

Submitted	Revised	Published
15 February 2025	04 March 2025	23 Marc 2025
DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v12i1.3399">https://doi.org/10.58518/madinah.v12i1.3399</a>		

## IMPROVING BRAIN NEUROPLASTICITY IN CONCENTRATION, EMOTIONAL CONTROL, AND COGNITIVE POWER THROUGH **DHIKR**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to identify the effect of dhikr on brain neuroplasticity and its implications for mental health. Using the thematic tafsir method, this study collects and analyses Qur'anic verses related to dhikr and mental health and examines books of tafsir as primary data sources. In contrast, secondary data are taken from books and scientific journal articles. The results show that the practice of dhikr can form new neural pathways related to concentration, emotional control, and improved cognitive abilities. Regular dhikr activities are proven to strengthen the brain's synaptic connections and improve the optimization of brain function through engaged focus. These findings indicate a convergence between spiritual practices and scientific findings, making dhikr an effective way to improve mental health and overall quality of life.

**Keywords:** Al-Quran, Dhikr, Neuroplasticity, Emotional Control, Cognitive Power

**ABSTRAK:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh dzikir terhadap neuroplastisitas otak dan implikasinya terhadap kesehatan mental. Dengan menggunakan metode tafsir tematik, penelitian ini menghimpun dan menganalisis ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang berkaitan dengan dzikir dan kesehatan mental, serta mengkaji kitab-kitab tafsir sebagai sumber data primer, sedangkan data sekunder diambil dari buku-buku dan artikel jurnal ilmiah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praktik dzikir dapat meningkatkan kerja neuroplastisitas otak dengan menghasilkan pembentukan jalur saraf baru yang berhubungan



dengan konsentrasi, pengendalian emosi, dan peningkatan kemampuan kognitif. Aktivitas dzikir secara rutin terbukti memperkuat koneksi sinaptik otak dan meningkatkan optimalisasi fungsi otak melalui fokus yang terlibat. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya konvergensi antara praktik spiritual dan temuan ilmiah, menjadikan dzikir sebagai cara yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kesehatan mental dan kualitas hidup secara menyeluruh

**Kata Kunci:** Al-Qur'an, Dzikir, Neuroplastisitas otak

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health is an important aspect to maintain for every individual to ensure a good quality of life. With good mental health, individuals can enjoy life well. In Indonesia, mental decadence is an undeniable content. This is evidenced by the increasing number of cases of mental disorders. Data from the Indonesian Community Mental Health Index Year 2023 shows that around 20 million people experience mental health problems, including anxiety and depression with suicide among adolescents. Many adolescents report having attempted suicide influenced by physical, emotional and social factors.<sup>1</sup> Public awareness about mental health is still relatively low and limited access to mental health services is a major obstacle. One approach that can be pursued is an approach that integrates spiritual and scientific dimensions to improve mental health, for example through the practice of Islamic meditation called *dhikr*.<sup>2</sup>

Meditation is often associated with religious or spiritual practices. However, today many meditation techniques are applied in a medical context without involving religious elements. *Dhikr* provides positive spiritual benefits on mental health through the brain's neuroplasticity process. The brain can adapt, repair, and reshape neural pathways based on repeated experiences and habits. The practice of Islamic meditation (*dhikr*) is through the repetition of holy words or sentences, which can help build positive mindsets and emotions that have an impact on brain structure and function, to get closer to God which has implications for inner calm.<sup>3</sup>

By remembering Allah consistently, individuals can achieve greater emotional stability, allowing them to deal with life's stresses more effectively. This activity not only promotes inner calm but also helps in managing daily stress and anxiety.<sup>4</sup> The Qur'an encourages Muslims to always *dhikr* (remember Allah) as a

<sup>1</sup> Nazula Hidayatul Ma'rufa, Assyifa Nur Rumaisha, and Fuad Nashori, "Pengaruh Terapi Zikir Istigfar Terhadap Depresi Pada Mahasiswa," *Psychopolitan : Jurnal Psikologi* 7, no. 1 (2023): 52–61.

<sup>2</sup> Rifqatul Husna, Ach Zayyadi, and Dwiki Oktafiana, "The Relationship of Faith and Tolerance in The Film One Amen Two Faith: Living Qur'an Perspective," *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1–10.

<sup>3</sup> Dwi Engel and Nazwa Zakiatus Salma, "Tinjauan Literatur: Manfaat Dzikir Dalam Regulasi Emosi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Sosial Agama* 03, no. 04 (2024): 289–301, <https://journal.nabest.id/index.php/annajah/article/view/289-301>.

<sup>4</sup> Emilia Mustary, "Terapi Relaksasi Dzikir Untuk Mengurangi Depresi," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Counseling* 3, no. 1 (2021): 1–9, <http://ejurnal.iainpare.ac.id/index.php/ijic>.



way to gain peace of mind, thus having an impact on mental health. There have been several of these previous studies by Sarihat (2021) in the article "The Secret of Soul Tranquility in the Qur'an: A Thematic Tafsir Study" This study examines Qur'anic verses related to faith and peace of mind. The results show many verses that emphasize calmness, such as Surah Al-Fajr 27-30. Peace of mind can be achieved through *dhikr* (Surah Ar-Ra'd 28) and other worship practices such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and reading the Qur'an.<sup>5</sup>

Umar Latif's research (2022) entitled "*Dhikr* and Mental Spiritual Fulfillment Efforts in the Perspective of the Qur'an" aims to explore the concept of *dhikr* and understand its meaning in a spiritual and psychological context. This research shows that *dhikr* plays an important role in shifting the focus of the individual's mind from worldly matters to awareness of God and the afterlife. Regular practice of *dhikr* can improve emotional control and reduce anxiety, which has a positive impact on mental health. *Dhikr* is a spiritual practice that helps overcome anxiety and negative thoughts.<sup>6</sup> Other research was found on the exploration of *dhikr* and its effects on mental health that focused on non-religious approaches (methods that do not involve the belief of religious norms) such as mindfulness.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the focus of this research is on the process of brain neuroplasticity through *dhikr* which has implications for mental health, which has not yet been found. This suggests that there is still a lack of understanding of the impact of *dhikr* on the brain and mental health, especially on the brain's ability to adapt and form new neural networks. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of *dhikr* as an Islamic meditation practice on mental health through the process of brain neuroplasticity by referring to Quranic verses. In addition, *dhikr* is also explored by researchers on how it affects brain neuroplasticity and its implications for mental health.

## METHOD

This research is a qualitative study. Qualitative studies emphasize the aspect of deep understanding of a phenomenon and assume that every phenomenon must have a pattern that can be revealed.<sup>8</sup> The type of research used is library research, which examines some literature related to *dhikr*, brain neuroplasticity, and its impact on mental health. To achieve these goals, this

<sup>5</sup> Sarihat, "Rahasia Ketenangan Jiwa Dalam Al-Qur'an," *MAGHZZA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 6, no. 1 (2021): 30-46.

<sup>6</sup> Umar Latif, "Dzikir Dan Upaya Pemenuhan Mental-Spiritual Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *At-Taujih : Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam* 5, no. 1 (2022): 28.

<sup>7</sup> Putri Paula Nathania Chrisna and Rudangta Arianti, "Meditasi Agama Buddha : Sejahtera Psikologis Dengan Mindfulness," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling (JPDK)* 5, no. 2 (2023): 2808-2816, <https://journal.universitaspahlawan.ac.id/index.php/jpdk/article/view/13682>.

<sup>8</sup> Rukminingsih, Gunawan Adnan, and Mohammad Adnan Latief, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan. Penelitian Kuantitatif, Penelitian Kualitatif, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas, Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, vol. 53, 2020.



research uses primary data sources in the form of interpretations of Quranic verses and secondary sources such as books and scientific journal articles.

The thematic interpretation method will be implemented to collect Qur'anic verses related to *dhikr*. The thematic interpretation method allows the researcher to determine key themes in the Qur'anic verses and relate them to the broader context, including psychological and neurological aspects. In this regard, researchers can grasp the essence of the deep meaning of *dhikr* from a spiritual and scientific perspective, as well as understand how the practice of *dhikr* can contribute to positive changes in brain structure and function. Using the thematic interpretation method, this study aims to present a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between spiritual practices and mental health. Descriptive analysis was also applied to describe the characteristics of the data without generalizing.

## DISCUSSION

### *Dhikr (Islamic Meditation) and Mental Health*

*Dhikr* has a deep and varied meaning. *Dhikr* comes from the Arabic **ذَكْرٌ** - **ذِكْرٌ** - which means "to mention" or "to remember" Allah and things related to Allah. In the Qur'an, *dhikr* is often interpreted as a way of praising Allah by upholding all forms of worship that the servant does to God.<sup>9</sup> According to al-Ghazali, *dhikr* is one of the very strong pillars of *taqarrub ilallah*. This remembrance can also be termed the guru's tariqah, where one never comes to God physically but is always present with their heart through the regular and continuous practice of *dhikr*.<sup>10</sup>

From the definition above, *dhikr* can be called Islamic meditation, *dhikr* is the most common form of Islamic meditation, in which a person repeatedly mentions the names of Allah or sentences such as "Subhanallah" (Glory be to Allah), "Alhamdulillah" (Praise be to Allah), and "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Great). This activity not only affects peace of mind but also has a spiritual purpose, which is to get closer to Allah to achieve peace of mind.<sup>11</sup>

In several verses of the Qur'an, Allah commands His servants to always remember Him. QS. Surah al-Ahzab (Surah 33), verse 41:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"O you who believe, remember (in the name of) Allah, as much as possible."

This verse invites every believing individual to remember Allah a lot. This verse contains an order for believers to remember Allah consistently and

<sup>9</sup> Misbakul Khaer, "Makna Dzikir Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Sya'rāwī (Studi Analisis Terhadap Tafsir Surat Al-Ra'd Ayat 28)," *AQWAL Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 2, no. 1 (2021): 151–168.

<sup>10</sup> Ismi Rahma Marwiyah, "Implementasi Dzikir Sebagai Terapi Sufistik Untuk Mencegah Stres Pada Ibu Rumah Tangga," *Gunung Djati Conference Series* 19 (2023): 530–540; Abd Basid, Ach Naufal Maulana, and Wahid Robith Lutfillah, "Ta'wil Al-Qur'an Imam Al-Ghazali: Telaah Metodologis Atas Kitab Tafsir Al-Imam Al-Ghazali Karya Muhammad Al-Rihani," *Firdaus: Jurnal Keislaman, Pemikiran Islam, dan Living Qur'an* 2, no. 2 (2023): 147–165.

<sup>11</sup> Sabarudin, "Konsep Dzikir Perspektif Hadis," *Minaret Journal Of Religious Studies* 1 (2023): 81–86.



intensively, both through the heart, tongue, and actions. The word "dhikron katsiron" (much *dhikr*) indicates the importance of the continuity of *dhikr* as a form of devotion and closeness to Allah. This verse also emphasizes that *dhikr* is one way to maintain a spiritual connection with Allah, provide peace of mind, and practice sincerity in worship.<sup>12</sup>

*Dhikr* connects the human soul to Allah and makes it always feel the presence of Allah SWT. Indeed, the most obvious *dhikr* is prayer; every word, movement, and even the second beat of the heart should be directed to Him. But the explanation in the book of *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab, he quotes from Thahir Ibn 'Ashur that *dhikr* contains two things, the first is *dhikr* with the tongue, including reading the Qur'an, studying, and conducting studies and research. The second is *dhikr* with the heart. *Dhikr* with heart means remembering Allah in all His commands and prohibitions.<sup>13</sup>

Ibn Atha'illah al-Sakandary argues that *dhikr* serves as a way to keep away from negligence and always remember Allah wholeheartedly. This is in line with the view of 'Abdal-Mun'im Hifni, who sees *dhikr* as a way out of negligence towards full awareness (*musyahadah*). In this process, there is a feeling of fear (*khauf*) and deep love for Allah, which is expressed through certain sentences that are repeated, according to the will of the person doing *dhikr*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, *dhikr* becomes a verbal activity that is a high spiritual awareness to get closer to Him. This practice promotes better mental health by fostering a sense of calmness, hope, and emotional strength in the face of stress.

*Dhikr*, which means remembering Allah, is one way of practising the teachings of the Qur'an. By doing *dhikr*, a person remembers and reflects on the verses of Allah, which will have an impact on the peace of the soul. As in Surah Al-Isra verse 82, *dhikr* is one of the ways to feel the "antidote" promised by Allah for believers. Allah ta'ala said:

وَنَزَّلَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنَ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

" And We have sent down from the Qur'an an antidote and a mercy for those who believe. And the Qur'an does not add to the wrongdoers anything but harm. "

Before verse 82, Allah describes Prophet Muhammad's night journey (*Isra'*) and how he was given revelation. This shows that the Qur'an is the result of a very important and extraordinary spiritual experience. In this context, verse 82 reinforces the role of the Qur'an as a result of this journey that brings goodness to

<sup>12</sup> Raja. Mukhammad. Mahmud Zufriyatun. Baharuddin, "Konsep Dzikir Dalam Al-Quran Surat Al-Ahzab Ayat: 41-42 (Studi *Tafsir Al-Misbah*)," *jurnal madani institute* 11, no. 2 (2022): 41-42.

<sup>13</sup> Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al- Misbah, Pesan, Kesan, Dan Kreasi Al- Qur'an(Al-Misbah Volume 10)," 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Mohammad Asy'ari, "Menggali Misteri Dibalik Dahsyatnya Dzikir," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1-14, [http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484\\_SISTEM PEMBETUNGAN\\_TERPUSAT\\_STRATEGI\\_MELESTARI](http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/305320484_SISTEM PEMBETUNGAN_TERPUSAT_STRATEGI_MELESTARI).



mankind. Quraish Shihab in his tafsir explains that the word *shifa'* is usually interpreted as healing or antidote, and is also used in the sense of freedom from deficiency, or the absence of obstacles in obtaining benefits.

Asbabun Nuzul of QS. Al-Isra' verse 82 is explained by Thabathaba'i in Tafsir al-Misbah quoted by M. Quraish Shihab, saying that this verse is related to the description of the surah about the characteristics of the Qur'an and its function as proof of the truth of the Prophet Muhammad's nubuwwah. This verse describes how the Qur'an functions as a cure for mental illness. In the narration of Ibn Mardawaih through the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Mas'ud reported that someone approached the Prophet and complained about his chest. Then the Prophet said: "Let yourself read the Qur'an". Meanwhile, according to the great Sufi al-Hasan al-Bashri, as quoted by Muhammad Sayyid Thanhawi, based on the narration of Abu-asy-Syeikh: "Allah made the Qur'an a cure for the diseases of the heart, and did not make it a cure for bodily ailments".<sup>15</sup>

In this case, the repeated recitation of the Qur'an is also a practice of *dhikr* in the daily life of a Muslim. The Qur'an as an antidote is one of the very good readings to be done continuously. The Qur'an also emphasizes that peace of mind can be achieved by remembering Allah. Making the Qur'an one of the recitations of *dhikr*, in addition to being a practical way to absorb the teachings of the Qur'an and get closer to Allah, can also make one's heart calm. As found in the Qur'an Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 28:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُ الْقُلُوبُ

*"(Those) who believe and their hearts are calmed by the remembrance of Allah. Remember, it is only in the remembrance of Allah that the heart is at rest."*

The Munasabah of Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 28 emphasizes that those who receive guidance from Allah and follow His guidance will feel peace in their hearts. This tranquillity comes after a period of doubt and is due to *dhikrullah* (remembrance of Allah) and the beauty of the Qur'anic verses. Thus, with the remembrance of Allah, the heart will be at peace.<sup>16</sup>

Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi explained the meaning of *dhikr* in surah ar-Ra'd verse 28, he interpreted that *dhikr* is remembering Allah with the heart, tongue and limbs to glorify and glorify Allah so that with this for people who believe, their hearts will tremble and their faith will increase, then they will not stop remembering Him.<sup>17</sup> For example, if we love someone, we will always

<sup>15</sup> Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al Mishbah Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an (Surah Ibrahim, Al-Hijr, An-Nahl Dan Surah Al-Isra)," *Tafsir Al-Misbah* Vol.7, 2002, <https://shorturl.at/lny37>.

<sup>16</sup> Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Volume-06," Jakarta : Lentera Hati, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Izzan Reza et al., "The Concept of Dhikr in the Qur'an and Its Relation to Mental Health: An Analysis of Surah Ar-Ra'd Verse 28," *Indonesian Journal of Behavioral Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 25–32, <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/mashadiruna>; Mohammad Mas'ud Ubaidillah, "Rationalization of the Nusantara Tafsir and the Middle East: A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of Al-Fatiha by KH. Zaini Mun'im and Ahmad Mustafā Al-Marāghī," *Mushaf: Jurnal Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan* 4, no. 1 (2023): 136–161.



mention his name and always remember him. Therefore, if a person has a love for Allah in his heart, then his heart will always be filled with *dhikrullah* because *dhikr* has become food for his soul.<sup>18</sup> However, if a believer has neglected the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) then Satan will control him so that his life will continue to be in darkness because Satan, jinn and humans will continue to plunge and tempt him to commit sins and sins that make his life uneasy.

In *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, M. Quraish Shihab explains that the word (الْيَ) *ala* is used to ask for the attention of the speech partner regarding what will be said. This verse is about *dhikrullah*, which gives birth to peace of mind. While the word (تَطْمَئِنُّ) *tathmainnu* Thabathaba'i explains the previous word, which is faith. The explanation of Sayyid Thantawi in his book *Tafsir al-Wasith* reveals that the selection of the verb form (تَطْمَئِنُّ) *tathmainnu* in the form of *mudhari'* (the verb is or will happen) gives the impression that the tranquillity is sustainable and uninterrupted.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, *dhikr* is highly recommended so that it has a great impact on the peace of the heart. *Dhikr* is not only verbal but the heart is also present to remember Allah. *Dhikr* is only done verbally without awareness of the heart, it will not be perfect unless the *dhikr* is accompanied by fear of Him, supervision of Him, and full awareness of His commands and prohibitions.

Based on the interpretation that has been presented above, it shows that *dhikrullah* or, remembering Allah, whether done verbally, in the heart or by deed, can foster a sense of mental tranquillity in the hearts of believers so that doing *dhikr* can have a positive effect on mental health.

### Brain Neuroplasticity

Religious practices such as prayer and meditation can affect the brain, as has been studied by neurotheologian Dr. Andrew Newberg. His research indicates that these activities can optimize activity in the parietal lobe and frontal lobe. The parts of the brain that have important functions in various mental, sensory, and motor activities are the parietal lobe and frontal lobe. This can strengthen neural connections and improve the brain's neuroplasticity in concentration, emotional control, and cognitive power, all of which are beneficial for mental health.<sup>20</sup>

Neuroplasticity is the ability of nerve cells (brain) to change, remodel, and reorganize, this aims to achieve better adaptability to new stimulation.<sup>21</sup> Neuroplasticity is a scientific term that refers to the brain's ability to change and adapt. The term neuroplasticity is derived from two words: "Neuro," which refers to the nervous system, including the brain and all neural networks in the body, while "Plasticity" refers to the ability to change, adapt, or reshape. Thus, neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to change in structure, function, and

<sup>18</sup> Ainur Rofiq and Sutopo, "Tafakur Dan Dzikir Dalam Mencapai Ketenangan Hidup," *Conseils : Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam* 3, no. 1 (2023): 1-12.

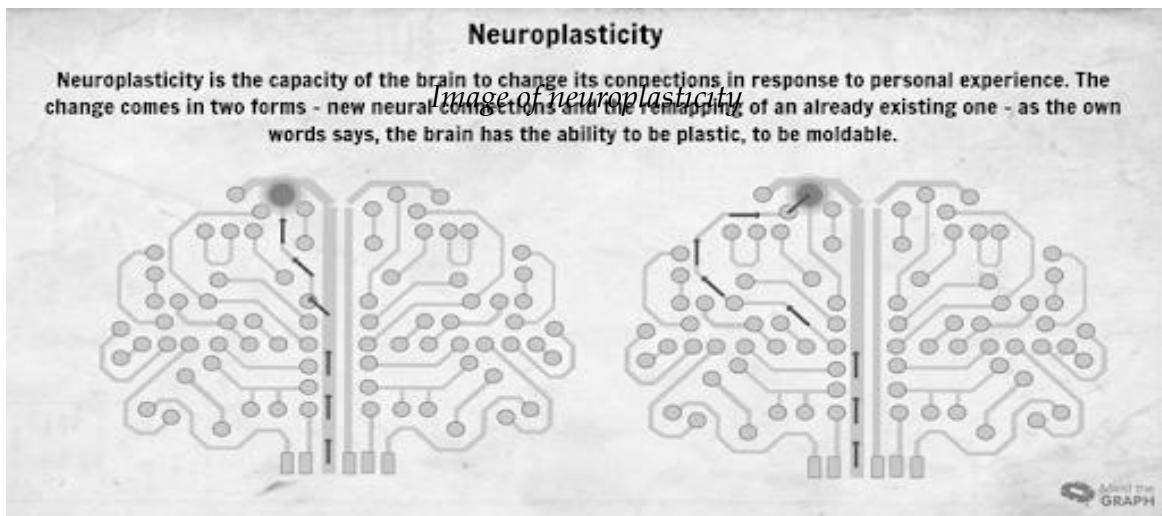
<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Sayyid Thantawi, "13. *Tafsir Al-Wasith* Thantawi - Mulai Ar-Ra'd.Pdf," 1987.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew B. Newberg, "The Neuroscientific Study of Spiritual Practices," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. MAR (2014): 1-6.

<sup>21</sup> Pedro Mateos-Aparicio and Antonio Rodríguez-Moreno, "The Impact of Studying Brain Plasticity," *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience* 13, no. February (2019): 1-5.



neuronal connectivity in response to changes in the environment, experience, or learning.<sup>22</sup> Neurons in the brain are distributed throughout, but the process of neuroplasticity occurs in specific brain networks that are active depending on the function or experience involving that part of the brain.<sup>23</sup>



The image shows the concept of neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to change and adapt its synaptic connections based on experience and learning. The illustration on the left side shows the initial condition of the brain before neuroplasticity occurs. The connections between neurons look simpler with synaptic pathways that have been formed but have not undergone many adjustments. The illustration on the right side shows the brain after changes due to neuroplasticity. The synaptic connections are more complex and branching, reflecting the formation of new connections or the strengthening of existing pathways. This concept explains that the human brain has adaptive properties, allowing a person to learn new skills, recover function after injury, or adapt to evolving experiences.<sup>24</sup> Thus, individuals who have good neuroplasticity will automatically be able to control their mental state.

The connection between neuroplasticity and spiritual aspects, namely *dhikr*, is very relevant. Indirectly repeating the readings in *dhikr* consistently will create a brain reflex that has been formed with several *thayyibah* sentences so that it can provide peace to the soul. In addition, the connection between neuroplasticity and spiritual aspects can be found in the Qur'an surah Al-Baqarah verse 269, which connects the neuroplasticity of the brain with wisdom. in the verse, it is emphasized that Allah bestows wisdom to those whom He wills. As Allah says in the Qur'an:

<sup>22</sup> Pristina Nur Andayani, "Neuroplastisitas: Kekuatan Otak Untuk Berubah Dan Beradaptasi Pristina Nur Andayani," *Literasi Note* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–9.

<sup>23</sup> Joyce Shaffer, "Neuroplasticity and Clinical Practice: Building Brain Power for Health," *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, no. JUL (2016): 1–12.

<sup>24</sup> Catherine Agonis, "Neuroplasticity Knowledge and Perceived Self-Efficacy in Western Adults: A Qualitative Examination," *Graduate Student Journal of Psychology* 21 (2023).



يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ حَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

*"He bestows al-Hikmah on whom He wills. Whoever is bestowed with al-Hikmah, then he has indeed been bestowed with much grace. And only Ulul Albab can take lessons."*

The Munasabah of the previous verse of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 269 describes two paths, the way of Allah and the way of the devil. The way of Allah brings peace and improvement in life, making it a wise choice. However, not everyone chooses this path; only those endowed with wisdom can understand and make the right decisions in life.<sup>25</sup>

Hikmah comes from the word (حَكْمٌ) *hakama*, which means to hinder and refers to the ability to direct towards the good and keep away from the bad. Those who have a pure mind or a clean heart (*Ulul al-Albab*) will be blessed with wisdom so that they can choose the best and avoid the bad. Meanwhile, those who reject Allah's guidance will experience confusion in thinking and only understand the surface aspects of a problem. True understanding can only be achieved by those who have the essence of reason. This is achieved through clear thinking and following Allah's guidance.<sup>26</sup>

In Islam, neuroplasticity and *al-hikmah* have the same meanings of change, adaptation, and improvement of the quality of life. Neuroplasticity's transformation process improves brain patterns, while wisdom improves mindset and behaviour towards goodness.<sup>27</sup> Neuroplasticity of the brain plays an important role in the process of improving health for the mentally ill because experience and deep learning can form new neural pathway connections in the brain, this ability is similar to the concept of wisdom which can improve an individual's ability to apply wisdom gained through deep understanding, experience, and reflection.

### Power of Concentration

Based on a scientific point of view, *dhikr* is more than just worship, *dhikr* also has a significant impact on physical and mental health. On the concentration side, *dhikr* that is done regularly can train the brain to focus, this process is similar to mindfulness meditation activities, where this activity is carried out to focus the mind on an object or a certain *dhikr* practice so that the brain can strengthen the ability to focus and reduce mental distractions. At times when a person faces unpleasant feelings such as disappointment and anger, *dhikr* becomes one of the effective ways to reduce amygdala activity in the brain (the part of the brain that regulates stress and emotions), so that a person becomes better able to cope with

<sup>25</sup> Quraish Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an (Volume 1)," *Jakarta: Lentara Hati*, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Shihab, "Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an (Volume 1)."

<sup>27</sup> Ahmat Miftakul Huda and Suyadi, "Otak Dan Akal Dalam Kajian Al-Quran Dan Neurosains," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 5, no. 1 (2020): 67-79; Rifqatul Husna and Ira Bariroh, "Penafsiran Term Qawwam Pada QS. Al- Nisa' Ayat 34 Dan Korelasinya Dengan Neurosains," *Ta'wiluna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an, Tafsir dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 3 (2024): 826-841.



his emotions. In a state of *dhikr*, a person's condition is very relaxed, calm, and solemn which can produce more electrical signals in the form of brain waves. Brain waves have two types of waves that are related to focus and calmness: alpha waves and theta waves. Alpha waves will work when individuals are relaxed but still aware, for example, *dhikr* or meditation. These waves can optimize creativity, focus, and memory and can reduce stress. While theta waves work when individuals are in a very relaxed state, in deep meditation, or when almost asleep. These waves can improve long-term memory, increase intuition and reduce anxiety which greatly impacts a person's mental health.<sup>28</sup>

*Dhikr*, mental health, and neuroplasticity have a close relationship through various mechanisms, such as increasing a sense of tranquillity and serenity, overcoming stress and anxiety, increasing focus and concentration, helping to overcome depression, and improving human physiological health. Hence, the practice of *dhikr* serves not only as a spiritual act of worship but also as an effective therapeutic tool to improve the psychological well-being of individuals.<sup>29</sup> In a psychological context, *dhikr* helps individuals to soak in the moment, reducing the negative thoughts that often plague their minds and emotions, thus increasing their ability to deal with challenging situations.<sup>30</sup> Meditation is often associated with reduced levels of stress hormones such as cortisol. Chronic stress can impair neuroplasticity by shrinking areas of the brain, such as the hippocampus, that are important for learning and memory. By calming the mind, *dhikr* can help maintain brain health and improve neuroplasticity.<sup>31</sup>

Meditation can also strengthen connections between neurons, as repetitive activities such as *dhikr* can strengthen synaptic connections in the brain. This repetitive process involves focused attention, which helps train brain circuits associated with concentration and calmness. By doing *dhikr* frequently, the connections between neurons can become more efficient.<sup>32</sup> In addition, *dhikr* can also increase the thickness of the brain cortex, activate the parasympathetic nervous system, increase awareness and focus, increase positive emotions, and cause long-term changes in brain structure.

<sup>28</sup> Fred Travis and Jonathan Shear, "Focused Attention, Open Monitoring and Automatic Self-Transcending: Categories to Organize Meditations From Vedic, Buddhist and Chinese Traditions," *Consciousness and Cognition* 19, no. 4 (2010): 1110–1118, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2010.01.007>.

<sup>29</sup> Sakinah Pokhrel, "Dzikir Sebagai Psikoterapi Terhadap Gangguan Mental (Mental Disorder) Menurut Al-Quran," *Thesis* 15, no. 1 (2024): 37–48.

<sup>30</sup> Irhas Irhas, Ahmad Amir Aziz, and Lalu Agus Satriawan, "The Power of Dhikr: Elevating Intellectual, Emotional, and Spiritual Quotients," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (2023): 601.

<sup>31</sup> Diane Ruge, Li Min Liou, and Damon Hoad, "Improving The Potential of Neuroplasticity," *Journal of Neuroscience* 32, no. 17 (2012): 5705–5706.

<sup>32</sup> Omri Barak and Misha Tsodyks, "Persistent Activity In Neural Networks With Dynamic Synapses," *PLoS Computational Biology* 3, no. 2 (2007): 0323–0332.



## CONCLUSION

*Dhikr* as an Islamic meditation practice has a significant impact on the neuroplasticity of the brain, making us mentally healthier. *Dhikr* not only helps individuals achieve peace of mind through the remembrance of Allah but also has profound spiritual implications by bringing humans closer to their Creator. Based on an analysis of Qur'anic verses and the views of scholars, *dhikr* affects mental health through peace of mind, emotion regulation and stress reduction.

The new findings outlined in this review explain that the practice of *dhikr* can also affect the neuroplasticity of the brain, forming new neural pathways associated with concentration, emotional control, and improved cognitive abilities. Mental health and brain function can be supported by a therapeutic approach through the practice of *dhikr*. Thus, *dhikr* not only serves as a means of bringing individuals closer to Allah but also helps maintain mental health and enhances the brain's capacity to learn and adapt. The combination of spiritual practices and scientific findings makes *dhikr* an effective way to promote a good quality of life, including peace of mind and mental health. The theoretical implications of this study suggest that spiritual teachings in Islam have scientific relevance in supporting psychological and neurological well-being.

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