



Spiritual Guidance and Mindful Worship: An Intervention Study within School Counseling Services

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Article Information:

Received: 17 November 2025

Revised: 4 March 2026

Accepted: 15 March 2026

Published: 4 April 2026

Keywords:

Spiritual Guidance, Mindful Worship, School Counseling, Needs Assessment, Intervention.

Abstract

This study examines the role of spiritual guidance within school counseling services in strengthening students' mindful worship. The school has implemented systematic religious habituation programs; however, variations in students' inner awareness remain evident. Using a one-group pretest–posttest design, the study employed an empirical needs assessment as the pretest and a posttest administered after the implementation of structured spiritual guidance sessions. Participants were 31 eleventh-grade students. Data were collected using a 48-item mindful worship scale covering cognitive awareness, attentional presence, emotional–spiritual engagement, and behavioral integration. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Shapiro–Wilk normality testing, reliability analysis, and paired-sample t-testing. The findings indicate a statistically significant increase in mindful worship scores after the intervention sessions, with data meeting assumptions of normality and demonstrating high internal consistency. The results suggest that spiritual guidance in school counseling can meaningfully complement institutional habituation by deepening students' inner awareness of worship. This study contributes preliminary empirical support here.

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual awareness has long been recognized as a central dimension of human development, particularly during adolescence, a period marked by identity exploration, emotional fluctuation, and value internalization. Within religious education, worship is not merely understood as ritual compliance but as a reflective and conscious engagement that connects cognitive understanding, emotional involvement, and moral action. Recent psychological and educational studies increasingly emphasize that religious practices

How to Cite this Article

Amalia, F., & Masrukhin, A. R. (2026). Spiritual Guidance and Mindful Worship: An Intervention Study within School Counseling Services. *Al-Musyrif: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling Islam*, 9(1), 35–45. <https://doi.org/10.38073/almusyrif.v9i1.4334>

devoid of inner awareness risk becoming habitual routines with limited transformative impact (Garland et al., 2009; A. Yousaf & Adil, 2024; O. Yousaf et al., 2022). This condition has prompted scholars to explore how religious worship can be experienced more mindfully, leading to the emergence of the concept of mindful worship.

Mindful worship refers to a state in which individuals engage in religious practices with full attention, conscious presence, emotional resonance, and reflective meaning-making. Empirical studies indicate that mindful engagement in worship is associated with higher psychological well-being, emotional regulation, and ethical sensitivity (Masrukhin et al., 2023; Masrukhin & Musfiroh, 2021; Oman, 2013, 2018; O. Yousaf et al., 2022). In educational contexts, especially secondary schools, this construct becomes particularly relevant as students often participate in structured religious routines without necessarily internalizing their spiritual meaning. Consequently, the challenge is not the absence of worship practices, but the limited depth of spiritual awareness during those practices.

In many Indonesian schools, religious habituation programs are implemented systematically to strengthen students' moral and spiritual character. Daily congregational prayers, scheduled devotional activities, and ritual discipline are commonly embedded in school culture. While such programs successfully establish behavioral consistency, several studies suggest that behavioral compliance alone does not guarantee internalized spiritual awareness (Adnan et al., 2023; Aulia et al., 2025; Jenuri et al., 2025). Adolescents may perform worship rituals regularly, yet remain cognitively disengaged or emotionally detached, thereby reducing worship to a mechanical activity. This phenomenon reflects a broader educational dilemma: how to transform religious habituation into spiritually meaningful experiences.

Within the field of school counseling, this dilemma opens a critical space for intervention. School counseling services are designed not only to address academic and psychosocial concerns but also to support students' personal and spiritual development. Developmental guidance perspectives emphasize that spiritual awareness is a legitimate domain of student growth and should be facilitated through reflective, preventive, and value-based interventions rather than corrective or clinical approaches (Sink, 2016; Miller, 2015). However, empirical research examining the role of spiritual guidance within school counseling—particularly in relation to mindful worship—remains limited, especially in non-Western educational contexts.

From a psychological standpoint, the concept of mindful worship is theoretically grounded in mindfulness research, which highlights present-moment awareness, attentional regulation, and non-judgmental acceptance as key mechanisms for personal growth (Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2015, 2019). Studies have demonstrated that mindfulness-based practices enhance emotional stability, self-regulation, and meaning-making among adolescents (Dunning et al., 2019; Zoogman et al., 2015). When integrated with religious worship, mindfulness shifts ritual performance from habitual repetition toward conscious spiritual engagement. This integration aligns with empirical findings indicating that religious mindfulness predicts greater spiritual satisfaction and moral (O. Yousaf et al., 2022).

In Islamic intellectual tradition, the emphasis on inner awareness during worship is not a new concept. Classical scholars consistently warned against ritualism devoid of consciousness. Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, asserted that the essence of worship lies in *hudūr al-qalb* (presence of the heart), without which ritual acts lose their spiritual value (Al Ghazali, 2020; Ghazali, 2023, 2014; Ghazzālī, 2011). He argued that prayer performed without attentiveness is merely physical motion, lacking transformative power over the soul. This perspective underscores that true worship requires conscious intention, reflection, and moral integration. Similarly, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani emphasized that worship must cultivate ethical awareness and self-discipline, linking ritual devotion with character formation (Al Bantani, 2002; Arofik, 2025).

Contemporary Islamic spiritual thinkers have echoed these classical insights. Wilcox emphasized that modern religious education often prioritizes external conformity while neglecting inner transformation, leading to spiritual fatigue among youth. Such critiques resonate with current educational challenges, where students may appear religiously compliant yet exhibit limited spiritual sensitivity in daily behavior (L. Wilcox, 2007; L. E. Wilcox, 2020). These insights strengthen the argument that educational institutions require approaches that address not only what students do religiously, but how they experience and internalize those practices.

In school settings where religious habituation programs are already established, introducing spiritual guidance through school counseling does not replace existing practices but complements them by deepening their meaning. Spiritual guidance within counseling focuses on reflective dialogue, value clarification, and awareness-building, enabling students to connect worship activities with personal meaning and lived experience (Miller & Thoresen, 2003). Research indicates that spiritually oriented counseling interventions can enhance students' sense of purpose, moral reasoning, and emotional resilience (Cashwell, C. S., & Young, 20142011; Cashwell & Scott Young, 2025; Cashwell & Young, 2025; Oman, 2013).

Despite growing theoretical support, empirical investigations that integrate mindful worship, spiritual guidance, and school counseling remain scarce. Most studies on mindfulness are conducted in secular or clinical frameworks, while religious education research often emphasizes curriculum or pedagogy rather than counseling-based interventions. Furthermore, few studies adopt a needs-assessment-based approach as an empirical foundation for designing spiritual guidance interventions. Needs assessment allows researchers to identify specific dimensions of spiritual awareness that require strengthening, ensuring that interventions are contextually grounded and developmentally appropriate (Choi & Park, 2024; Meiga Latifah Putri & Herdi, 2021; Royse et al., 2009).

This study responds to these gaps by examining spiritual guidance within school counseling services as an intervention aimed at strengthening students' mindful worship. Conducted in a school that has already implemented systematic worship habituation, the study positions spiritual guidance as a complementary strategy focused on enhancing inner awareness rather than enforcing behavioral compliance. Using a one-group pretest–posttest design grounded in an empirical needs assessment, the study examines changes

in students' mindful worship following a structured guidance sessions. This approach allows for an examination of potential effectiveness while acknowledging ethical and contextual constraints that limit the use of control groups in religious educational settings.

By integrating psychological theories of mindfulness, counseling-based developmental frameworks, and classical Islamic spiritual thought, this study contributes a multidimensional perspective to the discourse on spiritual development in schools. It offers preliminary empirical evidence supporting the role of spiritual guidance in enriching worship experiences among adolescents. More broadly, the study highlights the importance of moving beyond ritual habituation toward conscious, reflective, and meaningful religious engagement within educational counseling practice.

METHOD

This study employed a one-group pretest–posttest design to examine changes in students' mindful worship following spiritual guidance within school counseling services. Pretest data were obtained from an empirical needs assessment, while posttest scores were obtained following the completion of the spiritual guidance intervention (Cresswell et al., 2003; Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). This design was selected due to ethical and contextual considerations, as religious habituation programs had been implemented school-wide, rendering the use of a control group impractical.

Participants consisted of 31 eleventh-grade students from a vocational secondary school. The sample size met the minimum requirement for parametric analysis in preliminary intervention research. Participant identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Data were collected using a 48-item Mindful Worship Scale measuring four dimensions: cognitive awareness of worship, attentional presence during worship, emotional–spiritual engagement, and behavioral integration. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The same instrument was administered for both pretest and posttest to ensure measurement consistency.

The pretest was administered prior to the implementation of structured spiritual guidance sessions as part of a needs assessment. Posttest data were collected after students participated in structured spiritual guidance sessions designed to enhance mindful worship. The analysis focused on within-group change rather than between-group comparison. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were computed for pretest and posttest scores. Normality was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test, and internal consistency reliability was assessed using *Cronbach's Alpha*. To estimate the magnitude of change, gain scores were calculated using the following equation:

$$\Delta X = X_{post} - X_{pre} \quad (1)$$

Data normality was examined using the *Shapiro–Wilk* test, computed as:

$$W = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n a_i x_{(i)})^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2} \quad (2)$$

Instrument reliability was assessed using *Cronbach's Alpha*:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S_T^2} \right) \quad (3)$$

where k represents the number of items, S_i^2 the variance of each item, and S_T^2 the total score variance. Differences between pretest and posttest scores were analyzed using a paired sample t-test:

$$t = \frac{\bar{D}}{S_D/\sqrt{n}} \tag{4}$$

where \bar{D} is the mean difference score, S_D is the standard deviation of differences, and n is the number of participants. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Trends of Mindful Worship Scores

Descriptive statistics reveal a notable increase in students' mindful worship scores from pretest to posttest. Prior to the implementation of structured spiritual guidance sessions, students' scores were clustered around a moderate range, suggesting that while worship practices had been established behaviorally, deeper levels of awareness, emotional engagement, and reflective integration were not yet fully developed. This pattern is commonly observed in educational settings where ritual activities are routinized but not always accompanied by reflective meaning-making. Following the spiritual guidance sessions, posttest scores demonstrated a substantial upward shift. The increase in mean scores indicates improvements across the core dimensions of mindful worship, including attentional presence during worship, emotional–spiritual involvement, and the integration of worship values into daily behavior. Importantly, the observed increase was not extreme, suggesting a realistic and developmentally plausible change rather than an inflated or artificial effect.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest Kesadaran Ibadah	31	144.90	6.87
Posttest Kesadaran Ibadah	31	187.77	7.12

Table 2. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	0.983	31	0.894
Posttest	0.979	31	0.795

Assumption Testing: Normality of Data Distribution

Prior to inferential analysis, the normality of the data distribution was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results indicated that both pretest and posttest scores were normally distributed, with significance values exceeding the 0.05 threshold. These findings confirm that the data met the assumptions required for parametric testing and justify the use of a paired sample t-test. From a methodological standpoint, the confirmation of normality strengthens the credibility of the statistical conclusions drawn from this study. In intervention-based educational research, particularly with relatively

small sample sizes, assumption testing is essential to ensure that observed differences are not artifacts of distributional bias.

Instrument Reliability

The internal consistency reliability of the Mindful Worship Scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated very high reliability coefficients for both pretest and posttest measurements, with alpha values exceeding 0.90. These findings suggest that the instrument consistently measured the construct of mindful worship across administrations and that item responses were highly coherent. High reliability is particularly important in studies examining internal states such as awareness, emotional engagement, and spiritual reflection. The strong reliability coefficients observed in this study enhance confidence that the detected changes in scores reflect genuine shifts in students' mindful worship rather than measurement error.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics (Cronbach's Alpha)

	N Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Pretest	48	0.970
Posttest	48	0.984

Paired Sample T-Test Results

To examine within-group differences between pretest and posttest scores, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest mindful worship scores, with posttest scores significantly higher than pretest scores ($p < 0.05$). The positive mean difference and large t-value indicate a strong and consistent pattern of improvement across participants. This finding suggests that the spiritual guidance sessions had a meaningful impact on students' mindful worship. The calculated gain scores further demonstrate that the observed improvement was not limited to a small subset of students but was evident across the group. From a practical perspective, this indicates that spiritual guidance interventions may have broad applicability within similar educational contexts.

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	144.90	31	6.87	1.23
Posttest	187.77	31	7.12	1.28

Table 5. Paired Samples Test

N	Correlation	Sig.
31	0.812	0.000

To enhance interpretability, a visual comparison of pretest and posttest mean scores is presented. The graphical representation clearly illustrates the upward shift in mindful worship following the implementation of structured spiritual guidance sessions, providing an intuitive summary of the quantitative findings.

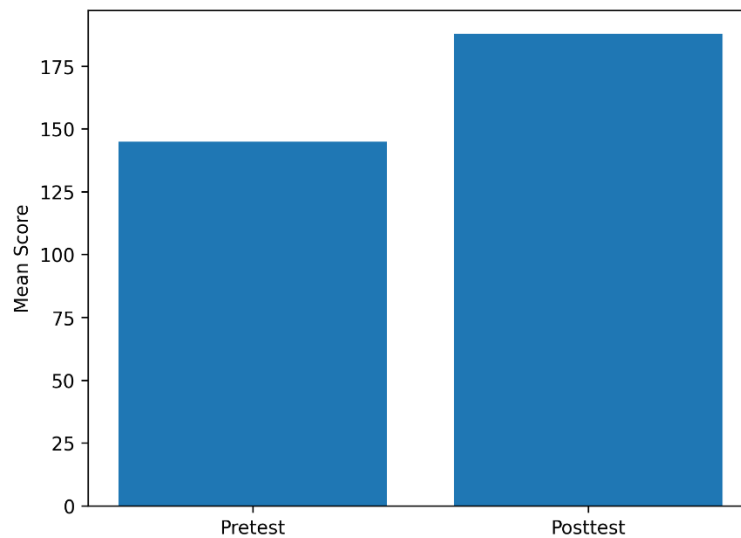


Figure 1. Pretest–Posttest Mean Comparison

Discussion

The findings of this study contribute important insights into the role of spiritual guidance within school counseling services in enhancing students' mindful worship. Despite the presence of structured religious habituation programs, the pretest results suggest that routine worship alone does not necessarily foster deep spiritual awareness among students. This supports previous research indicating that ritual compliance, while valuable, may remain superficial without reflective engagement (Garland et al., 2009; O. Yousaf et al., 2022).

The significant improvement observed in posttest scores highlights the added value of spiritual guidance as a counseling-based intervention. Unlike disciplinary or instructional approaches, spiritual guidance emphasizes reflective dialogue, self-awareness, and personal meaning-making. This aligns with developmental counseling theory, which positions guidance services as facilitators of holistic growth rather than mere problem-solving mechanisms (C. Sink, 2009; C. A. Sink et al., 2017).

From a psychological perspective, the findings are consistent with mindfulness research demonstrating that increased attentional awareness enhances emotional regulation and personal insight (Kabat-Zinn, 2015; Zoogman et al., 2015). When mindfulness principles are integrated into religious contexts, worship becomes an experiential process that engages cognition, emotion, and behavior simultaneously. This integration is particularly relevant for adolescents, who are navigating complex developmental tasks related to identity, values, and autonomy.

The results also resonate strongly with classical Islamic spiritual teachings. Al-Ghazali emphasized that worship without presence of the heart (*hudūr al-qalb*) is spiritually deficient, likening inattentive prayer to a body without a soul. The observed increase in mindful worship suggests that spiritual guidance can operationalize this classical principle within modern educational counseling. By encouraging students to

reflect on intention, focus, and meaning, spiritual guidance transforms worship from habitual motion into conscious devotion.

Furthermore, the behavioral integration dimension of mindful worship revealed notable improvement, indicating that students increasingly connected worship practices with everyday conduct. This finding reflects the Islamic educational ideal that worship should shape moral character and social behavior, a principle echoed by scholars such as Nawawi al-Bantani. In counseling terms, this demonstrates the potential of spiritual guidance to bridge the gap between internal awareness and external action.

Importantly, this study does not position spiritual guidance as a replacement for existing religious habituation programs. Rather, it functions as a qualitative enhancer that deepens the internal dimension of practices already in place. This distinction is crucial for educational institutions that may be concerned about overburdening students with additional religious activities. Spiritual guidance works by enriching meaning, not increasing ritual demands.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that school counselors can play a strategic role in supporting students' spiritual development. Integrating spiritual reflection into counseling sessions allows students to explore questions of meaning, intention, and values in a supportive environment. This approach aligns with contemporary counseling models that recognize spirituality as a legitimate dimension of human development (Cashwell & Young, 2025; Miller & Thoresen, 2003)

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that warrant consideration. While the results indicate significant improvements in mindful worship, the one-group pretest–posttest design limits causal inference. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of short-term post-intervention outcomes rather than definitive evidence of sustained behavioral change. However, within the ethical and practical constraints of religious educational settings, this design provides a meaningful preliminary framework for examining the role of spiritual guidance in school counseling contexts.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of moving beyond ritual habituation toward spiritually meaningful engagement. By integrating spiritual guidance into school counseling services, educational institutions may foster mindful worship that is reflective, emotionally resonant, and behaviorally integrative. Within its exploratory scope, this study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for holistic, value-based approaches to student development in educational counseling, while laying the groundwork for more methodologically robust investigations in the future.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that spiritual guidance within school counseling services may contribute to strengthening students' mindful worship, particularly in educational settings where religious habituation programs are already implemented. The findings indicate that structured reflective guidance can enhance students' attentional presence, emotional–spiritual engagement, and behavioral integration of worship values. By positioning

mindful worship as a measurable counseling outcome, this study offers an empirical contribution to the integration of spiritual development within school counseling practice.

Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. The use of a one-group pretest–posttest design restricts causal inference, and the findings reflect short-term post-intervention outcomes rather than long-term behavioral change. Additionally, the relatively small sample size and single-school context limit broader generalizability. Future research should employ more rigorous quasi-experimental or controlled designs, involve larger and more diverse samples, and incorporate longitudinal approaches to examine the sustainability of spiritual awareness development over time. Addressing these limitations will strengthen the empirical foundation for integrating spiritual guidance within school counseling frameworks.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to SMK Ma'arif NU Mayangan Gumukmas Jember, for the institutional support and cooperation provided during the conduct of this study. Special appreciation is extended to the school principal, Abdul Wahid, M.Pd., for granting permission and facilitating the research process. The authors also acknowledge the valuable support of the school counseling (BK) teachers, whose assistance and professional collaboration contributed significantly to data collection and the overall completion of this study.

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