approach shows promise in behaviour therapy for Muslim individuals suffering from internet addiction.

**Keywords:**

Internet Addiction, Psychospiritual, Islamic Principles, Islamic Integrated Therapy, Cybersexual Addiction

## Introduction

Historically, addiction was narrowly defined, primarily focusing on the compulsive consumption of substances like opium, characterized by their harmfulness and associated withdrawal symptoms. However, this terminology was not solely confined to drug usage. Some studies reported addiction to activities such as compulsive gambling, exercise, and television viewing, broadening the traditional understanding of addiction beyond substance use alone (Alexander & Schweighofer, 1988). Such compulsive activities resembled addiction to drugs as it consumed a person's entire time of a person and resulted in the tragic consequences. Over the span of more than two decades, Internet addiction has emerged as a prominent subject of inquiry within academic discourse. Despite the proliferation of research endeavours, the reported prevalence rates of Internet addiction remain subject to the influence of diverse conceptual frameworks. Notably, Young (1996) laid the groundwork for conceptualizing Internet addiction as a generalized impulse control disorder, anchoring its core psychopathology in the notion of impaired control (Pan, Chiu, & Lin, 2020).

The proliferation of the internet as an indispensable facet of contemporary life has hastened an alarming rise in internet addiction, particularly notable in regions like Korea, where it has burgeoned into a pressing public health concern necessitating heightened awareness and treatment initiatives (Cash, D Rae, H Steel, & Winkler, 2012). In South Korea, a notable 2.1% of children aged between 6 and 19 years old are afflicted by internet addiction. The gravity of this issue is further underscored by reports of fatalities directly attributed to internet addiction within the country, eliciting significant concern and prompting heightened vigilance regarding its deleterious consequences (Block, 2008). The pervasiveness of internet addiction extends beyond regional boundaries, encompassing nations worldwide, including Malaysia. In Malaysia, alarming statistics reveal that 28.6% of teenagers grapple with internet addiction, indicating the widespread nature of this phenomenon and emphasizing the imperative for comprehensive interventions to mitigate its adverse effects (Hashim, Kaur, & Ng, 2016).

Addiction to activities can be as detrimental as substance addiction, as both entail a pattern of compulsive behaviour characterized by the pursuit of pleasure, loss of control, escalating engagement, and impairment in social or occupational functioning. Notably, internet addiction has garnered significant recognition in the 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5), where it is delineated as a distinct disorder meriting diagnostic consideration (Luo et al., 2022). Internet addiction manifests across three primary categories: gaming, sexual preoccupation, and excessive engagement with email or text messaging platforms (Block, 2008).

In scrutinizing internet addiction, parallels can indeed be drawn with other forms of behavioural addiction, including exercise addiction. Both phenomena share commonalities in terms of their compulsive nature and the adverse effects they can have on an individual's life. Freimuth et al. (2011) provide insight into this phenomenon by illustrating the case of Sally. Initially, Sally's engagement in exercise brings about feelings of enjoyment and relaxation. However, as her exercise routine intensifies, the duration of her sessions increases, and she persists in exercising despite experiencing physical injuries, such as a twisted ankle. Furthermore, her commitment to exercise begins to erode her interpersonal relationships, notably causing strain with her boyfriend. This case underscores the potential for exercise to transition from a healthy pursuit to a compulsive behaviour with detrimental consequences, mirroring the diagnostic criteria for addiction outlined in the DSM-5 (Freimuth, Moniz, & Kim,

2011). Some identified several causes of internet addiction such as the need to be online to do the task, i.e. homework, getting job, and getting information. The motive to use the internet for checking e mail and banking will lead to impulsively go to gaming or other pleasurable activities on line(Kapahi, Ling, Ramadass, & Abdullah, 2013).

This paper aims to explore the intersection of internet addiction and the integration of Islamic principles in the treatment of Muslim patients. While a general framework for managing addiction exists, the adaptation of social and religious principles to align with the local context holds promise for enhancing patient outcomes. Drawing upon two case studies involving female patients grappling with internet addiction, this discussion seeks to elucidate the potential efficacy of integrating religious perspectives in the therapeutic approach.

### Methodology

To highlight the specific challenges and benefits of integrating Islamic principles in managing internet addiction, a comprehensive review of various databases was conducted. The review primarily gathered data from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and PubMed. Key search terms included "internet addiction," "Islamic principles," "religious therapy," and "psychospiritual treatment." The literature was thoroughly examined, with findings categorized based on the impact of religious interventions, emotional and psychological outcomes, and practical implementation strategies.

The analysis encompassed studies that specifically addressed the use of Islamic values and practices (such as redho (acceptance)) as methods to strengthen patients emotionally. It also explored challenges such as maintaining motivation, managing relapses, restarting the therapeutic cycle, and handling intensive treatment schedules. The necessity for patients to have a religious background to fully benefit from these interventions was considered, along with the potential need for combining pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy in severe cases.

A detailed case vignette was included to demonstrate the practical application of integrating Islamic principles in treatment, highlighting the psychospiritual aspects and their impact on patients' emotional well-being. This review underscores the importance of a holistic approach to internet addiction, incorporating both spiritual and psychological dimensions, supported by relevant literature for each method.

### Results

In recent years, technological advancements have significantly impacted people's quality of life, particularly through the evolution of social media, which has facilitated communication and interaction. Nevertheless, concerns have arisen over the excessive use of social media and its adverse effects, as evidence suggests that such usage shares indicators of behavioural addiction(Harianti, Huwaida, Adriwiguna, & Qudsyi, 2022). Internet addiction is conceptualized as an impulse-control disorder, significantly disrupting daily life functions, family relationships, and emotional stability(Duong, Liaw, & Augustin, 2020). Between April 2013 and April 2018, generalized internet addiction and online gaming addiction emerged as the most prevalent internet addiction issues in the European Union, both commonly associated with specific comorbid disorders(Lopez-Fernandez & Kuss, 2020).

Recent studies suggest that up to one-quarter of the general population may be affected by at least one subtype of digital addiction. The prevalence of digital addiction subtypes varies

significantly across different regions, with notable geographical disparities. Low and lower-middle-income countries bear a higher burden of digital addiction compared to their higher-income counterparts. Males exhibit a higher prevalence of internet and gaming addictions than females. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the increasing trend of digital addiction, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and policies to address this growing issue (Meng et al., 2022). Research has shown that individuals with problematic internet use are typically educated adolescents, predominantly young males, often presenting with comorbid disorders. The most severe cases frequently involve gaming and gambling disorders (Lopez-Fernandez & Kuss, 2020).

The digitalization of contemporary society has resulted in a moderate to high level of social network addiction among young adults. While not reaching pathological levels, this addiction is still excessive for a typically developing population (Lozano-Blasco, Robres, & Sánchez, 2022). The evolution of technology has facilitated the creation of sophisticated microprocessors capable of producing high-quality graphics for computer gaming. While initially designed for entertainment, certain elements within games, combined with environmental factors, have contributed to the development of digital addiction, particularly towards computer games such as massively multiplayer online games (Aziz, Nordin, Abdulkadir, & Salih, 2021). Other factors contributing to gadget addiction are the influence of social media, easy internet access, and parental neglect of children (Kahiruldin, Embong, & Anas, 2023). This behaviour also appears to be influenced by factors such as age, gender, and geographic location (Lozano-Blasco et al., 2022). Adolescents, in particular, are susceptible to developing addictive behaviours, with the Internet being a significant area of concern (Marin, Nuñez, & de Almeida, 2021). Evidence indicates that distinct neurophysiological features are associated with Gaming Disorder and Internet Addiction. While both conditions exhibit some neurophysiological similarities to substance use disorders, specific patterns differentiate them (Burleigh, Griffiths, Sumich, Wang, & Kuss, 2020).

## Discussion

Internet addiction has been extensively studied globally and is characterized by attributes that can undesirably impact social, and functional domains (Marin et al., 2021). It represents one of the most significant risks to contemporary and future society, particularly for the younger population, who are continually engaged with technological devices. This constant interaction can lead to severe consequences, including serious behavioural disorders and psychological illnesses (Moreno-Guerrero, Gómez-García, López-Belmonte, & Rodríguez-Jiménez, 2020). The excessive engagement in gaming activities among adolescents has been associated with numerous negative consequences, which lead to various physical health issues, including obesity, back pain, neck pain, orthopedic and muscle joint problems, eyesight deterioration, hearing impairment, and physical inactivity (Aziz et al., 2021). This increase could lead to greater individualism, reduced sociability, and altered cultural practices (Lozano-Blasco et al., 2022).

Gadgets are crucial for those working or studying from home, ensuring continuous two-way communication. However, excessive gadget use can negatively impact health and emotions (Kahiruldin et al., 2023). The internet, much like a double-edged sword, offers numerous benefits but can also have undesirable impacts. In the context of education, internet use can enhance student academic achievement. Yet, excessive use can lead to internet

addiction, which may diminish academic performance, impair psycho-social abilities, and cause psycho-emotional issues(Ma'ruf & Muafatin, 2022).

Addressing internet addiction is challenging and time-consuming, as it requires the individual to recognize their problematic behaviour and develop the will to change(Ma'ruf & Muafatin, 2022). Psychological interventions have focused on several key areas: reducing addiction-related impulsivity and cravings, addressing cognitive maladjustments, and alleviating family-related issues. These strategies have been explored to effectively manage and mitigate the impacts of internet addiction(Xu et al., 2021). Psychoeducation serves as a crucial context for promoting and training the appropriate use of internet(Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020). It is imperative to continue promoting healthy living habits concerning digital health, particularly among young people. Encouraging responsible digital practices is essential to fostering a healthy society and mitigating the risks associated with the digital world(Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020).

Addressing the challenges of internet and digital addiction necessitates the implementation of several policy options. These include the dissemination of applied research on responsible internet use, promoting education on offline and online health behaviours among young populations, and providing support for communities and significant others of problematic internet users. By adopting these measures, policymakers can work towards mitigating the negative impacts of internet addiction, promoting healthier digital habits, and supporting the well-being of individuals and communities(Lopez-Fernandez & Kuss, 2020)

### ***Religiosity and Spirituality in Internet-Related Addictions***

Religiosity plays a protective role against internet-related addictions(Dossi, Buja, & Montecchio, 2022). Throughout history, religious beliefs and practices have shaped and informed societal perceptions of addiction. This influence persists to the present day, with religion and spirituality often seen as factors that influence attitudes towards addiction and its treatment. Notably, religious and spiritual elements are integrated into well-known treatment approaches like Alcoholics Anonymous. While research has extensively explored the relationship between addiction, spirituality, and vulnerability to addiction, there has been relatively less emphasis on how religion specifically affects attitudes towards addiction on a broader scale(Weinandy & Grubbs, 2021).

Generally, Islam permits the use of beneficial technology for the pursuit of knowledge, provided it does not contravene Islamic laws. Though, excessive use of technology, which can lead to health risks, is discouraged(Jamil, Anas, Aziz, & Ahmat, 2022). From an Islamic perspective, the design of social media technologies (instrumental value) should not compromise healthy family relationships (intrinsic value). Similarly, while values such as efficiency, productivity, responsiveness, and faster access in social media are important, they are secondary to fundamental values like worship, contemplation, moral excellence, charity, compassion, and brotherhood(Zubair & Raquib, 2020).

Islamic scholars view this as a call to raise awareness and help individuals manage the negative effects of technology. They advocate for moderation, balance, and avoidance of excess(Masya, Setiawan, Hamid, Fajriani, & Dewantari, 2020). Islamic scholars propose enhancing spiritual fulfillment as one of solutions to address gadget addiction(Kahiruldin et al., 2023). Spiritual interventions not only combat social media addiction but also enhance spirituality and



contribute to self-actualization, reinforcing the potential of an Islamic approach in addressing such issues(Harianti et al., 2022). Islamic religious coping can directly influence self-control, and self-control can indirectly impact problematic internet use(Roudhotina & Uyun, 2022). Various methods have been proposed to address social media addiction, including the concept of muraqabah (Islamic mindfulness or self-monitoring) as a spiritual intervention(Harianti et al., 2022).

### ***Case Vignette***

Miss A and Miss B, both devout Muslim university students, sought psychiatric intervention due to depressive symptoms, including sadness, low mood, sleep disturbances, and academic difficulties. Their condition deteriorated as their academic performance declined, and their compulsive internet surfing, primarily focused on sexual content, further exacerbated their condition. This behaviour, initiated during adolescence, provided a sense of pleasure but progressively consumed their time and thoughts, leading to distress, shame, and guilt. Despite struggling with these feelings, they coped differently; Miss A continued performing salah (prayer), while Miss B began neglecting it, feeling unworthy of divine forgiveness.

Upon diagnosis of Major Depressive Disorder comorbid with internet addiction, a biopsychosocial approach was adopted, integrating pharmacotherapy with Islamic-oriented supportive therapy and behavioural interventions rooted in Islamic principles. Both were prescribed Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), namely fluoxetine for Miss A and sertraline for Miss B, alongside psychosocial and spiritual support tailored to their religious beliefs. Miss A responded positively to treatment, exhibiting improvement in symptoms and resuming prayer and academic pursuits. In contrast, Miss B's progress was slower, but she eventually reengaged with prayer and regained focus on her studies.

Miss A and Miss B meet the criteria for diagnosing addiction as outlined in the DSM-5. They exhibit the four principal indicators: excessive use, withdrawal symptoms upon cessation, tolerance evidenced by escalating engagement to achieve pleasure, and negative consequences, notably poor academic performance(Block, 2008).

This case underscores the efficacy of integrating Islamic values into psychotherapy for Muslim patients grappling with internet addiction and depression. By addressing the spiritual dimension of their distress and employing behaviour therapy aligned with their religious beliefs, clinicians can foster meaningful therapeutic engagement and facilitate recovery within a culturally sensitive framework.

### ***Psychospiritual and Religious Integration in Therapy***

Integrating psychospiritual and religious aspects in psychotherapy, including religious coping, has shown positive outcomes in several studies(Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005). Religious coping, which involves faith in God, love from God, and religious rituals, helps manage stress and yields positive results(Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Pargament, 2001). For instance, when patients like Miss A and B expressed embarrassment, guilt, and sinful thoughts for not being good Muslims, Islamic teachings were incorporated into therapy. This involved concepts such as Tauheed and Fiqh based on the Quran, Hadith, and the behaviour of the Prophet's companions. Therapists normalize these feelings by reminding patients that humans are prone to sin but can always repent. For reassurance, therapists might say, "Feeling worried and anxious is normal. Allah definitely forgives us, as He mentions in the Quran."

The integration of Islamic principles into Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has been documented, with Hamdan A. (2008) describing the Islamic approach to cognitive restructuring (Hamdan, 2008). CBT is the primary treatment for internet addiction, often supplemented with a systemic approach, particularly for adolescents (Lopez-Fernandez & Kuss, 2020). CBT is based on the principle that thoughts (cognitions) determine feelings and behaviour. Patients are taught to monitor thoughts that trigger addictive emotions and learn coping mechanisms. Initially, the focus is on behaviours and situations that maintain the addictive behaviour. Later, patients identify faulty thinking and learn to distract, challenge, and change these thoughts to more positive ones. As abstinence from the internet is impractical, a controlled behavioural model is adopted (Young, 2007). Success depends on patient motivation, encouraged through self-reflection (muhasabah) and the willingness to change. This is supported by the Quranic verse, "Verily, Allah will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves" (al-Ra'd 13:11). When patients experience cognitive distortions of uselessness and hopelessness, verses such as "So verily, with the hardship, there is ease (relief); verily, with the hardship, there is ease" (Qur'an, 94:5–6) are used for restructuring. Patients are also encouraged to fast to reduce their urges and desires (Hamdan, 2008).

Besides CBT, there is a significant gap in the research on integrating mindfulness with Islamic values, despite the increasing evidence supporting the benefits of mindfulness-based interventions. For the last decade, the use of mindfulness-based intervention for a variety of psychological, somatic, and interpersonal problems has increased dramatically (Mirdal, 2012). Physically, a study of how the two facets of mindfulness impact health behaviors found that practicing mindfulness can enhance or increase multiple behaviors related to health, like getting regular health check-ups, being physically active, using seat belts, and avoiding nicotine and alcohol (Jacobs, Wollny, Sim, & Horsch, 2016). It can also improve cardiovascular health through a lower incidence of smoking, more physical activity, and a healthier body mass index (Loucks, Britton, Howe, Eaton, & Buka, 2015). Mindfulness has been positively linked with lower blood pressure, especially when the practitioner is skilled in nonjudgment and nonreactivity (Tomfohr, Pung, Mills, & Edwards, 2015). Lastly, researchers found that mindfulness helped participants lose weight, improve their eating behaviors and attitudes, and decrease depression and anxiety (Rogers, Ferrari, Mosely, Lang, & Brennan, 2017).

Further research is warranted to explore the impact of incorporating additional religious principles, such as *redho* (acceptance), and ritualistic behaviours aimed at relaxation, in strengthening patients emotionally. Preliminary observations suggest that encouraging patients to read one or two pages of the Quran daily could serve as an effective distraction from internet usage. However, challenges remain in maintaining patient motivation, managing relapses, restarting the therapeutic cycle, and handling the demands of an intensive treatment schedule. The effectiveness of this approach likely hinges on patients having a religious background, making it crucial to assess its generalizability across diverse populations. In severe cases, integrating pharmacotherapy with psychotherapy may be necessary. Therefore, therapists should be equipped to address the psychospiritual dimensions of treatment. Comprehensive studies are needed to evaluate the efficacy and practicality of these interventions in clinical settings.

## Conclusion

Internet addiction is a public health problem. It requires a holistic approach with multidisciplinary involvement. The patient, the therapist and the social environment. Integrating the Islamic approach into the treatment has a promising outcome on this issue. The aim should be come up with scientific guidelines and research to suit local Muslim needs. Internet addiction, including its subtypes like cybersexual addiction, poses a significant public health challenge. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that incorporates multidisciplinary involvement, including patients, therapists, and the broader social environment. This paper has demonstrated the potential benefits of integrating Islamic principles and practices into the treatment of internet addiction among Muslim patients.

The integration of religious principles such as redho (acceptance) and Quran reading into behavioural and emotional therapy can offer a unique and culturally sensitive approach that enhances emotional strength and coping mechanisms. The case studies highlighted the effectiveness of combining pharmacotherapy with psychospiritual therapy, demonstrating positive outcomes in managing addiction and associated depressive symptoms. However, several challenges remain, including maintaining patient motivation, managing relapses, and the demands of an intensive treatment schedule. The necessity for patients to have a religious background to fully benefit from these interventions also underscores the importance of assessing the generalizability of this approach across diverse populations. Future research should focus on systematically evaluating the efficacy and practicality of these interventions in clinical settings. Developing scientific guidelines tailored to the needs of Muslim patients will be crucial in ensuring that this integrated approach is both effective and widely applicable.

In conclusion, integrating Islamic principles into the treatment of internet addiction presents a promising method that warrants further exploration and validation. By embracing a biopsychosocial and spiritual framework, therapists can better support the recovery of Muslim patients, ultimately contributing to more effective and culturally sensitive mental health care.

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