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Journal home page:  
[www.msocalsciences.com](http://www.msocalsciences.com)**Islamic Counseling Approach by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan for Preventing Aggressive Behaviour Among School Students****Noraniza Mohd Nor<sup>1</sup>, Syed Mohamad Syed Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, Siti Nur Hadis A Rahman<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Pendidikan, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)<sup>2</sup>Akademi Tamadun Islam, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)Correspondence: Noraniza Mohd Nor ([noranizamohdnor75@gmail.com](mailto:noranizamohdnor75@gmail.com))**Abstract**

The issue of aggressive behaviour is often the subject of serious discussion amongst discipline teachers and school counselors. From the Islamic perspective, aggressive behaviour is caused by the lack of Islamic values in aspects of student interaction at schools. Thus, the readiness of discipline teachers and school counselors to tap into the skills and knowledge of counseling using the Islamic approach is crucial in realizing the outlined educational development plan. This concept paper aims to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic counseling based on Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's views in addressing aggressive behaviour among school students. The methodology of the study is in the form of literature reviews by examining books, journals and previous studies related to the topic of discussion. The study has found that there are 4 ways of dealing with aggressive behaviours among secondary school students based on Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's view which are the responsibility of faith education, the responsibility of educating the mind, the responsibility of educating the mind awareness and the responsibility of educating the soul. The guidelines above should be utilized by school counselors in handling the issue of aggressive behaviours amongst school students.

**Keywords:** Islamic counseling, Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, aggressive behaviour, school students**Introduction**

The definition of aggressive behaviour according to Olweus (1993) is the act of being hostile to intentionally hurt someone repeatedly, whether it is done individually or in groups. According to Liu et al., (2013) in the context of preschool children, the aggressive behavior displayed at this stage of development is from the past, but does not begin at this stage. It has been found that the existing youth counseling therapy is not using Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's ideas in Islamic counseling as a medium of presentation and problem solving for aggressive behaviour amongst high school students. Studies conducted by Salasiah (2008) discussed Al-Ghazali's *tazkiyah an-nafs* approach, while studies by (Fauzi, 2016; Ismail & Daud, 2014; Mohamad, 2015; Mustofa, 2014) discussed about the thoughts of Abdullah Nasih Ulwan on the education of children and adolescents in the form of *tarbiatul aulad*. Furthermore, Azizah (2017) discussed the persuasive-styled of child education based on the perspective of Dr. Abdullah Nashih Ulwan and youth Islamic counseling module using the Al-Ghazali approach (Saper, 2012). Based on past researches, there were various methods of counseling according to Islam but they did not refer specifically to and apply the approach of Abdullah Nasih Ulwan.

## Definition of Operation

### *Aggressive Behaviour*

According to Yahaya et al. (2011), aggression is a planned behaviour designed to injure others as a result of the feelings of frustration and annoyance. This defined concept of aggressive behaviour is similar to the view expressed by Stone (1977) which stated that aggressive behaviour is an intentional action to harm or injure someone or a group of individuals that may result in physical and psychological injuries or death. Researchers have categorised aggressive behaviours in the form of physical aggression (Archer, 1995; Buss & Perry, 1992; Olweus, 1993; Reyna et al. 2011), verbal aggression (Buss & Perry, 1992; Yahaya & Idris, 2011), aggressive hostility ((Buss & Perry, 1992; Gladue, 1991; Kolla et al. 2017) and aggressive anger (Archer, 2004; Buss & Perry, 1992; Kolla et al., 2017). They agreed that aggressive perpetrators have a tendency to cause harm, discomfort, and pain to others. An example of aggressive behaviour would be to hit, taunt, and belittle someone or a group of others. Studies by Kolla et al., (2017) showed that aggressive behaviour of anger and hostility can be used to make predictions for anti-social behaviour (Fitzmaurice, 1952) especially Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and borderline personality disorder (BPD).

Aggressive behaviours are expressed in physical aggression (Archer, 1995; Buss & Perry, 1992; Olweus, 1993; Reyna et al., 2011), verbal aggression (Buss & Perry, 1992; Yahaya & Idris, 2011), hostility aggression (Buss & Perry, 1992; Gladue, 1991; Kolla et al., 2017) and anger aggression (Archer, 2004; Buss & Perry, 1992; Kolla et al., 2017). Aggressive perpetrators have a tendency to cause injury, discomfort, and pain to others. An example of aggressive behaviour would be to hit, taunt, and belittle someone or a group of others.

### *Islamic Counseling*

According to (Zakaria & Akhir, 2017), Islamic counseling in Malaysia started in the 1980s. According to (Rahman & Ismail, 2013), the aim of Islamic counseling is to bring clients towards peace of mind and soul. According to (Rassool, 2016), Islamic counseling is a contemporary response, similar to other therapeutic approaches but it is based on the Islamic understanding of human nature that incorporates personality into the therapeutic process. Islamic counseling was pioneered by a number of Islamic counseling scholars who argued that it was necessary for the field of counseling to be done in accordance with Islamic principles rather than the existing mainstream methodology at that time. The Islamic approach to customisation, integrative and traditional models are used in Malaysia. The popular models in the country include Ad-Deen Cognitive Counseling, iCBT, Spiritual Counseling, Al-Ghazali, Asmaul Husna and Prophetic Style (sunnah).

It can be shown through a thorough research by (Mustaffa, 1998) which stated that Islamic counseling is a set of teaching and learning processes aimed at helping an individual or groups of people that have mental and psychological issues in order to guide and drive them in achieving happiness in life and the Hereafter on the basis of Islam as the way of life.

## Problem Statement

Aggressive behaviour amongst high school students has always been stigmatising. Statistics of disciplinary misconduct recorded by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2012) showed an increase in the number of students involved in aggressive behaviour. In fact, more recent studies have also expressed concerns about the increase in negative behaviours amongst youth as stated by (Azizan & Yusoff, 2018). Violence in the media has been found not to cause students to act aggressively in physical, verbal, emotional and sexual ways and only to cause students to act aggressively in a hostile manner (Yaacob, 2010). Misbehaviours portrayed in media are found not to cause students to act aggressively in physical, verbal and criminal ways, and only to cause students to misbehave in a hostile manner (Yahaya & Idris, 2011). However, Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1998) explained that the interest in watching violent and sexually explicit films is the cause of deviations in children's education (Ismail &

Daud, 2014). (Yahya et al., (2007) mentioned in his study that aggressive behaviour that causes bullying can occur at all levels of schooling at the primary and secondary levels, in both urban and rural areas and among all genders. One of the cases that involved aggressive behaviour leading to bullying cases was about 23 school students pleading guilty in bullying and treating their friends aggressively at Kuala Terengganu Magistrate's Court (Daily News, 2018), while there was also the aggressive behaviour of 9 students in Shah Alam that beat up their classmate (Daily News, 2019).

The aforementioned scenario shows that today's teenagers are in need of ongoing guidance from adults for their life sustainability. This situation requires counselors to find the best solution in addressing the issues of these endless aggressive behaviours. One of the suggested approaches in addressing the problem of aggressive behaviour among school students is through the Islamic approach (Manap, 2015).

## Objectives

The objective of this research is to obtain the following;

- i. Identify moral values based on Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's thoughts that can be applied in high school students.
- ii. Identify elements of Islamic counseling processes that can be applied to high school students.

## Highlights of the Study

### *Aggressive Behaviour*

Public awareness of the Islamic counselling approach has generally shown positive growth over time. Due to the public awareness and acceptance of the divine aspects in life, Islamic counseling therapy approaches continue to be relevant and have a place amongst counselors especially Muslim counselors. Highlights of the study found that studies on Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's thoughts revolve around children's education. The Islamic counselling therapy approach in addressing the problem of aggressive behaviour based on this scholar's thinking is a new dimension in the world of counseling in Malaysia. Abdullah Nasih Ulwan's thoughts would be the cornerstone of Islamic counseling therapy in addressing aggressive behaviour amongst high school students. This view is based on the strength of the scholar in discussing about children's education in his book entitled *Children's Education from Islamic Point of View*, published by the Department of Islamic Advancement of Malaysia (JAKIM, 1998).

According to Yahaya et al., (2010), factors influencing aggressive behaviour among school students in Johor Bahru include school environment, family background, students' attitude, psychology and peers. The level of aggression among the 260 school students who became the respondents was high. The types of aggressiveness include physical, verbal and anti-social. Furthermore, Yahaya et al., (2011) mentioned that students' perception of the act and types of aggressive behaviour was relatively high. There is a significant relationship between verbal and anti-social behaviour and parental income. Schools, teachers, friends, and students need to work together in creating a good and comfortable school environment to prevent the culture of aggressive behaviour. A research was conducted by (Hsieh & Chen, 2017) on 80 first class degree students in a university in Taiwan through a competitive reaction time game based on Taylor's Aggressive Paradigm. The findings showed that respondents with low inhibitory levels have a high level of provocation. The findings of this study contribute to the information on the development of aggressive behaviour recovery programs. Another study was conducted by (Kruti & Melonashi, 2015) at a school in the metropolis of Albania on a group of 17-year-old students. The aforementioned age is said to be the most critical area where adolescents will be rebellious because this is the peak age of individual vulnerability. The respondents of the study were from various economic backgrounds. The findings of this study proved that the level of aggression

shown was somewhat alarming but this study did not conduct an experiment on aspects of actual behaviour occurring in the real world.

Additionally, Manap (2015) research on identifying the understanding of 167 Islamic education teachers about aggressive and sub-aggressive behaviour that caused bullying, types of bullying, location, frequency of bullying, factors of bullying, actions to address and prevent bullying found that 87.2 percent understood the types of bullying, 84 percent agreed that bullying occurred in school while 77.7 percent acknowledged that bullying occurred at school due to family, peers and school factors. Researchers also suggested that the Islamic approach is the way of addressing bullying behaviour in schools. According to Yaacob (2010), aggressive behaviour within children is due to a lack of attention. This study compared the aggressive behaviour between children who are under the supervision or by their own mothers or not under the supervision of their mothers (for working mothers). However, working mothers' factor did not have a significant effect on the aggressive behaviour of children under the age of 5.

### ***Islamic Counseling Approach***

A research by Salasiah (2008) on Al-Irsyad Al Nafsiyy's missionary approach according to Imam Ghazali was conducted in collaboration with the Islamic Religious Council Counseling Center, Negeri Sembilan whether the counselors used the Islamic approach when conducting counseling sessions with their clients. The findings of the study showed that counselors used Islamic approaches in a number of cases indirectly and in an unorganised way. Research done by (Saper, 2012) related to the construction of the 'Tazkiyah An-Nafs guidance module and its impact on youth religiosity and resilience is closely linked to this study. This study used Al-Ghazali's approach in developing its module. The results of this study found that there was a significant increase in adolescents' religiosity and resilience after following this module.

According to (Zakaria & Akhir, 2017), Islamic counseling in Malaysia began in the 1980s and there are a lack of theoretical basis and model intervention. This study obtained information from 18 counselors and lecturers in Malaysia. Three types of Islamic counseling models were identified namely the Restructuring Model, the Integration Model (Ad-Deen cognitive, iCBT, Psychological Counseling) and the Traditional model (Al-Ghazali, Asmaul, Prophetic Style). Furthermore, research conducted by (Zakaria & Akhir, 2017) aimed to find the relationship between Islamic counseling and Islamic creed. It proposed a method of integrating Islamic creed into three stages of the counseling process; beginning, middle, and end processes. The findings showed that counseling is inseparable from the Islamic creed aspect because of the close relationship between counseling theories, goals, functions, principles and processes.

### **Methodology**

This study used the methodologies of literature review and content analysis. There were three themes used in the search for data related to the topic: "Abdullah's Sad Direction Approach", "Aggressive Behaviour", and "School Students". These showed that there are four basic principles, which are the responsibility of faith education, the responsibility of educating the mind, the responsibility of mind awareness and the responsibility of the education of the soul.

### **Findings and Discussions**

A counselor should be familiar with various counseling skills and techniques. This is important as it can provide confidence to the counselor and the clients. There are several approaches by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan in helping clients. The four main approaches can be identified as the responsibility of faith education, the responsibility of educating the mind, the responsibility of consciousness and the responsibility of the education of the soul. Aside from that, a few other counseling process approaches were also discussed in this concept paper.

### **(a) The Responsibility of Faith Education**

Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (2000) outlined four ways to apply faith education to children. The first way is to start the life of a child with the phrase of *La ila ha ilallah*. This sentence will be the first sentence that a baby would listen through *Adzan* when he is born. Secondly, teach the children the law of *halal* and *haram* when they are wise, so that they will grow up being aware and acknowledged their responsibilities as servants of Allah SWT. They will carry out all His commands, abandon all His prohibitions and will be able to acknowledge Islam as the perfect religion that covers all aspects of life. Thirdly, teach the children to perform *ibadah* after the age of seven. It aims to familiarise the children with the atmosphere of *ibadah*. Once they have reached their puberty, the concept of *ibadah* is not a strange concept to them and will not be a burden for them. Lastly, educate the children on the concept of love for the Prophet Muhammad and his family and cultivate the feeling of love for reciting Quran. Quran needs to be a daily routine to establish a noble character. Prophet Muhammad and his family's noble personalities should be the prime example to follow and practice the *sunnah* in life either through deeds or verbal communications. The explanation above showed that implementation of faith education on children starts when they reach puberty. In the context of Islamic counseling, various forms of beliefs and thoughts that are fundamental to a Muslim's faith can be tailored to the counseling process, especially in the process of restructuring the client's mind to conform to Islamic will. This is because the main objective of Islamic counseling is to produce effective and ethical treatment to Muslim clients (Hamdan, 2008).

### **(b) The Responsibility of Educating the Mind**

Abdullah Nasih Ulwan defined educating the mind as to shape the mind of a child with things that benefit him such as knowledge of Islamic Laws (*Syara'*), academic education and the current knowledge. Albert Ellis' western theory of Emotional Rational Therapy (RET) assumes that humans have the potential to act rationally and to think sanely. Based on this theory, the existence of wrong values and beliefs as well as irrationality of human beings are the main factors of depression and can lead to multiple issues to the affected person (Masroom et al., 2018). This theory is not denied by Islam but the function of the mind is different from the Islamic point of view. According to Islamic views, the capacity of our mind is limited and humans are not capable of thinking about all the things that they want to think about. In the Quran, Allah S.W.T explained the capacity of the human mind that can be translated as: "Allah does not burden a person except for what Allah has given him. Allah will soon give us ease after the hardships. " Therefore, humans cannot rely solely on rationality in solving problems and questions about themselves as assumed by RET. Faith and God-fearing piety are more important than rationality. Counselors should play a role in encouraging clients to think rationally (logically and flexibly), to feel healthier, and to take more efficient actions to achieve their life goals and purposes (Masroom et al., 2018).

### **(c) The Responsibility of Mind Awareness**

Providing mind awareness to children from childhood to adulthood is one of the important responsibilities that Islam places as a trust for parents and teachers. Mind awareness as defined by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan is to always connect the minds of the children by asserting Islam as religion and the nation, connecting with the Quran as the rule of life, connecting with the history of Islam as a splendor and with the Islamic knowledge as their thinking. There are several ways to reach that awareness according to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, for example, educators or counselors need to provide understanding (Islamic reality) accompanied by awareness, good role models (close relationship with educators or counselors), a lot of readings and learn from it and befriend with good people.

### **(d) The Responsibility of the Education of the Soul**

According to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, the education of soul is to train children to be courageous, forthright, self-sufficient, control of their temper, have good intentions towards other people and have all the qualities of a noble soul and a praised character. Al-Ghazali's way of dealing with anger is to perform wudu' and recite the *isti'azah*. The heart has a very close relationship with other human body parts because every trait of a person reflects the behaviour of other body parts. This view explained that the movements of a body part is an outgrowth from the heart. This means that human behaviour is a manifestation of the will or direction of the heart. Thus, in the context of Islamic counseling, counselors need to implement the elements of wisdom to clients to ensure that they can make accurate and wise decisions. Tactful brings the same meaning as wisdom that includes justice, resentment, possessing prophetic traits, denying ignorance, upholding the truth, putting things in place, always speaking the truth, preventing harm, in-depth understanding and being concerned with knowledge, upholding the truth with sound arguments and guided by the Quran.

## **Counseling Processes According to Islamic Perspectives**

The significant cognitions from the Islamic faith that can be incorporated into the counseling process with Muslim clients include: the understanding of the reality of this world and its temporality (Quran, 28:60; 29:64); the focus on the Hereafter (Quran 3:15); recalling the purpose and effects of distress and afflictions (Quran 2: 155-6); trusting and relying on Allah (*Tawakkal*) (Quran 3: 159); understanding that after hardship there will be ease (Quran 94: 5-6); focusing on the blessings of Allah, remembering Allah and reading the Quran (13:28); and supplication (*du'as*) (Quran 2: 186).

### ***(a) The Understanding of the Reality of This World and its Temporality***

This concept paper provides exposure to the public that spiritual questions in counseling should be focused on in order for them counseling services offered to meet human needs and effectively address client issues in the pursuit of achieving prosperity in life. Allah SWT has mentioned in Surah al-Qasas (28:60), which means "And whatever thing you [people] have been given - it is [only for] the enjoyment of worldly life and its adornment. And what is with Allah is better and more lasting; so will you not use reason?"

### ***(b) The Focus on the Hereafter***

Counseling processes do not only focus advice, guidance, assistance or help of living a prosperous life in this world but also revolves around life in this world and the Hereafter that obtains the blessing of Allah (Mustaffa, 1998). Counseling practice from an Islamic perspective is seen as something that is evolutionary, not static, stagnant, and unchanging, but still based on *Shari'a* through Quran and the Sunnah and emphasises the well-being of clients's lives for the world and the Hereafter (Omar, 2018). Every human being must remember and acknowledge that life in this world is temporary. Clients have to be explained about their weaknesses in the presence of Allah but have a variety of uniqueness such as various senses that can help humans to grow from the aspect of thinking and making wise decisions. Western counseling that has been practiced and implemented in the society does not make religion as a cornerstone and it separates religion from worldly affairs. Islam sees aspects of the world and the Hereafter as indivisible in individual's life. The word of Allah in Surah Al-Imran (3:15) which means "Say (O Muhammad), "Shall I inform you of [something] better than that? For those who fear Allah will be gardens in the presence of their Lord beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and purified spouses and approval from Allah. And (remember), Allah is Seeing of [His] servants. "

### ***(c) Recalling the Purpose and Effects of Distress and Afflictions***

In general, not all bad things that happen will have a bad effect, there may be good things to gain as a result. Likewise, not all things that are favored will bring positive gains and benefits (Masroom et al., 2018). From an Islamic perspective, the form of a test that is imposed on a Muslim is not simply a matter of adversity and hardship. Tesys can also come in the form of "joy, pleasure, and luxury". This

is because Islam sees pleasure and luxury as a form of trust that needs to be safeguarded and maintained.

For example, wealth and luxury possessed by oneself are obligated to be taxed in the form of Zakat to help those in need. For the test faced in this form, does the property owner have the awareness and responsibility to discharge his property as an obligation? Allah's Word in Surah Al-Baqarah (2: 155-156) which brings the meaning "and We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, (155). Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."(156)" According to the above verse, Allah SWT mentioned the forms of trials and difficulties of life. This verse also states that the objective of the tests and the difficulties He places on humans is to see their level of patience.

#### ***(d) Trusting and Relying on Allah (Tawakkal)***

Counseling sessions will be more effective if the counselors use the Islamic approach in his counseling sessions with religious and spiritual elements. Sipon & Hussin (2012) found that most Western counseling theories such as Gestalt Theory, Emotional Reasoning, Existence, and Psychoanalysis are more focused on knowledge related to behaviour and cognition without taking spiritual aspects into consideration, despite being a very important element as Allah SWT said in Surah al-Talaq, verse 2-3, which means: "And when they have [nearly] fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or part with them according to acceptable terms. And bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah . That is instructed to whoever should believe in Allah and the Last day. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out (2). And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent. (3)"

#### ***(e) Understanding That After Hardship There Will Be Ease***

The other approaches used by counselors include to inject the spirit and strength to the clients to ensure that they will never give up while also placing hope (*al-rajaa* ') on Allah SWT, to make the clients realise that the problems they are facing is a test from Allah SWT to test one's faith, to look at others for the purpose of empowering oneself and to suggest clients to come closer to God by reciting the Qur'an and Zikir (practice of uttering Allah's name out of devotion to Him and His oneness) (Hamjah, 2010). Allah has mentioned in the surah As-Syarah (94: 5-6) which means "For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. (5) Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. (6)"

#### ***(f) Focusing on the blessings of Allah, remembering Allah and reading the Quran***

Hamjah (2010) stated that counselors need to remind clients to increase their Zikir practices to alleviate anxiety as it can give them peace of mind. According to the Word of Allah in surah Ar-ra'd (13:28) which means "Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured". The above verse describes the remembrance of Allah SWT will give peace to the soul (Al-Ghazali 1994). A calm soul can strengthen oneself spiritually as one will feel that Allah is always with him and is confident that Allah will help him to cope with anxiety (Hamjah, 2010).

#### ***(g) Supplication (Du'as)***

Prayer is the way provided by Allah S.W.T for His servants to ask for something, regardless of whether it is physical or spiritual. Mentioning Allah's name through *Zikir* and asking for His grace through prayer is an excellent way for an individual to find solace in life (Mustaffa et al., 2003). The Word of Allah in Surah al-Baqarah (2: 186) "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided."

## Conclusion and Future Recommendations

Based on the above discussions, it was concluded that counselors should explore an integrated channel with educators and parents so that each youth's concerns can be handled prudentially and wisely. From the viewpoint of Abdullah Nasih Ulwan, there are four ways that were discussed to help clients which are The Responsibility of Faith Education, The Responsibility of Educating the Mind, The Responsibility of Mind Awareness and The Responsibility of the Education of the Soul. In addition to that, several Islamic counseling processes were also discussed. Therefore, the approach presented by Abdullah Nasih Ulwan is very appropriate for all educators, counselors, and parents to be manifested in dealing with students' aggressive behaviour as it is appropriate and practical throughout the community. However, to avoid conflicts between counseling and clients' culture and religious belief, the aspects of religious sensitivity in intervention needs to be handled wisely as the application of psychiatric and spiritual elements varies according to their respective religions. In this regard, the counselors' competency needs to be strengthened so that the counseling conducted will have an effective and meaningful impact in providing service to the clients.

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