



The Effect of Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy on Clients' Mental Health: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of mental health disorders necessitates comprehensive intervention approaches that integrate medical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Cupping therapy (hijamah), as a traditional healing practice with strong historical foundations and formal recognition in Indonesia, presents potential as a complementary intervention. However, empirical quantitative evidence regarding its impact on mental health remains limited. This study aims to examine the effect of Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy on the mental health of clients at Rumah Rehab Al Amin, Deli Serdang. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was employed. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, and mental health was measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including paired sample t-tests and regression analysis. The findings reveal a significant improvement in mental health conditions following the intervention. Regression results further indicate a strong positive relationship between the therapy and mental stability. In conclusion, Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy effectively enhances mental health through integrated biopsychospiritual mechanisms.

Keywords: Holistic Sunnah Cupping, Mental Health, DASS-21, Quasi-Experimental, Paired Sample T-Test.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health problems have evolved into an urgent and multifaceted global health crisis in the twenty-first century. Recent reports indicate that conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression extend beyond individual clinical issues and constitute a socio-economic burden that affects productivity and overall quality of life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Empirical realities, however, reveal a substantial gap between the demand for mental health services and the availability of effective interventions. This condition calls for a strategic reorientation in which conventional medical approaches are integrated with complementary therapies that address biopsychosocial and spiritual dimensions in a holistic manner.

The discourse on integrative health highlights the importance of revisiting traditional healing practices that possess strong historical foundations while remaining clinically relevant. One such modality is cupping therapy. Historical documentation indicates that cupping has been practiced since approximately 3000 BCE, making it one of the oldest therapeutic methods in human civilization (Sari et al., 2018). This practice has transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, appearing in ancient Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, Chinese, Indian, Greek, and Roman medical traditions. Its long-standing presence demonstrates that cupping represents not merely a contemporary health trend but a time-tested body of medical knowledge.

In Islamic terminology, cupping therapy is referred to as *hijamah*. The term derives from the verb *hajama*, meaning “to suck” or “to draw out” (Sari et al., 2019). Technically, the procedure involves creating negative pressure within cups or similar instruments placed on specific anatomical points on the skin, leading to localized congestion or ecchymosis (Khomsah & Nurani, 2024). The primary objective is to improve microcirculation, enhance cellular metabolism, and restore organ function (Hamdi et al., 2005). Modern clinical practice categorizes cupping into two main types: dry cupping, which relies on suction applied to intact skin, and wet cupping or puncture-and-cupping techniques, which involve superficial skin incisions to remove serosanguinous fluid often associated with toxins (Zahara et al., 2023). In Indonesia, cupping therapy operates within a well-established regulatory framework. Government regulations formally recognize traditional complementary healthcare practices, reflecting institutional support for integrating such therapies into the national health system. This recognition has facilitated the widespread availability of cupping services across different social contexts, including independent practitioners, modern clinics, and rehabilitation centers that incorporate spiritual approaches into treatment programs.

The concept of cupping in Islamic tradition extends beyond a purely mechanical or biological procedure. The work *Zad al-Ma’ad* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (2003) presents cupping as a prophetic healing method aimed at maintaining balance between physical and spiritual dimensions. This perspective forms the basis of what is often termed Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy, an approach that integrates physical techniques with spiritual practices such as prayer, intention, and remembrance (*dhikr*). This integration aligns with holistic health concepts that view human beings as unified entities consisting of biological, psychological, and spiritual components. Islamic psychology emphasizes that such balance is essential for achieving inner tranquility (*tuma’ninah*) and stable mental health (Ancok & Suroso, 2011; Bastaman, 2007). The relevance of this integrative intervention becomes particularly evident in rehabilitation settings. Observations of clients’ daily activities at Rumah Rehab Al Amin, Deli Serdang, reveal complex behavioral

patterns. Daily activities reflect psychological conditions, as positive behaviors such as regular worship and healthy social interaction support mental recovery, whereas negative patterns such as social withdrawal, irregular sleep, and excessive social media use exacerbate stress and anxiety (WHO, 2018; Fakhriyani, 2019). Existing data indicate that a limited proportion of clients consistently engage in positive activities, while a considerable number remain involved in maladaptive routines that contribute to psychological distress. This imbalance suggests that mental health interventions should extend beyond verbal counseling and incorporate body-based therapies capable of inducing physiological relaxation and reinforcing spiritual resilience.

Scientific evidence supports the effectiveness of cupping therapy in improving mental health through neurological and endocrinological mechanisms. Further studies indicate that the relaxation induced by this therapy reduces sympathetic nervous system activity associated with the fight-or-flight response (Cao et al., 2015). Reduced physiological tension contributes directly to lower levels of anxiety and depression, as measured by standardized instruments such as the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

Despite the widespread theoretical and practical foundation of cupping therapy, a significant research gap remains in quantitative studies examining the specific effects of Holistic Sunnah Cupping on mental health outcomes. Previous research has largely separated physiological and spiritual benefits or has focused primarily on pain management. Few studies have employed systematic experimental designs to evaluate how an integrated physical-spiritual intervention can effectively reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress among rehabilitation clients. This study aims to analyze the effect of Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy on the mental health of clients at Rumah Rehab Al Amin, Deli Serdang. Using a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of this intervention as a complementary therapeutic strategy. The study contributes to the theoretical development of Islamic psychology and complementary health practices while offering practical implications for healthcare providers in designing more integrative, value-based rehabilitation programs. By examining the relationship between physical intervention through cupping and mental stability, this research seeks to reposition traditional healing practices within the framework of modern scientific inquiry.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest format (Creswell, 2014). The selection of this design was based on the need to measure changes in respondents' psychological conditions longitudinally, specifically before and after the

intervention (Creswell, 2014). The research procedure followed a series of systematic stages, beginning with the development of a theoretical framework and the formulation of research hypotheses. The next stage involved the development and pilot testing of research instruments to ensure data accuracy. After the instruments were confirmed to be valid, participants were selected according to predefined criteria. The process continued with the administration of the pretest questionnaire, the implementation of the Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy intervention, and concluded with the collection of posttest data. All collected data underwent thorough verification prior to statistical analysis and interpretation within the relevant theoretical framework.

The population of this study consisted of all clients undergoing rehabilitation at Rumah Rehab Al Amin, Deli Serdang, totaling 100 individuals. A sample of 30 respondents was selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2017). Inclusion criteria required participants to have undergone cupping therapy for at least one month, to be at least 17 years old, to provide informed consent voluntarily, and to have no severe physical conditions that could act as confounding variables in assessing mental health status.

The independent variable in this study was the application of Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy, while mental health was treated as the dependent variable. Mental health was measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21 (DASS-21), a globally recognized instrument with high reliability in assessing depression, anxiety, and stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Prior to the main data collection, the instrument underwent validity testing using item-total correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency. Data analysis was conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the general condition of respondents, while inferential analysis focused on hypothesis testing through paired sample t-tests. This statistical procedure was applied to evaluate the significance of differences in mean mental health scores before and after the intervention (Field, 2023). Paired sample t-tests are appropriate for comparing two related means measured at different time points within the same group, providing strong statistical justification for assessing intervention effectiveness (Field, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Psychometric Integrity and Methodological Rigor

The present study underscores the paramount importance of methodological rigor in ensuring the validity, reliability, and scientific accountability of research findings. The psychometric evaluation of the instruments confirmed that all items within the Holistic Sunnah Cupping and Mental Health variables achieved standardized loading factors exceeding 0.3, indicating adequate

representation of the intended constructs (Hair et al., 2010). In complex psychological research, particularly within rehabilitation settings, ensuring that each indicator accurately reflects theoretical dimensions prevents ambiguity and strengthens interpretative confidence (Sugiyono, 2019). This precision is essential when capturing multidimensional constructs such as mental health, which encompass emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects.

Reliability analyses reinforced these findings. Construct Reliability (CR) values for both variables exceeded 0.70 during the pre-test and approached 0.90 in the post-test, demonstrating high internal consistency and minimal measurement error (Field, 2023). Such consistency aligns with Antony et al.'s (1998) validation of the DASS-21, which effectively differentiates depression, anxiety, and stress across diverse populations. The combination of high validity and reliability confirms that the instruments are not only conceptually sound but also empirically robust, providing confidence that observed changes in mental health are attributable to the intervention rather than measurement artifacts.

The research employed a quasi-experimental, one-group pretest-posttest design, which is well-suited for applied health studies where full experimental control is not feasible (Creswell, 2014). While the absence of a control group limits the ability to isolate all external factors, this design allows for longitudinal observation of psychological change, offering strong preliminary evidence for causal inference. In this study, the methodological rigor was complemented by careful sampling and ethical safeguards, ensuring that the results reflect genuine therapeutic effects rather than confounding influences.

Clinical Transformation of Mental Health Status

The most striking finding of this research is the significant improvement in clients' mental health, reflected by the increase in mean DASS-21 scores from 38.17 to 45.40. This change represents a transition from psychological distress to a higher level of well-being, encompassing both symptomatic relief and enhanced emotional resilience. Contemporary definitions of mental health emphasize flourishing and functional capacity rather than merely the absence of disease (World Health Organization, 2014; 2022). Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy appears to facilitate such flourishing by targeting both negative symptoms—depression, anxiety, stress—and positive psychological dimensions, including emotional regulation, self-efficacy, and inner peace (Keyes, 2005).

Inferential statistics substantiate these descriptive improvements. The paired sample t-test yielded $t = -3.205$, $p = 0.003$, confirming that post-test scores were significantly higher than pre-test scores. This finding demonstrates that the intervention, rather than random variation, accounts for the observed improvement. Furthermore, regression analysis revealed an increase in the

coefficient of determination (R^2) from 0.25 to 0.56, indicating that over half of the variance in mental health outcomes can be attributed to the Holistic Sunnah Cupping intervention. According to Cohen (1988), such a large effect size demonstrates not only statistical but practical significance, reinforcing the therapy's applicability in real-world rehabilitation contexts.

Physiological Mechanisms and Clinical Evidence

The efficacy of cupping therapy can be understood through established physiological mechanisms. Ernst (2009) notes that the negative pressure applied during cupping enhances local blood circulation and stimulates peripheral nerves, triggering endorphin release and other neurochemical mediators that promote relaxation and analgesia. These biological effects reduce sympathetic nervous system activity, lowering physiological stress markers and facilitating emotional stability. Meta-analytical evidence supports this mechanism, confirming that cupping therapy significantly alleviates anxiety and depressive symptoms (Cao, Li & Liu, 2019).

Zahara et al. (2023) further argue that cupping serves as a tangible stress-reduction intervention, particularly in communal or institutionalized settings such as rehabilitation centers. The act of drawing "stagnant" or "dirty" blood is perceived both physiologically and psychologically as detoxification, reducing internal tension and promoting systemic balance. By relieving physical tension, the therapy creates conditions conducive to psychological recovery, aligning with the psychophysiological principle that body and mind are inseparable in maintaining mental health.

The Holistic and Islamic Psychological Framework

A distinguishing feature of Holistic Sunnah Cupping Therapy is its integration of spiritual practices into the clinical process. Hawari (2016) emphasizes that effective mental health interventions must encompass biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. This aligns with Engel's (1977) biopsychosocial model, which advocates for holistic treatment approaches beyond purely biological paradigms. Holistic Sunnah Cupping operationalizes this integrative framework by combining physical intervention with intention, prayer, and mindfulness, positioning the client as a unified entity of body and soul (Purwakania Hasan, 2008).

Research (Ancok & Suroso, 2011) highlight that Islamic psychology uniquely addresses the individual's relationship with the Creator, suggesting that spiritual engagement during therapeutic interventions enhances meaning-making and resilience. Clients undergoing hijamah with the intention of following the Sunnah reportedly experience a "spiritual boost," enhancing emotional regulation and coping strategies. Research (Bastaman, 2007) notes that such engagement mirrors logotherapeutic principles, wherein meaning-

centered practices serve as potent psychological defense mechanisms. This integrative approach differentiates Holistic Sunnah Cupping from conventional interventions, offering therapeutic efficacy that transcends the purely physiological.

Prophetic Medicine and Modern Relevance

The historical grounding of hijamah in prophetic medicine (thibb an-nabawi) provides both cultural resonance and therapeutic legitimacy for participants (Sari, 2019). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (2003) explains in *Zad al-Ma'ad* that cupping balances bodily humors and purifies the mind, a principle that contemporary researchers interpret as neuroendocrine regulation involving the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (Fakhriyani, 2019). Integrating these classical teachings with modern measurement tools, such as the DASS-21, demonstrates that ancient therapeutic wisdom remains empirically relevant for addressing mental health challenges in the 21st century. The spiritual component of the therapy, involving *dzikir* and prayer, induces meditative states that reduce cortisol levels and improve emotional regulation. This integrative model explains the substantial increase in predictive power ($R^2 = 0.56$) observed in regression analyses, suggesting that the therapy's efficacy derives not only from its physiological component but also from the synergistic influence of spiritual engagement.

Practical Implications for Rehabilitation and Public Health

The findings have significant implications for mental health services, particularly in culturally and religiously sensitive contexts such as Indonesia. Incorporating Sunnah-based holistic therapies can improve treatment adherence, reduce stigma, and enhance patient engagement (Hawari, 2016). Holistic Sunnah Cupping may serve as a primary complementary therapy alongside counseling and pharmacotherapy, bridging physical and spiritual domains to foster recovery. This study also provides a model for validating traditional therapies through rigorous scientific methods. By employing standardized psychometric instruments (DASS-21) and advanced statistical analyses (IBM SPSS, Field, 2013), traditional practices can be systematically evaluated, enabling integration into modern healthcare systems. Such evidence-based approaches are critical for advancing integrative medicine and addressing the growing burden of mental health disorders.

Despite robust findings, several limitations warrant consideration. The small sample size ($n = 30$) limits generalizability, and the absence of a control group means external factors—such as social support within the rehabilitation center—may have contributed to the observed outcomes (Creswell, 2014). Future research should employ randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with larger, more diverse populations to confirm the intervention's efficacy. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess whether the 56%

contribution of Holistic Sunnah Cupping to mental health outcomes remains stable over time. Additionally, qualitative approaches could explore subjective experiences and meaning-making processes associated with spiritual engagement during therapy, providing insight into how Sunnah-based intentions influence cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Bastaman, 2007).

The integration of Holistic Sunnah Cupping into the mental health care of clients at Rumah Rehab Al Amin represents a transformative intervention. By harmonizing physiological benefits (Ernst, 2009; Sari, 2019) with psychological and spiritual dimensions rooted in Islamic psychology (Ancok & Suroso, 2011; Purwakania Hasan, 2008), the therapy addresses depression, anxiety, and stress comprehensively. High validity, reliability, and robust statistical results provide strong empirical support for the therapy's inclusion in modern holistic health systems. This research demonstrates that integrating scientific and spiritual principles can yield a more resilient, multidimensional approach to human health, setting a precedent for future integrative mental health interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the Holistic Sunnah Cupping intervention has a significant and meaningful impact on improving the mental health of participants. The analysis revealed a clear strengthening of the relationship between the administration of the therapy and the psychological condition of individuals following the intervention. Prior to the treatment, the contribution of the therapy to mental health was limited; however, after the intervention, its effect increased substantially, demonstrating a stronger and more influential relationship.

The findings indicate a positive association between Holistic Sunnah Cupping and mental health, suggesting that the more optimal and intensive the therapy administered, the better the psychological outcomes achieved by the participants. The increase in the strength of this relationship underscores that the intervention does not merely provide temporary relief but plays a crucial role in reinforcing emotional stability and overall mental well-being. Therefore, it can be concluded that Holistic Sunnah Cupping is an effective intervention for enhancing mental health. This approach holds considerable potential as a complementary therapeutic method that extends beyond physical treatment, integrating psychological and spiritual dimensions to achieve holistic balance and well-being in individuals.

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