

INCONGRUENCE AND HYPOCRITICAL BEHAVIOR FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NIFAQ: AN INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL-ISLAMIC LITERATURE REVIEW IN ISLAMIC GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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Abstract

This article presents an integrative literature review that maps and synthesizes the conceptual relationships among *incongruence* in humanistic psychology, hypocritical behavior in social psychology, and the Islamic concept of *nifaq*, as a conceptual basis for the development of Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BKI). The analysis draws on a systematic review of relevant psychological and Islamic literature. The synthesis reveals that all three concepts share the same phenomenological anchor—the misalignment between internal values and external behavioral expression—yet each offers a distinct explanatory framework: humanistic psychology foregrounds the intrapersonal dimension, social psychology highlights contextual dynamics, while Islam emphasizes the spiritual-moral dimension. Their integration yields a more holistic and contextually sensitive model of understanding, with practical implications for developing BKI interventions that address both psychological and spiritual dimensions. The article also identifies limitations of Rogers' theory in collective cultural contexts such as Islamic boarding schools, and proposes the incorporation of *interdependent self-construal* as a conceptual bridge between Western psychology and the socio-cultural realities of Indonesian Muslim communities.

Keywords: *Incongruence*, Hypocrisy, *Nifaq*, Islamic Counseling

Abstrak

Artikel ini merupakan kajian literatur integratif yang bertujuan memetakan dan mensintesis hubungan konseptual antara *incongruence* dalam psikologi humanistik, perilaku hipokrit dalam psikologi sosial, dan konsep *nifaq* dalam Islam sebagai basis pengembangan Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam (BKI). Kajian dilakukan melalui telaah sistematis terhadap literatur psikologi dan keislaman yang relevan. Hasil sintesis menunjukkan bahwa ketiga konsep tersebut memiliki jangkar fenomenologis yang sama, yakni ketidakselarasan antara nilai internal dengan ekspresi perilaku eksternal, namun masing-masing menawarkan kerangka explanatory yang berbeda: psikologi humanistik menekankan dimensi intrapersonal, psikologi sosial menekankan dinamika kontekstual,

sementara Islam menekankan dimensi spiritual-moral. Integrasi ketiganya menghasilkan model pemahaman yang lebih holistik dan kontekstual, dengan implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan intervensi BKI yang menjangkau dimensi psikologis sekaligus spiritual. Artikel ini juga mengidentifikasi keterbatasan teori Rogers dalam konteks budaya kolektif seperti pesantren, serta mengusulkan penggabungan konsep *interdependent self-construal* sebagai jembatan antara psikologi Barat dan realitas sosial-budaya Muslim Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *Incongruence*, Hipokrit, *Nifaq*, Konseling Islam

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of incongruence between believed values and demonstrated behavior is one of the most pervasive psychological problems in modern life. In the era of social media, the pressure to project an ideal self-image is intensifying, so individuals often present a public persona that does not reflect their true inner state. In psychology, this condition is known as incongruence, which is a discrepancy between self-concept and an individual's actual experiences (Rogers, 1961; Sedikides & Gregg, 2022). When this discrepancy manifests itself in the realm of social behavior when someone professes certain values but acts contrary the behavior is commonly called hypocrisy or hypocrisy.

Hypocritical behavior is not simply an ethical-moral problem. Research in social psychology shows that hypocrisy is a manifestation of cognitive dissonance a state of psychological tension that arises when two inconsistent cognitions exist in an individual's consciousness simultaneously (Festinger, 1957). Individuals experiencing this condition are driven to reduce this tension through various mechanisms, including rationalization, behavioral changes, or even strengthening their commitment to expressed but unpracticed values a paradox explored in depth by Stone and Fernandez (2008).

From an Islamic perspective, this phenomenon is associated with the concept of *nifaq* a disharmony between a person's outer and inner selves. Contrary to the popular understanding that reduces *nifaq* solely to a matter of faith, contemporary Islamic psychology studies view it as a psychological-spiritual condition rooted in identity conflict and a lack of self-integrity (Bastaman, 1995). Islamic values such as *sidq* (honesty), *ikhlas*

(purity of intention), and tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) implicitly embody the vision of a congruent person one whose outward behavior aligns with their inner convictions.

Although these three concepts incongruence, hypocrisy, and hypocrisy have strong phenomenological equivalents, studies explicitly synthesizing them within a single analytical framework are still very limited. Psychological research tends to focus on intrapersonal aspects without linking the spiritual dimension, while Islamic studies emphasize normative-theological aspects without in-depth exploration of the underlying psychological dynamics. This gap is the primary justification for this article.

This article aims to: (1) map and synthesize the conceptual relationships between incongruence, hypocritical behavior, and hypocrisy; (2) identify points of convergence and divergence between psychological and Islamic perspectives in understanding these phenomena; (3) analyze the limitations of Rogerian humanistic psychology theory when applied to the context of collectivist Islamic cultures; and (4) formulate implications for the development of a more holistic and contextual approach to the Islamic Interventional Psychology (IBC). This article does not claim to produce a final intervention model, but rather to lay a conceptual foundation for further empirical research and practice development.

METHODE

This article uses an integrative literature review approach, a research method that aims to synthesize findings from diverse literature sources including literature from different disciplines to produce a new, more comprehensive conceptual framework (Torraco, 2005). Unlike systematic reviews, which focus on the aggregation of empirical findings, integrative reviews allow researchers to incorporate theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature simultaneously, making them suitable for integrating epistemologically distinct yet complementary psychological and Islamic perspectives (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

A systematic literature search was conducted through several academic databases, namely Google Scholar, PsycINFO, JSTOR, and the IAIN/UIN Repository for Indonesian-

language Islamic literature. Keywords used in the search included: incongruence, hypocrisy, cognitive dissonance, self-concept, nifaq, Islamic psychology, Islamic guidance and counseling, and tazkiyatun nafs. The search was conducted on literature published from 1957 to 2024, with the exception of foundational classics such as Al-Ghazali and Rogers, which are primary sources undated in modern terms but remain academically valid.

The inclusion criteria for this review included: (1) works explicitly discussing the concepts of incongruence, cognitive dissonance, hypocrisy, or hypocrisy; (2) works discussing the integration of psychology and Islam or Islamic Guidance and Counseling; (3) primary source works that serve as the theoretical foundation for the concepts under study; and (4) works published in peer-reviewed scientific journals or verifiable academic books. Exclusion criteria included: (1) opinion or popular articles without an academic basis; (2) literature that only mentions these concepts marginally without substantive discussion; and (3) sources that cannot be bibliographically verified.

The synthesis process was conducted in three stages. The first stage is conceptual mapping, which involves identifying and mapping the definitions, dimensions, and operational contexts of each concept (incongruence, hypocrisy, and hypocrisy) separately. The second stage is comparative analysis, which involves comparing the three concepts to identify points of similarity, difference, and conceptual tension between them. The third stage is integrative synthesis, which involves constructing a new conceptual framework that integrates psychological and Islamic perspectives in a complementary manner and formulating its implications for the development of Islamic Guidance and Counseling practices. The entire analysis process is conducted with reference to the principles of critical appraisal to ensure that the sources used are of adequate quality and relevance for the purposes of this study.

RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

A. Incogruence in Rogers' Humanistic Psychology: Psychological Roots

Carl Rogers, in his Person-Centered Theory, defined the concept of incongruence as a discrepancy between an individual's self-concept and their actual

experiences (Worth & Proctor, 2020). Rogers (1951) explained that psychological tension arises when an organism denies significant sensory and visceral experiences from conscious awareness, leaving them unsymbolized and unintegrated into the self-structure. In his more comprehensive work, Rogers (1961) described incongruence as "the distance between the real self and the ideal self"-a condition he argued was a primary source of anxiety, defensive behavior, and a loss of authenticity.

When individuals experience incongruence, they tend to develop what Rogers called a false self-a facade or mask presented to the outside world that does not reflect their true inner state. In a social context, this condition can manifest as hypocritical behavior: individuals verbally profess values of honesty, obedience, or sincerity, yet their actual behavior contradicts these claims.

The therapeutic implication of Rogers' theory is that healing incongruence requires a therapeutic environment that fosters unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence from the counselor (Rogers, 1957). Under these conditions, individuals gradually integrate previously denied experiences into their self-structure, narrowing the gap between the real self and the ideal self, and moving toward what Rogers called a fully functioning person (Joseph & Murphy, 2013).

However, there are important limitations to Rogers' theory that need to be considered in the context of this study. Rogers' theory is built on the assumption of an individualistic self (independent self) one that is autonomous, separate from the social environment, and sovereign over its own values. This assumption is cultural, not universal. Markus and Kitayama (1991), in their classic cross-cultural study, demonstrated that individuals in Asian, African, and Southern European cultures tend to have an interdependent self-construal: a self defined through relationships, social roles, and obligations to the community. Within the framework of the interdependent self, "presenting different selves in different contexts" is not always pathological; rather, it is a form of normative social sensitivity.

The implication for the context of Islamic boarding schools and Indonesian Muslim communities is that not all forms of self-adjustment to communal expectations

can be automatically categorized as pathological incongruence. An analytical distinction is needed between: (a) healthy social adaptation as an authentically lived expression of collective values; and (b) true incongruence characterized by inner conflict, anxiety, and rejection of internal experiences that do not align with externally imposed self-concepts. This is an important conceptual bridge that needs to be built in the Indonesian context of Islamic Intercultural Education (IBC).

B. Hypocritical behavior in Social Psychology: Cognitive and Contextual Dimensions

From a social psychology perspective, hypocritical behavior is best understood through the framework of cognitive dissonance theory formulated by Festinger (1957). This theory states that individuals are inherently motivated to maintain consistency among their various cognitions beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. When two inconsistent cognitions coexist in consciousness (e.g., "I believe honesty is a core value" and "I just lied"), an unpleasant psychological tension arises, which Festinger called dissonance.

Hypocrisy, in this framework, is a specific form of cognitive dissonance in which an individual publicly advocates a value but privately or behaviorally violates it. Stone and Fernandez (2008), in their comprehensive review of three decades of research on "hypocrisy induction," demonstrated that awareness of one's own hypocrisy can actually be a driver of behavioral change: individuals who become aware of the discrepancy between their advocated values and their past behavior are motivated to change their future behavior to reduce the dissonance. These findings have significant therapeutic implications: properly facilitated self-awareness can be an entry point for change interventions.

However, not everyone responds to awareness of self-hypocrisy with behavioral change. Festinger (1957) himself identified several dissonance reduction strategies that actually maintain the status quo: (1) rationalization finding excuses to justify the inconsistency; (2) trivialization minimizing the significance of violated values; (3) the addition of consonant cognitions—seeking new beliefs that make

hypocritical behavior seem justifiable. Individuals tend to use the cognitively easiest strategy, rather than the most transformative one.

The social dimension of hypocrisy also cannot be ignored. Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory offers a complementary lens: in every social interaction, individuals act as "actors" managing the impression they wish to project to the "audience." Goffman distinguished between the front stage (public appearance) and the back stage (private behavior hidden from the audience). The distance between these two spaces is a universal condition in social life. What becomes psychologically problematic is when the gap becomes too wide and the individual is unable to integrate the two when the backstage self and the frontstage self become two separate entities.

The synthesis of Festinger and Goffman suggests that hypocrisy is a phenomenon with dual roots: intrapersonally, it is rooted in cognitive dissonance, and interpersonally, it is rooted in the demands of impression management. The two can be mutually reinforcing: social pressure to project an ideal frontstage self increases the likelihood of a gap with the authentic backstage self, and this gap creates psychologically exhausting dissonance.

C. Nifaq in Islamic Perspective: Spiritual-Moral Dimension

In Islam, the concept most closely related to incongruence and hypocrisy is hypocrisy. Linguistically, hypocrisy comes from the word *nafiq*, meaning "hidden exit" a reference to animals with different entrances and exits, a symbol of dishonesty and hidden degeneration. Terminologically, hypocrisy refers to a state of dishonesty between what is outwardly expressed and what is inwardly concealed.

Classically, scholars distinguish two categories of hypocrisy: (1) hypocrisy of faith (*i'tiqadi*) professing faith verbally while concealing rejection in the heart, which is depicted in the Qur'an through the characters of the "hypocrites" in Medina; and (2) hypocrisy of behavior (*amali*) adopting hypocritical traits in everyday behavior even though this does not necessarily mean apostasy from the faith, such as lying, breaking promises, and betraying trusts. This distinction is analytically important: what is

relevant for psychological-counseling studies is the gradual nature of nifaq (immorality) that can be intervened through a process of self-development.

Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya Ulumuddin* particularly in *Rub' al-Muhlikat* (the section on things that destroy the soul) provides an in-depth psychological analysis of nifaq as a manifestation of the weakness of the nafs (self-centeredness). He explains that this condition is rooted in the dominance of desires over the mind and heart, as well as a lack of muhasabah (self-reflection). Within Al-Ghazali's framework, healing nifaq requires a systematic process of tazkiyatun nafs (self-purification) purifying the soul of despicable traits through worship, muhasabah, and strengthening the values of sidq (honesty) and ikhlas (purity of intention). This framework conceptually parallels the therapeutic process in Rogers' humanistic approach, but with an added transcendental dimension absent from Rogers's theory.

Bastaman (1995), in his attempt to integrate psychology with Islam, positions nifaq as a personality distortion resulting from the weak integration of the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of the human being. He argues that Islamic psychology cannot simply adopt Western descriptive and therapeutic models but must integrate them with Islam's normative and transformative vision of the ideal person (*insan kamil*). This perspective is relevant for the Islamic Psychological Association (BKI), which aims not only to "improve the psychological functioning" of individuals but also to facilitate their spiritual growth.

D. Integrative Synthesis: Common Ground and Differences

All three perspectives Rogerian, social-cognitive, and Islamic share a common phenomenological foundation: they recognize that incongruence between internal values and external behavioral expressions is a source of real psychological and/or spiritual problems. However, they offer different explanatory frameworks, and these differences should not be viewed as contradictions, but rather as complementary aspects of a multidimensional reality.

From the Rogerian perspective, incongruence is seen as a developmental distortion rooted in conditions of worth learned by individuals from childhood. The

focus is intrapersonal: individuals need to "return to themselves" through a process of unconditional acceptance. From the cognitive dissonance perspective, hypocrisy is a problem of cognitive inconsistency inherent in human psychology and can be leveraged as a lever for behavioral change through awareness induction. From the Islamic perspective, nifaq is a spiritual-moral problem with both vertical (the individual's relationship with God) and horizontal (relationships with others) dimensions that cannot be reduced solely to psychological categories.

The following table summarizes a comparison of these three perspectives across key analytical dimensions:

Table 1. Comparison of Incongruence, Hypocritical, and Nifaq Perspectives

Analytical Dimensions	<i>Incongruence</i> (Rogers)	Hypocrisy (Cognitive-Social)	<i>Nifaq</i> (Islam)
Root of the Problem	External conditions (<i>conditions of worth</i>)	Dissonance & Social Pressure	Weakness of the nafs & Dominance of lust
Focus of Analysis	Intrapersonal & self-development	Cognitive-Behavioral and social dynamics	Spiritual-moral and integrity of faith
Therapeutic Approach	Humanistic therapy (unconditional positive regard)	Induction of self-awareness and behavioral change	Tazkiyatun nafs and self-reflection
Transcendental Dimension	No	No	Central (relationship with God)
Cultural Context	Individualistic (independent self)	Universal & cross-context	Communal-religious (interdependent self)

The integration offered by this article is not syncretistic (simply mixing), but rather complementary: each perspective operates at a different and complementary level of analysis. Rogers provides descriptive language for the psychological mechanisms of incongruence; Festinger and Goffman explain the socio-cognitive dynamics that maintain or reduce it; while the Islamic framework provides a normative-transformative orientation and spiritual meaning that motivate change in the context of the Muslim individual.

E. Implications for Islamic Guidance and Counseling

From the above synthesis, several practical implications for BKI can be formulated. First, counselors in the BKI context need to develop the ability to distinguish between normative social adaptation and pathological incongruence. In the Islamic boarding school context, in particular, displaying external adherence to community norms does not automatically constitute nifaq or incongruence unless such adherence is accompanied by significant internal tension, anxiety, and chronic feelings of inauthenticity.

Second, an integrative BKI approach needs to combine psychological techniques with spiritual practices. Muhasabah (structured introspection) has a functional equivalent to self-monitoring and reflective journaling techniques in cognitive-behavioral psychology (Corey, 2021), but with the added dimension of transcendental accountability that can significantly strengthen motivation for change. Tazkiyatun nafs can be viewed as a long-term therapeutic process parallel to Rogers' congruence process, but with a higher end goal than simply individual psychological well-being.

Third, findings from hypocritical induction research (Stone & Fernandez, 2008) suggest that appropriately facilitated self-awareness not through threats or shaming, but rather by helping individuals see the gap between their values and their behaviors can be an effective entry point for change. In Islamic counseling (BKI), this approach can be implemented through adaptive Socratic dialogue techniques that invite clients to reflect on the consistency between their Islamic values and their daily behaviors, without judgment.

Fourth, BKI needs to consider the collective dimension of Indonesian Muslim identity. Rather than focusing solely on "individual authenticity" in the Western sense, BKI can orient counseling toward achieving self-integrity in relationships: alignment between personal values, social roles within the Muslim community, and a transcendental orientation toward God an integrative model more in line with the interdependent self-construal dominant in the Indonesian cultural context.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As an integrative literature review, this article has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the synthesis is conceptual in nature and has not been empirically tested in the specific context of the Indonesian Muslim population. The resulting hypotheses such as the relevance of muhasabah as a BKI intervention or the limitations of the Rogerian model in collective contexts require empirical verification through phenomenological research or case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Second, this study has not fully explored the internal variations in the concept of nifaq as discussed in classical tafsir and fiqh, particularly the important distinction between nifaq i'tiqadi and nifaq 'amali and their gradations. A more in-depth exploration of primary Islamic sources would enrich the conceptual framework developed.

Third, this article has not addressed the gender dimension of the phenomena of incongruence and hypocrisy while the pressure to project a conformist self-image in the context of Islamic boarding schools may be experienced differently by male and female students. Further research should integrate a gender perspective into the analysis.

For further research, it is recommended: (a) a phenomenological study with Muslim students/adolescents to empirically explore the experience of incongruence and its relation to the concept of nifaq; (b) the development and validity testing of a BKI instrument that integrates psychological and spiritual indicators; (c) a mixed methods study to test the effectiveness of a structured muhasabah intervention as a counseling technique; and (d) a cross-cultural comparative study of how self-construal moderates the relationship between social pressure, cognitive dissonance, and hypocritical behavior in various Muslim contexts worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that incongruence, hypocritical behavior, and nifaq are three concepts with strong phenomenological equivalents but operate within different explanatory frameworks. Each describes, from its own perspective, the reality of a misalignment between internal values and external behavioral expressions a condition

that has serious implications for both an individual's psychological health and spiritual integrity.

The article's primary theoretical contribution is building a conceptual bridge between humanistic psychology, social-cognitive psychology, and Islamic psychology to understand this phenomenon holistically. Specifically, the article highlights that Rogers' theory despite its strengths in explaining the mechanisms of intrapersonal incongruence requires contextualization when applied in collective cultural settings such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), where the concept of the interdependent self predominates over the independent self, Rogers's fundamental assumption.

Practically, this article emphasizes the immense potential of BKI as a counseling approach capable of simultaneously addressing psychological and spiritual dimensions. Practices such as *muhasabah* and *tazkiyatun nafs* not only have the legitimacy of a long Islamic scholarly tradition but also possess a theoretical basis that can be dialogued with contemporary psychology. The development of a BKI model that integrates self-awareness, authenticity, and transcendental orientation is an urgent agenda and is worth continuing to work on.

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