

## CASE REPORT

# Managing Depression and Excessive Pornography Use Through Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) in a Young Adult with a Religious Background: A Case Report

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### ABSTRACT

Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) has proven to be a valuable intervention for addressing mental health challenges in individuals with a strong religious background. This approach effectively integrates psychological strategies with spiritual and religious principles, providing a culturally sensitive and holistic treatment option. This case report explores the complex interplay of pornography exposure, childhood trauma, academic pressures, and religious faith in a Huffaz Al Quran student. The report underscores the importance of a multifaceted treatment approach, integrating psychological and spiritual interventions within the TIIP framework. This case study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the efficacy of TIIP, providing insights into its potential benefits for managing mental health issues in individuals with strong religious values.

*Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences* (2026) 22(SUPP4):192-194. doi:10.47836/mjmhs.22.s4.32

**Keywords:** Depression, Pornography, Trauma, Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy

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### INTRODUCTION

Pornography consumption among adolescents and young adults is a growing concern, with potential negative impacts on mental and sexual health. Al Quran students, dedicated to memorizing the Quran, face unique challenges in today's digital age. While their rigorous religious studies demand intense focus and spiritual devotion, they are not immune to the widespread availability of online pornography. This case report explores the impact of pornography exposure on a Huffaz Al Quran student, examining the interplay of various contributing factors and the potential for a holistic intervention approach.

Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) offers a promising framework for addressing this issue

by integrating psychological and spiritual guidance within an Islamic context. The TIIP, as a culturally attuned intervention for Muslim individuals, has gained increasing recognition, combining Islamic principles with established psychological methodologies (1). However, its clinical application within Malaysia remains relatively unexplored, with limited documented cases detailing its real-world use in therapeutic settings. Much of the existing literature predominantly discusses Islamic psychotherapy in a broad sense, often lacking structured models tailored to specific psychiatric disorders. Considering this gap, particularly regarding the effectiveness of TIIP in addressing complex psychological struggles such as religious guilt, compulsive pornography use, and depressive symptoms, this case report seeks to provide a practical illustration of its implementation in a patient deeply rooted in religious beliefs.

### CASE REPORT

A 20-year-old college student presented with a two-year history of depression and suicidal ideation for eight months duration, rooted in academic stress and

roommate conflicts. He reported persistent low mood, loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, and feelings of worthlessness. He described significant fatigue and difficulty concentrating, which had adversely impacted his academic performance. Despite spending increased hours studying, he struggled to retain information from his study. He described disrupted sleep patterns, characterized by initial insomnia and early morning awakening, leaving him feeling unrefreshed. His appetite had diminished noticeably. He admitted to withdrawing socially, avoiding friends and family due to pervasive guilt and self-perceived failure. These symptoms profoundly disrupted his daily functioning and interfered with his role as a huffaz. Previously, he possessed good memorization abilities. However, as his condition worsened, he struggled with recall and lost motivation to engage in his studies, which hindered his ability to maintain his previous level of religious and academic performance.

Upon further questioning, he reported a history of childhood sexual abuse at age four and subsequent exposure to pornography and sexual harassment by a male roommate while at a Tahfiz boarding school. This led to homosexual activity with multiple partners during that time. He disclosed engaging in homosexual activity on multiple occasions, occurring in the school dormitory. He described the encounters as consensual, with his role in the interactions being passive. Following these experiences, he reported experiencing emotional distress, including intense guilt, and shame, which were deeply influenced by his religious beliefs. His internalized moral conflict contributes to a cycle of guilt and psychological distress. His transition to college was marked by academic difficulties, worsening his depression and leading to recurrent, uncontrolled masturbation and distress, impacting his studies.

On mental state examination, the patient appeared neatly dressed. He was cooperative throughout the interview but visibly anxious and tearful, particularly when discussing sensitive topics. His speech was normal in rate and volume. He described his mood as "low," which was consistent with his affect. His thought process was organized and logical, though frequently dominated by preoccupations with guilt, sinfulness, and failure. Thought content revealed passive suicidal ideation without intent or plan, alongside significant distress regarding his sexual behaviours and pornography use. There were no hallucinations or other perceptual disturbances. Cognitively, he was fully oriented to time, place, and person. He demonstrated good insight into his condition, recognizing the need for professional help. His judgment was sound in hypothetical scenarios, but he struggled to manage his compulsive behaviours effectively in real-life situations.

The patient was diagnosed with major depressive disorder. He was started on escitalopram, and the dose

was increased to 20 mg daily. However, he had a partial response to escitalopram, as he continued to experience low mood. The escitalopram was then augmented with brexpiprazole 1 mg daily. The TIIP intervention was implemented, with sessions conducted weekly over a period of four months. The assessment involved identifying the patient's motivation for change, the level of available social support, engagement in community settings (*ijtima'ī*), the strength of religious identity, and the extent of therapeutic support. The primary area of dysfunction was identified as the *nafs*, and a targeted intervention was implemented using the RIDA therapy plan. This approach includes: R – Recognize the problem; I – Introspect through self-examination within an Islamic framework; D – Disengage from dysfunctional patterns by relying on Islamic principles; and A – Align oneself and behaviour with the will of Allah and Islamic teachings. The TIIP framework emphasised understanding the *nafs* (self) and cultivating *nafs al-mutmainnah* (tranquil self) through self-reflection, prayer, mindfulness, and a deeper spiritual connection with the Quran, aiming to empower him with greater self-control and resilience. TIIP's holistic approach integrated psychological, spiritual, and social interventions tailored to the student's cultural and religious context. The inclusion of Islamic principles such as *tawakkul* (reliance on God), *sabr* (patience), *istighfar* (seeking forgiveness), and *shukr* (gratitude) provided protective and transformative mechanisms for coping and meaning-making. A strong therapeutic relationship created a safe space to explore the roots of his compulsive behaviours, including guilt and past trauma, while trauma-informed care addressed the potential impact of early adverse experiences. By focusing on the interconnectedness of mind, body, and soul, this approach enabled him to navigate his challenges and move toward recovery with spiritual well-being and resilience.

After undergoing treatment with the Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) framework, the 20-year-old college student demonstrated significant improvements in both his depressive symptoms and behaviours related to pornography use. His mood stabilized, with a noticeable reduction in feelings of hopelessness and guilt. He regained interest in his academic pursuits and social connections, showing better engagement with peers and family.

## DISCUSSION

Excessive pornography consumption has been associated with a range of negative outcomes, including relationship distress and perceived addiction (2). Existing research suggests that a significant percentage of individuals, both men and women, have reported feeling addicted to pornography, leading them to seek help for their use (2). In the context of the Huffaz Al Quran, the challenges faced in retaining Quranic memorization and the importance of maintaining a conducive environment for

spiritual growth further highlight the need to address this issue (3, 4). While the prevalence of pornography usage among the Huffaz Al Quran community remains largely unexplored, the potential impact of this issue on their emotional well-being is a matter of grave concern.

One study found that Huffaz at the tertiary education level often face time management problems and lack a supportive environment for retaining their Quranic memorization, which can leave them vulnerable to various distractions, including excessive pornography use (3). Another study emphasizes the importance of self-regulation and motivation in the process of Quranic memorization, factors that may be disrupted by the compulsive use of pornography (5). The inherent tension between the pious nature of Quranic memorization and the moral and ethical implications of pornography consumption underscores the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address this issue within the Huffaz Al Quran community (2, 3). While the research in this area is limited, the available evidence suggests a concerning trend that warrants further investigation and a multifaceted approach to address the complex interplay of spiritual, psychological, and social factors involved.

The treatment of compulsive behaviours in the Huffaz Al Quran community requires a holistic approach grounded in the Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy (TIIP) framework. TIIP addresses the interconnectedness of mind, body, and soul by integrating psychological, spiritual, and social interventions while emphasizing the strengthening of *nafs al-mutmainnah* (the tranquil self) to foster self-control and resilience. Islamic principles such as *tawakkul*, *sabr*, *istighfar*, and *shukr* play a vital role in recovery, providing solace, guidance, and meaning-making beyond compulsive behaviours. Recognizing the impact of past trauma, the TIIP framework incorporates trauma-informed care, ensuring a sustainable recovery process that respects the cultural and spiritual needs of this community. The TIIP offers a distinctive approach to addressing past trauma by integrating spiritual healing with psychological interventions. The TIIP focuses on reframing trauma within an Islamic perspective, promoting acceptance (*rida*), repentance (*taubah*), and reliance on divine wisdom (*tawakkul*). TIIP also facilitated the patient's recovery through cognitive, affective, and behavioural interventions. Cognitively, it helped reframe guilt and hopelessness using Islamic teachings, fostering self-compassion. Affective strategies, including guided supplication and dhikr, enhanced emotional regulation and mood stability. Behaviourally, the patient re-engaged in religious and social activities, restoring motivation and purpose (1).

## CONCLUSION

This case report demonstrates the need for a multifaceted approach to treatment, incorporating both psychological and spiritual interventions tailored to the unique cultural and spiritual context of this community. TIIP offers a promising framework for integrating these approaches and fostering resilience among Huffaz Al Quran students. The TIIP is ideal for Muslim individuals seeking faith-based therapy, particularly those who prefer culturally sensitive care over secular approaches. However, it may not suit non-Muslims, those requiring secular therapy, or individuals with severe psychiatric disorders needing medical intervention. Those with rigid religious views or religious OCD may require alternative treatments, and TIIP may be ineffective for those who see mental health struggles purely as spiritual weaknesses.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) for funding this research under the Dana Penyelidikan Universiti (DPU) grant scheme (Project Code: UniSZA/2024/DPU1.0/04 I RD091).

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