

# Tawadhu and psychological well-being among muslim students

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**Abstract:** The importance of psychological well-being in the lives of students, particularly those in Islamic-based educational environments, serves as the primary focus of this study. Among the internal factors influencing well-being, tawadhu, which is defined as an attitude of non-superiority and the ability to appreciate others without losing self-confidence, is considered a key variable. Utilizing a quantitative correlational method, this study aimed to examine the positive relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among Muslim students. Data were collected through online questionnaires using the Tawadhu Scale and Psychological Well-being Scale (the short version). The results revealed a significant positive relationship between the two variables ( $r = .577$ ;  $p < .001$ ). These findings indicate that higher levels of tawadhu are associated with greater psychological well-being, specifically in areas such as self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. In conclusion, tawadhu as a spiritual value contributes significantly to developing inner peace and mental resilience in students. These findings suggest that higher education institutions should consider character education programs that integrate Islamic values with positive psychology approaches.

**Keywords:**

Muslim students,  
psychological well-being,  
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Psychological well-being represents a healthy mental and emotional state that is essential for individuals to effectively navigate life's pressures. For students in particular, maintaining high psychological well-being is a critical factor in managing emotions, fostering positive thinking, and optimizing personal potential (Ryff, 1989). Despite its importance, various studies indicate that psychological well-being remains relatively low among student populations globally. For instance, research in Jordan found that 17.5% of international students experience low levels of well-being (Samawi & Samawi, 2025). Similarly, in Indonesia, studies have identified low psychological well-being among 13.4% of students at a state university (Purnama et al., 2022) and 6.0% of nursing students (Nugraha et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, it is necessary to understand its definition, dimensions, and predictors of psychological well-being. Ryff (1989) conceptualizes well-being through six core dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions reflect an individual's ability to lead a balanced and meaningful life across emotional, cognitive, and social domains. Research suggests that well-being is influenced by internal factors, such as self-compassion, self-esteem, and resilience, as well as external factors, including social support, spiritual experiences, and a supportive academic environment (Norhidayah et al., 2024; Ryff & Singer, 2008).

One internal factor with the potential to significantly enhance psychological well-being is *tawadhu*. In the context of Islamic psychology, *tawadhu* is an attitude of humility characterized by an absence of superiority and a genuine appreciation for others. Laeli (2022) describes *tawadhu* as sincerity in following Allah's commands, restraining one's ego, and behaving selflessly to foster equality regardless of social status. Crucially, this trait is distinct from low self-esteem; it is rooted in self-confidence rather than arrogance (Mun'im, 2023).

In Western psychology, *tawadhu* finds a parallel in the concept of humility. According to Tangney (2000), humility involves six key elements: (a) accurate self-assessment, (b) acknowledgment of mistakes, (c) openness to new ideas, (d) a balanced perspective, (e) low self-focus, and (f) an appreciation of external values. Both Islamic and western perspectives view humility as a recognition of one's limitations and a respect for others, which facilitates healthy social relationships and emotional stability.

The development of *tawadhu* is shaped by factors such as gratitude, sincerity, patience, and self-control (Ilyas, 2007). Individuals possessing *tawadhu* tend to prioritize the common good and avoid excessive boasting. This disposition is reflected both in one's relationship with Allah, through gentle prayer and remembrance, and in social interactions characterized by love, compliance and respect (Almuniroh & Ilahiyah, 2023). This aligns with Islamic teachings in Surah Al-Furqan verse 63,

which describes the servants of Allah as humble and gentle individuals capable of maintaining harmonious social ties. Thus, tawadhu reflects not only noble character but also the wisdom and self-regulation needed to respond to life's challenges.

There is strong reason to believe that tawadhu is closely linked to increased psychological well-being. Empirical evidence from Western psychological research supports this connection, for example Morales-Rodríguez et al. (2020) found that humility contributes to self-acceptance, positive social relationships, and personal growth. Furthermore, Zawadzka and Zalewska (2013) identified humility as a significant predictor of life satisfaction and a sense of meaning. Given that the Western construct of humility positively influences well-being, it is vital to explore whether tawadhu (as the Islamic conceptualization of humility) functions similarly.

Based on this theoretical framework, this study hypothesizes a significant positive relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among Muslim students. Individuals with high levels of tawadhu are expected to demonstrate greater self-acceptance, maintain harmonious social relationships, and manage life's pressures wisely without being dominated by the ego. Therefore, tawadhu is anticipated to contribute significantly to the core dimensions of psychological well-being, including interpersonal health and resilience against external pressures.

## **METHODS**

### **Research approach**

This study employs a quantitative approach utilizing a correlational method to examine the relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among young adults, specifically Muslim students. Within this research framework, tawadhu serves as the predictor (independent) variable, while psychological well-being is defined as the criterion (dependent) variable.

### **Research Participants**

The study was conducted in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. The research population was defined based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) active university students, (2) identifying as Muslim, and (3) aged between 18 and 25 years. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met these specific requirements, resulting in a final sample of 186 participants. The demographic characteristics of the sample are detailed in the table below.

**Table 1**  
*Participants' Demographic Data*

Age	<i>n</i>	% of Total
18	9	4.8%
19	41	22.0%
20	70	37.6%
21	23	12.4%
22	26	14.0%
23	14	7.5%
24	1	0.5%
25	2	1.1%

*Note.* *N* = 186

**Table 2**  
*Participants' Gender Description*

Gender	<i>n</i>	% of Total
Male	47	25.3%
Female	139	74.7%

The participant profile was predominantly female, comprising 139 individuals (74.3%) of the total sample. Regarding the age distribution, the most represented group was the 20-year-old cohort, which accounted for 70 participants (37.6%).

### **Data collection**

Data for this study were elicited through two primary measurement instruments administered via Google Forms. To assess the criterion variable, the study utilized the Psychological Well-being Scale (the short version), adapted into Indonesian by Humaidah and Mulyono (2025). This instrument is derived from Ryff (1989) original multidimensional framework, which was developed into long, medium, and short versions by Ryff and Keyes (1995) and further validated by Garcia et al. (2023). This research utilized the 18-item short scale, in which three items represent each of the six core dimensions of self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency with a reliability coefficient

of .912. Responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with specific items reverse-coded.

The second instrument employed was the Indonesian Tawadhu Scale Natanael et al. (2020), which serves to integrate the Western psychological construct of humility with Islamic values. This scale consists of 20 items categorized into interpersonal (13 items) and intrapersonal (7 items) dimensions. The instrument showed excellent reliability, yielding a coefficient of .98. Participants responded to items such as "I appreciate every process of the work I do" using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In this scale, Item 10 was reverse-coded.

### Research procedure

The study was conducted in five primary stages. In the initial stage, the measurement instruments were selected, specifically the Psychological Well-being Scale (the short version) by Ryff (1989) and the Indonesian Tawadhu Scale. The second stage involved identifying the population and selecting a sample through purposive sampling. This technique was chosen to ensure that all participants met the specific criteria required to fulfill the research objectives.

The third stage focused on data collection via an online questionnaire. The survey was disseminated through social media platforms, such as Instagram and various WhatsApp groups, to reach the intended participants. The questionnaire was organized into four parts: informed consent, participant demographics, the Tawadhu Scale, and the Psychological Well-being Scale. In the fourth stage, the collected data were analyzed using jamovi statistical software. Finally, the fifth stage involved synthesizing the findings and preparing the results to be presented in a systematic scientific paper.

## RESULT

**Tabel 2**

*Description of Research Variable Data*

Research Variables	Empirical X Score				Hypothetical X Score			
	X Max	X Min	M	SD	X Max	X Min	M	SD
Tawadhu	100	60	83.7	8.82	100	20	60	13.3
Psychological Well-Being	70	42	53.1	5.60	72	18	45	9

Table 2 provides an overview of the empirical score distributions for both tawadhu and psychological well-being. The empirical scores for tawadhu ranged from 60 to 100, while psychological well-being scores ranged from 41 to 70. These descriptive statistics serve as the foundation for the categorization process, which is determined by the mean ( $M$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD$ ) of each variable.

A comparison between the empirical and hypothetical scores was conducted to further understand the data. For the tawadhu variable, the empirical mean ( $M = 83.7$ ) was notably higher than the hypothetical mean of 60. Similarly, for psychological well-being, the empirical mean ( $M = 53.1$ ) exceeded the hypothetical mean of 45.

Based on this description, the data were classified into five categories. The classification was calculated using the following formulas:

1. Very High:  $X \geq M + 1.5 SD$
2. High:  $M + 0.5 SD \leq X < M + 1.5 SD$
3. Moderate:  $M - 0.5 SD \leq X < M + 0.5 SD$
4. Low:  $M - 1.5 SD \leq X < M - 0.5 SD$
5. Very Low:  $X \leq M - 1.5 SD$

Notes.  $M$  = Empirical Mean;  $SD$  = Standard Deviation

**Table 3**  
*Categories of Tawadhu in Research Participants*

Value Range	Categorization	$F$	%
$X \geq 96,93$	Very High	7	4%
$88,11 \leq X < 96,93$	High	56	30%
$79,29 \leq X < 88,11$	Moderate	61	33%
$70,47 \leq X < 79,29$	Low	47	25%
$X \leq 70,47$	Very Low	15	8%
TOTAL		186	100%

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant positive relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among Muslim students. The

statistical analysis confirms that higher levels of tawadhu are associated with enhanced psychological well-being.

This result aligns with the perspective presented in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Al-Furqan verse 63, which characterizes the beloved servants of Allah as those who walk humbly upon the earth and respond to ignorance with words of peace. This verse illustrates that tawadhu encompasses emotional regulation, gentleness, and the capacity to maintain harmonious social relations. From a psychological standpoint, these traits are consistent with Ryff (1989) dimensions of psychological well-being, specifically positive relations with others and environmental mastery during stressful encounters. Thus, tawadhu functions not only as a spiritual virtue but also as an internal mechanism that fosters emotional stability and mental health.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with research by Rozana et al. (2024), which identified a similar positive relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among Islamic school teachers in Siak Sri Indrapura. The study showed a positive relationship between the two variables, indicating that the higher the level of tawadhu possessed by teachers, the higher the level of psychological well-being they felt.

In addition, these results are in line with previous studies that confirm that tawadhu and *humility* can improve an individual's psychological well-being. Munawaroh (2018) states that the higher a person's level of tawadhu, the greater their psychological well-being. Furthermore, several studies at universities in Jordan and Indonesia revealed that internal factors such as *self-compassion*, resilience, and emotional intelligence are closely related to humility and play an important role in improving students' *psychological well-being* (Norhidayah et al., 2024). Internationally, these results support the findings of Morales-Rodríguez et al. (2020) in Spain, who noted that humility contributes to self-acceptance, positive social relationships, and personal growth, as well as Zawadzka and Zalewska (2013) in Poland, who identified humility as a key predictor of achieving meaning in life and personal satisfaction.

The distinctiveness of this study lies in its focus on Muslim students at Universitas Islam Indonesia, a demographic that remains under-researched in psychological literature. By integrating Islamic spiritual values with contemporary psychological frameworks, this study provides a culturally relevant perspective on the Islamic higher education environment. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single university, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to the broader Muslim student population. Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples and utilize long-term research approach to monitor the

development of the relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being over time.

## **CONCLUSION**

The empirical evidence derived from this study confirms the research hypothesis, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between tawadhu and psychological well-being among Muslim students. These findings suggest that higher levels of tawadhu are intrinsically linked to enhanced psychological well-being. The attitude of tawadhu is manifested through an individual's capacity for authentic self-acceptance, the cultivation of harmonious social relationships, and a balanced, wise approach to navigating life's pressures. Consequently, tawadhu serves as an inner attitude that fosters psychological health and emotional stability, providing a critical foundation for students as they manage the complexities of their academic and social lives.

## **Suggestion**

Further research is recommended to involve a more diverse group of participants by expanding the scope of the research location, such as involving students from various universities, both public and private, as well as from different majors and faculties. This expansion of participants' characteristics is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between tawadhu and *psychological well-being* in students in general. In addition, future research may also consider using different research methods, such as longitudinal designs or mixed approaches, so that the dynamics of the relationship between the two variables can be understood more deeply and the research results have stronger generalizability.

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