Silence in the Noise of Power: Psychosocial Violence through Mobbing and Character Assassination and Al-Ghazali's Spiritual Therapy Response

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the phenomenon of psychosocial violence in the form of mobbing and character assassination in modern institutional environments such as campuses, bureaucracies, and religious institutions. This symbolic violence not only impacts the psychological aspects of victims but also erodes the ethical, spiritual, and cultural values of organizations that should uphold integrity. This research uses an integrative approach by combining Western organizational psychology theoriessuch as those of Heinz Leymann and Eric Shiraevwith the Islamic spiritual ethics offered by Imam al-Ghazali. The findings indicate that mobbing practices are a systemic, covert power strategy aimed at excluding individuals with high integrity through symbolic manipulation and structural violence. The resulting impacts include psychological wounds, existential alienation, and a loss of meaning in life that cannot be addressed by conventional formal therapy. In this context, al-Ghazali's Sufism approach, through the concepts of tazkiyatun nafs (self-control), mujāhadah (self-reflection), ṣabr (reflection), dhikr (remembrance of God), and tafakkur (reflection), makes a significant contribution as a form of transformative spiritual therapy. This research presents a conceptual synthesis in the form of a spiritual resilience model, offering a holistic response to symbolic violence in institutional spaces, while also broadening the horizons of psycho-spiritual healing relevant to contemporary challenges.
Keywords: *Mobbing, Character Assassination, Symbolic Violence, Tazkiyatun Nafs, Spiritual Resilience, Spiritual Therapy*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, attention has been growing on non-physical violence in the workplace. While often invisible to the naked eye, these forms of violence are real and experienced by many individuals, ranging from persistent mental stress and social exclusion to subtle but systematic attempts to damage a person's reputation. The workplace should be a safe, supportive, and collaborative space. However, in reality, many workers experience psychological trauma in what appears to be a professional environment (Bourdieu, 1991). This phenomenon occurs not only in corporate environments but also permeates various other institutions, such as educational institutions, social organizations, and even religious institutions, places that should be bastions of moral and ethical values. Ironically, behind the seemingly dignified and civilized institutional image, manipulative power dynamics and unethical practices often lurk.

Two forms of symbolic violence that are increasingly visible in various social spaces are mobbing and character assassination. These phenomena are receiving increasing attention, both through mass media coverage and academic discourse. Numerous cases have been recorded showing lecturers being marginalized for their progressive thinking, civil servants being isolated for taking a firm stand against corruption, or staff being slandered simply for not participating in informal power networks. These patterns reflect systemic and ongoing forms of non-physical violence, which often go unnoticed but leave deep psychological scars for victims. Mobbing, as defined by Heinz Leymann, refers to a form of unethical and aggressive communication, carried out systematically and repeatedly, with the

main aim of pressuring, discrediting, or even pushing the victim out of the work environment. Mobbing is generally carried out by superiors or coworkers in influential positions within an organization (Leymann, 1990). This violence is not always direct or overt. However, it is present subtly and consistently in everyday life: individuals are socially ostracized, avoided in interactions, subjected to ridicule, or excluded from decision-making processes that should involve them.

In many cases, mobbing is accompanied by character assassination, a systematic attempt to damage a person's integrity and image through indirect but effective means: spreading suspicious rumors, assigning negative labels, obscuring individual accomplishments, or labeling that reduces a person's reputation to a socially or professionally detrimental image. Eric Shiraev and Jennifer Icks suggest that character assassination is often carried out by individuals or groups who feel their position is symbolically threatened by the presence of someone who has high competence and strong moral integrity (Icks & Shiraev, 2014). Fenomena ini kerap kali berakar pada perasaan iri, ketakutan akan kehilangan kekuasaan, atau ketidakmampuan untuk berkompetisi secara sehat dalam dinamika struktural organisasi (Icks & Shiraev, 2014)

Secara global, insiden mobbing dan pembunuhan karakter menunjukkan tren peningkatan yang mengkhawatirkan. Laporan dari Workplace Bullying Institute (WBI) pada tahun 2021 mencatat bahwa lebih dari 30% pekerja di Amerika Serikat pernah mengalami bentuk mobbing di lingkungan kerja, dengan lebih dari separuh pelakunya berasal dari atasan langsung. In Indonesia, although systematically documented quantitative data is still limited, various media reports and independent research findings are beginning to highlight the prevalence of structural bullying in various institutions, from universities to bureaucratic institutions.

Several emerging cases reflect a similar pattern: lecturers or professors experiencing ostracism for their ideas deemed to disrupt the status quo, or civil servants being criminalized for disloyalty to a particular political affiliation. This phenomenon indicates that symbolic violence is not only present in the corporate sphere but also permeates institutions that should be spaces for the growth of ethics and integrity.

The increasing practice of mobbing and character assassination within universities, bureaucracies, and integrative settings indicates that this phenomenon has developed into a kind of "institutional social disease" that spreads through the cracks of symbolic power and hierarchical structures. The victims of this practice are not weak individuals, but often those with superior intellectual capacity, a strong work ethic, and a firm commitment to upholding the principles of truth and justice. In environments that should be spaces for moral development and the development of knowledge, such steadfastness often triggers resistance from informal networks that exploit power for personal or group interests.

A social paradox thus emerges: the higher a person's competence and integrity, the greater their potential to become a target of covert systemic violence. In the context of the integration of scholarship and religion within these institutions, this situation not only threatens the psychosocial health of individuals but also undermines the academic climate, bureaucratic governance, and the spirit of the Islamic boarding school system, which should be inclusive, just, and civilized. If left unchecked, the practices of mobbing and character assassination risk creating a work culture steeped in fear, silencing criticism, and the loss of meritocracy within the institutional system (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). An environment that should foster academic freedom, professional governance, and spiritual development has instead become an arena for symbolic repression that erodes individual dignity.

This phenomenon is crucial to examine further, especially given the limited research integrating modern psychological approaches with Islamic ethics and spirituality. To date, solutions to mobbing and character assassination have generally focused on legal intervention or administrative mediation. Yet, many victims experience profound emotional wounds, a fractured soul, a loss of meaning in life, and social alienation that cannot be addressed by formal solutions alone.

Therefore, a more comprehensive and transdisciplinary approach is needed, including a spiritual healing approach rooted in classical Islamic spirituality. In this context, the thoughts of Imam al-Ghazali are highly relevant. Through concepts such as mujāhadah al-nafs (struggle against the ego), ṣabr (steadfastness of heart), ikhlāṣ (purification of intention), and tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), al-Ghazali offers a spiritual dimension that not only functions as personal therapy but also as an ethical foundation in rebuilding a just, healthy, and civilized institutional culture (al-Ghazali, 2020).

In this context, this research presents a novelty that can be broken down into three main aspects. First, this research integrates the perspective of modern organizational psychology with classical Sufi ethics, particularly al-Ghazali's thought, in interpreting the phenomenon of mobbing and character assassination in modern institutions such as universities, bureaucracies, and integrative organizations. Second, mobbing is not understood solely as an interpersonal problem, but as a systemic phenomenon rooted in an unhealthy organizational culture, thus requiring a structural spiritual healing approach. Third, this study offers the concept of spiritual resilience as a new conceptual framework for responding to psychological wounds resulting from symbolic violence in institutional spaces.

This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to building a healthy, just, and humane work environment by integrating modern psychology with Islamic spiritual ethics. This research has five main objectives: first, to describe the forms and patterns of mobbing and character assassination in the context of modern institutions such as campuses, bureaucracies, and integrative institutions. Second, to analyze the psychological and spiritual impacts of mobbing and character assassination on victims. Third, to examine Western psychological approaches to understanding the phenomenon of symbolic violence in the workplace or organizations. Fourth, to examine Imam al-Ghazali's thoughts on spiritual therapy as a response to mental suffering caused by unfair treatment. Fifth, to develop a conceptual synthesis between psychological theory and Islamic spirituality as a contribution to a holistic model of mental healing in the institutional realm.

Mobbing and Character Assassination Theory

Mobbing, from a psychosocial perspective, refers to a form of collective psychological violence that occurs in the workplace or within a community, where specific individuals are subjected to systematic actions aimed at weakening, isolating, or even eliminating them from their social or professional environment. The term was first introduced by Heinz Leymann, a Swedish psychologist of German descent. According to Leymann, mobbing is a process of negative communication that is repeated and ongoing over a long period, resulting in profound emotional suffering for the victim.

In the context of value-based institutions such as universities, bureaucracies, and integrative institutions, the practice of mobbing and character assassination becomes a paradoxical form of symbolic violence: it hides behind the formalities of governance and ethical language of the institution, yet simultaneously violates the values of justice, humanity, and spirituality that underlie the institution's existence (Leymann, 1990).

Heinz Leymann, a pioneer in the study of mobbing in a psychosocial context, emphasized that the impact of mobbing is not only limited to the mental health of the victim, but also seriously damages the social and professional integrity of the targeted individual. This process, which occurs systematically and continuously, creates conditions in which the victim not only loses self-confidence but also experiences a degradation of social status, professional marginalization, and relational disconnection within their work environment or community. These impacts show that mobbing is not just an ordinary interpersonal conflict, but a form of multi-layered symbolic violence: it destroys dignity, weakens professional identity, and marginalizes individuals from the social structure through ways that are often hidden and difficult to prove legally. In value-based institutional environments such as universities, bureaucracies, and integrative institutions, these impacts become even more complex because victims experience not only emotional suffering but also a profound spiritual crisis due to the clash between the noble values they believe in and the repressive institutional reality.

On a more pointed scale, character assassination can be understood as the most destructive form of mobbing. While mobbing focuses on repeated and collective psychological pressure, character assassination is a systematic attack specifically aimed at damaging an individual's reputation, credibility, and self-esteem. This action not only alienates the victim from their social and professional circles but also aims to undermine their moral authority and personal integrity in the public eye.

Zelie S. Hill and Sergei Samoilenko, in their study of character assassination, explain that this practice is a rhetorical and social strategy deliberately used to discredit individuals, particularly those in positions of influence or high integrity. Character assassination is often carried out through the dissemination of negative information, whether true, half-true, or completely false, to undermine an individual's legitimacy within a community or institution.

In the context of institutions such as universities, bureaucracies, and integrative organizations, this practice is particularly dangerous because it can destroy the credibility of scientists, moral leaders,

or educators who dare to defend the values of truth and justice. As a result, character assassination not only harms the individual attacked but also weakens the ethical and spiritual structure of the institution as a whole (Icks & Shiraev, 2014). This strategy can be realized through gossip, slander, the spread of misleading information, and even the manipulation of public opinion. Such tactics are often used in the workplace, political sphere, and even religious life.

While seemingly a contemporary phenomenon, this practice has been going on for a long time in human history. However, in the context of modern society, its forms have become more structured, hidden, and destructive. Many victims experience serious psychological distress, lose their direction in life, and fall into a deep abyss of despair. [13]

Al-Ghazali's Spiritual Therapy as a Response to Mobbing and Character Assassination

In dealing with the psychological wounds caused by mobbing and character assassination, a spiritual approach can provide a peaceful healing space. One relevant figure to be used as a reference in this context is Imam al-Ghazali (1058–1111 AD), a prominent Sufi, theologian, and Islamic philosopher. In his main work, Iḥyā Ulūm al-Dīn, al-Ghazali emphasized that spiritual healing cannot simply rely on a rational or medical approach, but must be accompanied by a deep process of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul). Al-Ghazali explained that the structure of the human psyche consists of three core elements: al-nafs (soul), al-qalb (heart), and al-'aql (reason). All three must be in harmony for a person to survive various mental attacks and social wounds. In facing betrayal, slander, and social pressure that have the potential to damage mental stability, al-Ghazali advocates the path of mujāhadah, namely the struggle against lust through devout worship, deep self-reflection, and strengthening the spiritual relationship with Allah SWT (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, 2011).

Al-Ghazali emphasized that knowledge of God, a deep and spiritual knowledge of God, is the primary source of inner strength in facing various forms of suffering. When someone experiences injustice or feels their dignity is being degraded by fellow human beings, al-Ghazali directs them to strengthen their hearts by realizing that what is most essential is not human views or judgments, but rather how God views and assesses them.

Meditation in Islamic tradition

Meditation in the Islamic tradition has distinct characteristics from meditative practices in Eastern teachings such as Buddhism and Hinduism. Within the framework of Islamic spirituality, these forms of meditation are reflected in the concepts of tafakkur (deep contemplation on creation and the meaning of life), tazakkur (awareness of death and the afterlife), and muraqabah (appreciation of God's presence and supervision). One of the leading Sufi figures who developed this contemplative approach was Ibn 'Aṭāillah al-Sakandari. In his monumental work, al-Ḥikam, he emphasized the urgency of withdrawing from the hustle and bustle of the world, calming the mind, and cultivating spiritual sensitivity as a path to tranquility and closeness to God.

The practice of meditation in Islam, as exemplified by Sufis such as al-Ghazali, involves several stages, both physical and spiritual. The first is khalwah, which is an effort to isolate oneself from the crowd and temporarily distance oneself from the hustle and bustle of social life in order to create a space of inner silence. Second, performing ablution and sunnah prayers as a form of physical and spiritual self-purification, preparing the heart to be fully present in contemplative practice. Third, living dhikr with full reverence, saying the name of Allah slowly and with full appreciation (as in the phrase Lā ilāha illa Allāh or Allāh... Allāh...) as a means to focus awareness on the Divine presence in a profound way (Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, 1992). The fourth step is muraqabah, which brings a deep awareness that God always sees, knows, and understands all the contents of the human heart and inner journey. The fifth step is tafakkur, which is reflective contemplation on the meaning of life, the nature of suffering, the wisdom behind every test, and the greatness of Divine destiny.

In practice, this Islamic meditation practice serves as a means of healing and reconstructing a soul wounded by psychological pressures such as mobbing and character assassination. It is not merely a form of spiritual therapy, but also a path home to the core of human existence: the serene and peaceful soul, known in Sufi terminology as al-nafs al-muṭma'innah.
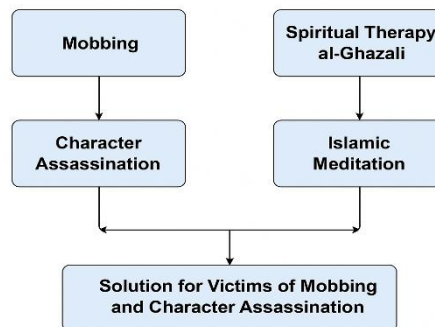
Psychosocial Integration and Spirituality as a Theoretical Framework for the Reconstruction of Victims' Souls

When someone experiences mobbing and character assassination, their social identity can be profoundly damaged. In many cases, conventional psychological therapy is unable to reach the depth of these wounds, as they are not only affected by the psychological aspect but also by the more subtle spiritual dimension. Therefore, an integrative approach is needed that combines theoretical perspectives on mobbing (Leymann), character assassination (Samoilenko), and the spiritual therapy framework offered by al-Ghazali. This approach emphasizes that true recovery requires not only social reconstruction but also a restructuring of self-meaning on a more essential spiritual level.

Through the practice of meditation in the Islamic tradition, wounded individuals are trained to let go of their dependence on social judgment and replace it with a strengthening of their inner awareness. They learn to no longer judge themselves based on wounds or stigmas inflicted by external parties, but rather on the ever-present and unwavering love of God. From this perspective, the experience of social injustice is interpreted as part of the process of tajrīdrelease from dependence on anything other than God and slander, becoming a means of takhliyah (religious devotion), cleansing the soul of ego and worldly attachments.

In contemporary social reality, violence is not always physical; it often manifests through hurtful words and social judgment that undermines individual dignity. Islamic spiritual tradition holds that every wound, if experienced with deep awareness, can become a gateway to spiritual transformation. In this regard, al-Ghazali asserted that the most dangerous calamity is not worldly suffering, but rather the loss of awareness of God's presence in the human heart.

When individuals experience social criticism or rejection, the spiritual path teaches us to cultivate inner strength through remembrance and divine love. Spirituality does not respond to wounds with hatred, but rather transforms them into a space for the purification of the soul. Ultimately, every human being is a spiritual pilgrim on a journey toward eternity. For those wounded by injustice but remaining patient and relying on God's presence, this suffering becomes a source of inner light, a light that cannot be extinguished by slander, blame, or neglect from anyone. To facilitate understanding of the above theory, we illustrate the theoretical concept below.

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│   Mobbing    │          │ Spiritual Therapy│
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      │ Solution for Victims of      │
      │ Mobbing and Character        │
      │ Assassination                │
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Before I examined this issue, I encountered several previous studies, including: first, Islamic psychotherapy as a spiritual healing for school bullying. Research by Yudha & Meilani (2023–2024), using a literature review, found that Islamic psychotherapy is effective in healing victims and even perpetrators of bullying in schools, ranging from children to adolescents. This approach emphasizes tazkiyah (contemplation) and spiritual training as a means of healing psychological trauma (Yudha & Meilani, 2024).

Second, a cognitive-based approach within a spiritual context. Methods such as Islamic-based Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) are applied to recent graduate students experiencing workplace anxiety. This research shows that an Islamic CBT approach significantly reduces anxiety and builds spiritual resilience in young individuals facing professional pressures. Third, spiritual affirmation and bullying prevention through Islamic religious education (Juniarti et al., 2024). A phenomenological study by Firmansyah et al. (2024) found that Islamic religious education teachers implemented spiritual affirmations to strengthen self-esteem to prevent student bullying. This demonstrates the role of spiritual

character education in preventing acts of social violence between students (Khumairoh & Sya'bani, 2024).

Previous studies have not specifically examined mobbing and character assassination from an Islamic spiritual perspective. The primary focus has been limited to bullying in education, with no in-depth exploration of psychosocial violence in the workplace or adult communities from a spiritual perspective. Furthermore, integration between a phenomenological approach and classical literature is still minimal. Research on spiritual healing generally fails to link victims' subjective experiences to the thoughts of figures like al-Ghazali. The Islamic meditation practices of meditation, reflection, and remembrance have also not been developed as systematic spiritual intervention models.

This study fills this gap by combining a phenomenological approach (the experiences of victims of mobbing and character assassination) and a literature review of al-Ghazali's spiritual therapies (tazkiyah, mujahadah, ma'rifatullah), while also developing an Islamic meditation framework as a spiritual healing strategy. To date, there has been no integrated study linking mobbing and character assassination with al-Ghazali's spiritual therapy and Islamic meditation practices. Therefore, this study offers an original contribution to the field of Islamic-based spiritual therapy for social trauma.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological-hermeneutic method and literature review. The phenomenological approach is used to explore the deeper meaning of the subjective experiences of victims of mobbing and character assassination, concerning personal consciousness as developed by Edmund Husserl. Meanwhile, the literature approach was chosen because this study is conceptual and philosophical, which requires exploration of the thoughts of figures such as Heinz Leymann, Sergei Samoilenko, Imam al-Ghazali, and Ibn 'Aṭāillah, as well as Sufi literature and classical religious texts (Husserl, 1982)

The focus of this research is to understand the dynamics of symbolic violence in the form of mobbing and character assassination in the modern era, as well as to examine the potential of Islamic spiritual therapy, especially the teachings of al-Ghazali and Sufi contemplative practices as an integral path to spiritual recovery (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

This research relies on primary and secondary data sources obtained through a literature approach. Primary sources include original works by figures such as Heinz Leymann's Mobbing, Sergei Samoilenko's Character Assassination, Imam al-Ghazali's Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn, and Ibn 'Aṭāillah al-Sakandari's al-Ḥikam. Other sources, such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Sufi works, also serve as references for understanding the spiritual roots of the experience of suffering (al-Ghazali, 2020)

Meanwhile, secondary sources include academic journals, scientific articles, and psychological-Sufi books relevant to the themes of mobbing, character assassination, spiritual therapy, and Islamic meditation practices. Data collection techniques include intensive reading, text analysis, and contextual interpretation of the meanings contained within the literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data were obtained from relevant primary and secondary works, such as classic texts, academic journals, and spiritual psychology books. The data collection technique was carried out through critical reading and contextual interpretation. Data analysis combined a phenomenological approach with the epoché technique to capture the essence of experience and Gadamer's spiral hermeneutic, which emphasizes a relational understanding between text and context (Moustakas, 1994). Validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and an interdisciplinary approach, while credibility is upheld by maintaining subjective integrity: empathy for the victims accompanied by intellectual acumen in interpreting the text (Janesick, 2000).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Findings: Subjective Experiences of Victims of Mobbing and Character Assassination

Through a phenomenological approach, the victims' inner experiences are explored from the most fundamental psychological depths. One informant, a woman identified in this study as "Sinar," is a professional working in an educational institution. She is known as a highly dedicated, innovative, critical thinker and is trusted by her colleagues. However, things began to change when she demonstrated the courage to criticize and propose improvements to the existing system. Her actions

became the starting point of a series of systematic bullying acts carried out by one of her superiors at her institution. In an in-depth interview, Sinar revealed that the initial bullying seemed mild but fraught with meaning, such as dismissive laughter whenever she gave a presentation. After that, a negative narrative emerged that portrayed her as someone difficult to work with. Gradually, she began to notice a shift in attitudes from her previously warm and supportive colleagues; the atmosphere became cold, interactions became strained, and discomfort was felt in every brief encounter. "I felt like I was no longer understood by my colleagues," she said bitterly.

The experience was further exacerbated when her superiors indirectly involved other colleagues in a systematic effort to damage her professional image. Colleagues who had previously been open to discussions now maintained a distance; some even limited communication to brief greetings or subtle avoidance. In a low voice, Sinar said, "I felt like I was a stranger in what should have been my safe space." This story reflects Leymann and Samoilenko's findings on structured mobbing strategies, in which perpetrators leverage social dominance within an organization as a tool to pressure and marginalize individuals perceived as disrupting the status quo (Icks & Shiraev, 2014).

Imam al-Ghazali's Theory of Spiritual Therapy: Purification of the Soul and Firmness of the Heart. Imam al-Ghazali's thoughts on spiritual therapy offer a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics of the human psyche through the processes of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul) and tahdzīb al-qulub (heart formation). In this framework, al-Ghazali emphasized that a person's spiritual health depends greatly on the ability to cleanse oneself of despicable traits such as pride, envy, and excessive love of the world. Purification of the soul, according to him, is not just ritualistic, but involves a deep reflective and muhasabah process regarding behavior and intentions. Through practices such as muraqabah (awareness of God's presence), mujahadah (struggle against lust), and khalwat (solitude for contemplation), individuals are encouraged to develop steadfastness in facing various worldly temptations and pressures. Firmness, in this case, is understood as spiritual endurance that is born from total submission to the Divine will and the ability to maintain consistency in walking the path of goodness. Al-Ghazali's approach is not only relevant in the Sufi context but also makes an important contribution to the discourse on contemporary Islamic psychology, particularly in the effort to find a balance between mental and spiritual health.

Imam al-Ghazali, through his monumental works such as Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn and Kimiya al-Sa'ādah, presents an approach to spiritual healing that is highly relevant to the context of psychological suffering caused by social trauma, including mobbing and character assassination. In al-Ghazali's perspective, healing a wounded soul is not solely achieved through external intervention but requires internal transformation through the process of tazkiyat al-nafs, namely the complete purification of the soul. This process encompasses several main stages, including reflective awareness of one's condition (muraqabah and muhasabah), systematic efforts to subdue lusts (mujahadah), and strengthening the spiritual dimension through the continuous practice of dhikr. Furthermore, al-Ghazali encourages individuals to reorient their life goals to Allah SWT as the center of all searches for meaning and inner peace. With this approach, spiritual therapy is not only a path to personal healing but also a means to build spiritual steadfastness in the face of layered social pressures. This framework becomes particularly relevant in the modern world, where psychosocial stress often leaves invisible wounds that can only be healed through an approach that touches the deepest spiritual dimensions (al-Ghazali, 2020).

In the spiritual journey undertaken by the informant, identified only as "Sinar," efforts to heal the soul are realized through the habit of consistently reciting dhikr (remembrance of God) in the morning and evening. This activity is not merely a routine of worship, but a form of mujahidah, an intense internal struggle to transform wounds into a space for spiritual reflection. In this process, he began to more deeply absorb the values of patience and sincerity, not merely as passive concepts, but as active principles in reframing the suffering he experienced. "Sinar" interprets suffering not merely as a trial, but as a divine means to strengthen his existential relationship with God. He stated, "I learned to organize wounds into a path back to God. Perhaps this is His way of strengthening me." This expression reflects the transcendence of the meaning of suffering from a spiritual perspective, as taught by al-Ghazali, that the difficulties faced by humans can become a medium for purifying the soul and a means of strengthening the heart when addressed with deep spiritual awareness.

Islamic Meditation as Social Trauma Therapy. Meditation in the Islamic tradition, often manifested in practices such as dhikr, tafakkur, tadabbur, and seclusion, has significant potential as a form of spiritual therapy for addressing complex social trauma. Unlike Eastern or Western forms of

meditation, which often focus on releasing the mind, Islamic meditation emphasizes an inner connection with the Creator through a profound divine awareness. In the context of social trauma, such as systematic bullying, marginalization, or character assassination, Islamic meditation serves not only as a means of temporary calm but also as a transformative mechanism capable of restoring self-esteem, strengthening the meaning of life, and fostering spiritual resilience. By increasing dhikr and contemplation on verses from the Quran, individuals experiencing social wounds are gradually trained to view suffering from a transcendent perspective as both a test and a path to spiritual purification. This approach aligns with the spiritual therapy framework offered by classical Islamic thinkers such as Imam al-Ghazali, who emphasized the importance of contemplation and submission as a path to authentic and sustainable inner healing (Ridho, 2024).

The Islamic method of meditation begins with preparing oneself to a state of purity, both physically and spiritually, then sitting in a calm and stable position, preferably in a quiet place away from distractions. The first step involves slowly reciting istighfar (repentance) as a form of inner cleansing and repentance for sins, followed by dhikr (remembrance of God), such as "Lā ilāha illa Allah", "Allāh Allāh", or "Ya Latīf". This dhikr can be recited aloud or silently, focusing fully on the meaning of the words and cultivating a full awareness of the presence of Allah SWT. In this contemplative practice, meditation becomes not only a means of worship but also a means of spiritually processing emotions and trauma.

In contemporary practice, this Islamic meditation technique can be combined with deep breathing exercises, where each breath is taken slowly through the nose, held for a moment, and exhaled slowly through the mouth or nose while simultaneously reciting the dhikr silently. This regular breathing rhythm serves to stabilize the autonomic nervous system and calm the emotional center of the brain (the amygdala), thus providing a profoundly relaxing effect. When dhikr is aligned with the breathing pattern, an integration of the physiological and spiritual dimensions occurs, strengthening the inner connection with God while simultaneously relieving psychological tension.

In the context of the "Ray" experience, he regularly practiced this form of meditation by retreating into silence, repeating frequent istighfar (repentance), and reflecting on the painful events that befell him. In this way, he sought not only inner peace but also the meaning of the trials he was experiencing. Gradually, he experienced a process of soul purificationa release from emotional wounds and a spiritual strengthening that helped him survive and thrive in stressful situations. This approach aligns with the Islamic concept of tazkiyat al-nafs (the spiritual self), which emphasizes that purification of the soul and fortitude can be achieved through focused and integrated spiritual disciplines, including meditation practices based on dhikr and conscious breathing.

The theoretical synthesis of a philosophical hermeneutic approach and Islamic spiritual solutions opens up new opportunities for understanding and addressing the social trauma experienced by mobbing victims. In Hans-Georg Gadamer's perspective, understanding cannot be built solely from observation of external symptoms or superficial psychological reactions. Rather, true understanding arises from a dialogical process between personal experience and a broader horizon of meaning, which is continually expanded through reflective and historical interpretation. In this context, the emotional wounds experienced by mobbing victims not only represent psychological disturbances but also signal an existential crisisa clash between bitter experiences and a deep need for meaning and direction in life. Therefore, recovery solutions require an approach that goes beyond conventional psychotherapeutic interventions and involves spiritual deepening.

Sufi figures such as Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn 'Athaillah as-Sakandari provided the foundation for a spiritual healing paradigm that addressed this crisis of meaning. Both emphasized the importance of ma'rifatullāh (true knowledge of God) as the primary path to inner peace and existential maturity. Dhikr performed devoutly and contemplatively was seen as an instrument for strengthening spiritual connections and unraveling stored emotional burdens. The practice of solitude in silence for introspection and drawing closer to the Divine was also seen as an effective strategy for inner purification. This process aligns with the principle of hermeneutics, namely the continuous effort to reinterpret experience from a horizon of ever-deeper and transcendent meaning.

Thus, Islamic spirituality serves not only as a solace but also as an epistemological foundation for building a strong sense of identity and restoring the meaning of life. This approach serves as an integrative alternative that bridges modern therapeutic needs with the wisdom of spiritual traditions, offering a holistic model of trauma recovery, both psychologically and spiritually. Sinar's narrative

demonstrates that Islamic-based spiritual therapy not only soothes wounds but also fosters new wisdom and strength. This is Islam's offer of mercy, demonstrating that behind social exclusion lies a space of healing silence.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that mobbing and character assassination practices within institutional settings are not merely individual or incidental phenomena, but have transformed into a systemic and structured form of collective behavior. This phenomenon develops gradually through a series of hidden but consistent actions, such as subtle, demeaning taunts, the dissemination of ambiguous negative narratives, gradual social exclusion, and efforts to shape collective opinion to stigmatize specific individuals. All of this occurs within an organized scenario, in which a dominant figure leverages their structural position and institutional power networks to engineer a process of exclusion against individuals deemed to disrupt the symbolic stability of the institution usually those with critical capacity, high integrity, and the courage to speak out against injustice.

In this configuration of power relations, domination is not only exercised formally through bureaucratic mechanisms, but also through covert symbolic violence. This violence manifests itself in the use of language, gestures, or attitudes that appear neutral but are psychologically wounding and marginalizing. This tendency is often fueled by envy and resistance to individuals perceived as threatening the status quo. Thus, mobbing becomes a strategy of social control that operates beneath the surface, relying on structural legitimacy and the willing silence of those around them.

The impact of this symbolic and structural violence is serious and profound. Victims experience not only psychological distress but also complex existential alienation. Psychological symptoms include feelings of isolation, decreased self-confidence, and emotional wounds that are difficult to express verbally. Spiritually, a significant void of meaning emerges, where activities previously undertaken with enthusiasm and sincere intentions become bland and exhausting routines. This crisis of meaning creates a distance between individuals and the inner peace that once accompanied them, so that the life energy that should have flourished through collaboration, recognition, and appreciation is drained by the hidden yet destructive dynamics of conflict.

Western psychology, through the thinking of figures such as Heinz Leymann, known for his mobbing theory, and Eric Shiraev and Jennifer Icks, who discuss character assassination, illustrates that this form of psychosocial violence is a systematic attack on personal integrity and human dignity. Mobbing is understood as indirect, covert violence, yet highly effective in damaging the psychological well-being of victims. It works through the creation of a manipulative narrative that positions the victim as the source of the problem, thereby legitimizing their suffering socially. In this view, victim recovery requires structured, long-term psychological support, as well as the presence of a just institutional system that supports the mental health and emotional safety of individuals from symbolic violence.

However, modern psychological approaches have limitations in addressing the spiritual and existential dimensions of emotional pain. The sense of alienation from the meaning of life, the emptiness of the soul, and the disconnection from transcendental relationships cannot be fully addressed through cognitive therapy or clinical intervention alone. It is in this context that Imam al-Ghazali's thinking becomes highly relevant and contributive. Through the concept of tazkiyat al-nafs (purification of the soul), al-Ghazali not only offers restorative therapeutic solutions but also guides individuals back to an authentic, vertical relationship with God. He believes that social suffering, when addressed spiritually, can become a path to self-purification and the strengthening of spiritual identity. Al-Ghazali emphasized five main pillars in the process of spiritual healing: mujahadah (inner struggle against lust), tafakkur (deep reflection on life experiences), dhikr (consistent remembrance of God as a calming force for the heart), muraqabah (awareness of Divine supervision that guides behavior), and khalwah (solitude in silence for self-reflection and purification of the heart). This approach is transformative; it does not simply heal wounds but honors suffering as a space for spiritual growth.

Thus, the integration of Western psychological theory and the concept of Islamic spiritual therapy forms a holistic model of self-healing. Modern psychology plays a role in identifying wounds, explaining the dynamics of power relations, and offering evidence-based therapeutic interventions. Meanwhile, the framework of Islamic spirituality provides a source of meaning, transcendental awareness, and the potential for deeper spiritual transformation. In this synthesis, individuals experiencing mobbing and symbolic violence are no longer positioned as passive victims, but rather as

spiritual subjects undergoing a spiritual process of spiritual maturity. This process enables them not only to heal but also to experience existential transfiguration, becoming individuals who are more resilient, clear-minded, and rich in the wisdom of life.

This research recommends the development of an integrative spiritual therapy model that combines Western psychological approachessuch as cognitive-emotional therapy and social supportwith Islamic meditation practices derived from the Sufi tradition. This model aims to respond to social trauma holistically through two pathways: (1) psychological recovery through reflection, emotional validation, and strengthening self-awareness; and (2) purification of the soul through dhikr, tafakkur, muraqabah, and khalwah.

This model is structured around three main pillars. First, Psychological Awareness, which helps victims recognize that the suffering they experience is a form of structural violence, not a personal failure. Second, Spiritual Transcendence, which reinterprets suffering as a path to divine meaning, as explained by al-Ghazali and Ibn 'Aṭāillah. Third, Gradual Recovery, which includes the stages of takhalli (emptying oneself of blameworthy traits), taḥalli (adorning oneself with noble morals), and tajalli (revealing divine meaning within the soul). Islamic meditation serves as a contemplative method that balances mental and spiritual aspects. This practice encompasses contemplation on the meaning of suffering, dhikr for inner peace, muraqabah as divine awareness, and khalwah as a space for purification from social poisons.

For Muslim counselors and spiritual guides, this study proposes guidelines for integrative practices, including: creating a space for empathy and emotional validation, channeling suffering as a means of tadrīb (spiritual education), guiding dhikr of the heart and contemplation of the Beautiful Names of Allah (Asmaul Husna), and building a supportive spiritual community. Most importantly, counselors need to help victims reconstruct their sense of meaning and identity, not by avenging the injury, but by growing beyond it toward spiritual maturity.

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