



THE IMPACT OF GUILT AND RELIGIOUS REMINDERS ON WORSHIP DELAYS: A COGNITIVE DISSONANCE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the psychological mechanisms underlying worship delay behavior among young Muslims through the lens of Cognitive Dissonance Theory. It focuses on the roles of guilt and religious reminders, aiming to understand both their independent effects and interaction. Drawing on empirical and theoretical foundations, the study posits that emotional discomfort resulting from delayed worship—particularly guilt—can lead to either behavioral correction or avoidance. It further explores whether religious reminders can moderate this dynamic by reducing the impact of guilt on procrastination in worship. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used, with data collected from 133 young Muslim adults aged 16 to 39 across educational and religious settings. Standardized Likert-scale instruments measured guilt, worship delay, religious reminders, and cognitive dissonance. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, including multiple linear regression and hierarchical regression modeling. Results indicated that guilt significantly predicted worship delay behavior ($\beta = .635, p < .001$), accounting for a substantial portion of the variance ($R^2 = .398$). In contrast, cognitive dissonance did not significantly predict worship delay when entered alongside guilt. Moderation analysis revealed that religious reminders significantly moderated the guilt–worship delay relationship ($\beta = -.200, p = .027$), suggesting that exposure to compassionate religious cues may buffer the negative impact of guilt on spiritual procrastination. These findings offer practical implications for religious educators, spiritual counselors, and community leaders, emphasizing the importance of emotionally intelligent religious messaging in supporting consistent religious practice. Theoretically, this study extends Cognitive Dissonance Theory to spiritual contexts and highlights guilt as a key emotional mediator in religious decision-making among youth.

INTRODUCTION

The current age is featured by technological advancement and increased time pressures. Young individuals often fail to maintain consistency in their religious obligations. One of the most prominent issues observed among young Muslims is the frequent delay or neglect of worship practices such as Salat (prayer). Despite understanding its religious importance, many youth postpone worship due to academic, social, or digital engagements. This inconsistency between belief and behavior leads to a psychological state known as cognitive dissonance. Therefore, many individuals experience emotional discomfort as a result of violating their spiritual values (Festinger, 1957).

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As a result of this dissonance, guilt emerges. Central moral and psychological force are damaged. Guilt has a dual nature—it can either motivate corrective behavior or trigger avoidance and self-justification (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). In the context of worship, guilt often intensifies when frequent religious reminders such as sermons, Quranic verses, or calls to prayer are given. These reminders act as external cues that reactivate spiritual consciousness and encourage individuals to reflect on their actions (Pargament, 2002; McCullough & Willoughby, 2009).

However, a common pattern seen among youth is their emotional detachment from religious reminders when it is perceived as judgmental. While some may respond to these kinds of reminders positively and resume religious practice, others retreat further. During spiritual neglect, some young people desire compassionate reminders. This behavioral gap raises important questions about how guilt and religious reminders interact to influence worship behavior.

Understanding this dynamic is crucial, as unresolved guilt may lead to moral disengagement, spiritual anxiety, or even long-term detachment from faith-based practices. Therefore, the present study seeks to explore how guilt operates within the emotional lives of young Muslims and how religious reminders influence guilt and worship delay. This inquiry not only fills a vital gap in religious psychology but also provides practical insights for spiritual counselors, and religious institutions seeking to re-engage youth in faith-based commitments.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Within the framework of Cognitive Dissonance Theory, guilt functions as a psychological tension that can either motivate individuals to return to worship or push them further into avoidance due to emotional discomfort (Festinger, 1957). In today's fast-paced world, particularly among younger generations, the delay or neglect of religious worship has become a growing concern. This behavior often leads to the emergence of guilt—an emotional and moral response triggered when actions conflict with one's internal religious values (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007).

Thus religious reminders, such as sermons, calls to prayer, and scriptural verses, serve as external cues that reduce dissonance by prompting spiritual reflection and reengagement (Pargament, 2002). These reminders are especially significant for young Muslims, as they help bridge the gap caused by missed worship and promote a renewed sense of religious commitment. However, youth often remain disengaged from these reminders due to their preoccupation with academic, social, or digital demands (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009).

Guilt serves as a pathway to growth rather than avoidance. The persistence of unresolved guilt can lead to emotional distress, moral disengagement, and spiritual stagnation. Therefore, it is essential that young individuals learn to immediately address guilt feelings by turning to religious reminders, which can transform emotional discomfort into spiritual motivation. Engaging with compassionate and merciful religious messages can help restore inner peace and reinforce devotional practices (Ladis et al., 2023; Martínez de Pisón, 2023). This study investigates the interaction between guilt and religious reminders in shaping worship behaviors, with the aim of fostering spiritual resilience among youth.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do guilt and cognitive dissonance predict worship delay behavior among young Muslims?
2. Does exposure to religious reminders moderate the relationship between guilt and worship delay behavior?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Guilt (Emotional Response)

Guilt is a self-conscious moral emotion that arises when individuals recognize a discrepancy between their behavior and internal moral or religious standards. Unlike shame, which focuses on the self, guilt targets specific actions and is often accompanied by a desire to repair the wrongdoing (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In religious contexts, guilt serves as both a regulatory mechanism and a spiritual motivator, particularly when individuals fall short of fulfilling their religious obligations.

According to Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek (2007), guilt is rooted in moral cognition and plays a pivotal role in self-evaluation. It encourages individuals to take responsibility, seek forgiveness, and engage in compensatory behaviors such as prayer, charity, or renewed commitment to religious duties. Within the framework of Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), religious guilt emerges as an emotional response to dissonance when one's delaying worship contradicts religious beliefs or expectations. This emotional discomfort becomes a critical force that either drives corrective action or, in maladaptive cases, leads to avoidance and rationalization.

Baumeister et al. (1994) argued that guilt is an interpersonal emotion that promotes moral behavior by preserving social and religious harmony. In Islamic tradition, for example, guilt over missed prayers is often followed by sincere repentance and increased acts of devotion, illustrating its role as a corrective emotional signal. However, when guilt is excessive or coupled with a punitive view of religion, it can become maladaptive—leading to emotional distress, reduced self-worth, and eventual spiritual disengagement.

Fisher and Exline (2010) found that individuals who internalize religious expectations too rigidly may experience guilt that hinders rather than motivates spiritual growth. This is especially true among youth, who are more emotionally sensitive and often navigate competing values between secular life and religious commitment. In these cases, guilt can lead to religious burnout, or a complete withdrawal from worship practices to escape emotional discomfort.

Despite its potentially negative effects, guilt can be highly constructive when paired with supportive religious reminders are given with compassion. According to Ladis (2023) and Martínez de Pisón (2023), messages of divine forgiveness enable individuals to process guilt in a healthy way and return to religious engagement with renewed motivation. In another words, guilt is a powerful emotional response that acts as both a moral compass and a psychological barrier depending on how it is managed. In the context of worship delays, guilt can encourage spiritual restoration or trigger avoidance behavior. Understanding the emotional mechanisms of guilt and how it interacts with other variables—like religious reminders and self-regulation—is essential to developing effective strategies for improving spiritual consistency, particularly among young believers.

Religious Reminders

Religious reminders are sermons, scriptural readings, Azan, or spiritual speeches. These serve an individual's religious consciousness and encourage engagement in devotional practices. They are a critical component in shaping religious behavior, especially for individuals struggling with inconsistency in worship due to distractions, emotional conflict, or spiritual stagnation.

According to Pargament (2002), religious reminders function as motivational signals that help believers reconnect with their faith, particularly in moments of spiritual weakness or disobedience. These reminders often include emotionally evocative content drawn from sacred texts or religious traditions, designed to prompt reflection, guilt awareness, and

eventual behavioral correction. In religious contexts, such reminders not only act as memory triggers but also strengthen moral and spiritual accountability among individuals.

Studies by McCullough and Willoughby (2009) emphasized the regulatory power of religious reminders on self-control and religious commitment. Their research showed that exposure to religious messages can significantly reduce moral disengagement by reinforcing a sense of duty and divine presence. Importantly, reminders that emphasize divine mercy are more likely to encourage positive religious behaviors such as repentance and recommitment to worship.

In the realm of cognitive dissonance theory, religious reminders play a critical role in reducing internal conflict. When individuals experience dissonance due to failing to perform religious duties (such as prayer), reminders serve as a pathway to either reconcile the inconsistency through renewed worship or deepen the conflict if they induce shame instead of hope (Festinger, 1957; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). This makes the tone and framing of religious reminders a determining factor in how they influence behavior.

Empirical evidence also suggests that reminders tied to community-based worship practices—like the *adhan* (call to prayer) or communal sermons—are more effective in promoting accountability and reducing procrastination in religious duties (Ladis et al., 2023; Martínez de Pisón, 2023). These public and repetitive cues enhance emotional engagement with faith and reduce feelings of isolation that often accompany worship neglect.

Despite their importance, the effectiveness of religious reminders is highly contextual and dependent on individual factors such as prior religious commitment, emotional state, and the perceived tone of the message. Reminders that are gentle, encouraging, and focused on divine forgiveness tend to foster a stronger return to religious behavior than those that rely on fear or guilt alone.

Worship Delay Behavior

Worship delay behavior refers to the postponement or neglect of religious duties—such as prayer, scripture reading, or communal worship—despite the individual’s acknowledgment of their spiritual importance. This behavior reflects a common challenge, particularly among young adults, who often struggle to maintain consistency in religious observance amidst academic, social, and digital distractions.

From a psychological perspective, worship delay is closely linked to the concept of procrastination, where individuals defer important actions even when they are aware of negative consequences (Steel, 2007). In the religious context, this delay creates moral tension, especially for believers who view worship as a sacred obligation. The delay not only disrupts spiritual routine but also generates emotional conflict due to misalignment between personal values and behavior.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding worship delay. According to the theory, individuals experience psychological discomfort when their actions contradict deeply held beliefs. For practicing Muslims, the delay in performing *Salat* (prayer) or other worship rituals triggers dissonance, which they may attempt to resolve through behavioral adjustment (resuming worship), cognitive justification (“God is merciful”), or avoidance (ignoring the feeling altogether).

Research by Wohl et al. (2010) found that delay in religious practices often evokes guilt and self-evaluation, leading either to compensatory actions (e.g., making up missed prayers) or further delay due to feelings of unworthiness. Similarly, Fisher and Exline (2010) identified a pattern of emotional withdrawal among individuals who feel overwhelmed by spiritual failure, suggesting that excessive guilt may undermine rather than enhance religious commitment.

Moreover, Baumeister et al. (1994) emphasized that feelings of guilt and responsibility play a regulatory role in religious life. When guilt remains unresolved, it may lead to spiritual disengagement or chronic worship avoidance. However, when guilt is paired with a pathway to redemption—such as reminders of divine mercy—it can become a motivational tool rather than a barrier.

Youths are particularly prone to worship delay behavior due to their developmental phase, marked by experimentation, autonomy-seeking, and increased exposure to secular environments. Their religious behavior is often influenced more by external motivators than intrinsic belief, making them vulnerable to spiritual inconsistency (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Yet, the presence of supportive religious environments and emotionally intelligent reminders can help reduce worship procrastination and reinforce moral behavior.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a psychological theory first introduced by Leon Festinger (1957), which describes the mental discomfort or tension individuals experience when they hold conflicting beliefs, values, or engage in behaviors that contradict their internal standards. This psychological inconsistency often leads individuals to reduce the discomfort through behavioral change, rationalization, or attitude adjustment.

In the context of religious practice, cognitive dissonance arises when an individual acknowledges the importance of worship yet delays or neglects performing it. This contradiction between belief (e.g., “I should pray”) and behavior (e.g., “I skipped prayer”) triggers psychological discomfort, often experienced as guilt, stress, or emotional unrest (Festinger, 1957). According to Elliot and Devine (1994), individuals are highly motivated to reduce this dissonance, and religious environments provide both the trigger for dissonance and the means to resolve it—such as through repentance, increased worship, or engagement with religious reminders.

Higgins (1987) extended the theory by emphasizing that self-discrepancies—gaps between actual behavior and moral or religious ideals—are central to dissonance-related emotional reactions such as guilt or shame. For devout individuals, particularly young Muslims navigating modern distractions, failing to meet worship expectations creates a strong dissonance state, prompting either recommitment or retreat depending on emotional resilience and spiritual support structures.

Baumeister (1997) and Sedikides (2021) discussed how individuals resolve dissonance through moral justification or spiritual reframing, such as believing that “God will understand” or increasing charity to offset guilt. This aligns with Merritt, Effron, and Monin’s (2010) concept of moral self-licensing, where past religious behavior is used to justify current noncompliance.

Importantly, Shariff and Norenzayan (2007) found that religious primes—subtle reminders of religious norms—can influence how individuals resolve dissonance. These reminders can reinforce moral standards and reduce the likelihood of avoidance by reactivating spiritual awareness and self-regulation. Conversely, if the dissonance remains unresolved or is magnified by harsh reminders, it can result in avoidance, denial, or emotional burnout.

In religious youth populations, cognitive dissonance is particularly relevant due to their transitional identity development and increased exposure to competing secular values. Their coping strategies may include minimizing the dissonance emotionally (e.g., through self-forgiveness), behaviorally (e.g., returning to worship), or cognitively (e.g., redefining obligations), depending on how they process religious guilt and reminders.

Theoretical Importance of the Topic

This research contributes significantly to the academic field of psychology of religion, moral psychology, and behavioral self-regulation by integrating emotional and cognitive processes within a religious context. Theoretically, it advances Cognitive Dissonance Theory by applying it to a spiritual and moral domain—namely, the postponement of worship—and examining emotional responses like guilt as central mechanisms in dissonance resolution.

Moreover, the study bridges emotion theory (Tangney & Dearing, 2002) and religious coping theory (Pargament, 2002), offering a nuanced understanding of how guilt can function adaptively or maladaptively based on the tone and content of religious reminders. It also highlights the moderating role of contextually framed religious cues in facilitating or obstructing self-correction following moral failure.

By focusing on youth behavior, this research addresses a crucial demographic in need of more empirical attention, particularly as they navigate the tension between secular environments and spiritual expectations. The findings have practical implications for religious educators, community leaders, and counselors aiming to improve engagement in religious practice without inducing shame or spiritual disengagement.

Research Gap

The literature reviewed in this study spans four interrelated constructs: guilt as an emotional response, religious reminders, worship delay behavior, and cognitive dissonance. Together, these concepts form a comprehensive psychological and behavioral framework to understand inconsistencies between religious beliefs and practice—particularly among youth.

Guilt has been shown to function as a moral emotion that can either motivate corrective religious behavior or trigger avoidance when left unresolved (Tangney et al., 2007). Religious reminders—such as sermons, prayer calls, and divine messages—serve as external cues that can reduce worship delay, especially when framed with compassion (Pargament, 2002; McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Meanwhile, worship delay behavior is a growing phenomenon among young Muslims and is often associated with modern distractions and conflicting value systems, leading to emotional tension and procrastination (Steel, 2007; Fisher & Exline, 2010).

Cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) serves as the foundational lens of this study, explaining the psychological discomfort experienced when one's actions (e.g., missing prayers) contradict internal values (e.g., belief in religious obligation). The literature collectively suggests that the way individuals process guilt and respond to religious reminders significantly shapes whether they return to religious duties or continue to disengage.

Despite rich empirical insights on individual constructs, there is a notable research gap in understanding how these variables interact—specifically, how religious reminders may influence the effect of guilt on worship behavior, and how this mechanism unfolds in youth populations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study follows a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate the role of religious reminders on the relationship between guilt and worship delay, framed within Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957). The design includes the use of standardized psychometric instruments and statistical analysis to examine the variables.

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online self-administered questionnaire distributed through purposive sampling among young Muslim adults aged 18–30. Participants were recruited from universities, mosques, and social media platforms with an aim to gather between 150–200 valid responses. Informed consent was also obtained, and anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Respondents completed the survey at their own pace.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire contained five-point Likert scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) covering the following constructs:

Guilt Emotional Response

Guilt was measured using adapted items from the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS) developed by Tangney, (1996) and Tzelepi et al., (2023), specifically the guilt subscale. Example of item includes “I feel bad about how I handled my worship responsibility.”

Religious Reminders

Religious reminders were assessed through items based on studies by McCullough & Willoughby (2009) and Pargament (2002), capturing participants’ exposure to and perception of reminders (e.g., sermons, adhan, Quranic verses). Example of item includes “Religious messages encourage me to reflect on my spiritual obligations.”

Worship Delay Behavior

Items measuring worship delay are adapted from studies on spiritual procrastination and worship neglect based on Fisher & Exline (2010) and Wohl et al. (2010). Example of item includes “I often postpone prayer even though I believe it is important.”

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance was measured using a **modified version** of the **12-item Dissonance Scale** used in psychological and marketing studies, adapted for religious context (P. & N., 2024; Telci et al., 2011; Weingarten et al., 2023). Example of item includes: “I feel uncomfortable when my actions do not match my religious beliefs.”

Data Analysis

To address the first research question—how the experience of guilt influences the likelihood of worship delay among young Muslims the study employed descriptive and inferential statistical analyses using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were first calculated for all variables to summarize central tendencies and distributions. Following this, a simple linear regression was conducted to assess the predictive effect of guilt on worship delay behavior. Statistical significance was tested at the conventional level of $p < .05$ to determine whether guilt had a meaningful influence on participants’ tendency to postpone worship.

For the second research question—what role religious reminders play in moderating the relationship between guilt and worship behavior—a hierarchical regression analysis was performed. Prior to conducting the analysis, the continuous predictor variables—guilt and religious reminders—were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity. An interaction term (Guilt \times Religious Reminder) was then computed to test for moderation. In the first step of the hierarchical regression, the main effects of guilt and religious reminders were entered. In the second step, the interaction term was added to examine whether the effect of guilt on worship delay varied depending on the level of religious reminders. A statistically significant interaction term indicated the presence of a moderation effect. The output interpretation focused on the significance and direction of the interaction, as well as the conditional effects of guilt at various levels of religious reminders, thereby providing insights into how religious cues may buffer or amplify guilt-related worship behaviors.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. As shown in Table 1, the sample consisted of 127 respondents who reported their age, with a minimum of 16 years and a maximum of 39 years. The mean age was 23.83 years ($SD = 3.65$), indicating that the participants were predominantly young adults.

Regarding gender, responses were recorded from 133 individuals; however, due to missing data on other variables, the valid listwise sample size was reduced to 127. Gender was coded as 1 = Male and 2 = Female. The mean gender value was 1.46 ($SD = 0.50$), suggesting a relatively balanced distribution with a slightly higher proportion of male participants. These demographic indicators provide context for the subsequent inferential analyses examining guilt, religious reminders, and worship delay behaviors among young Muslims.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	127	16	39	23.83	3.650
Gender	133	1	2	1.46	.500
Valid N (listwise)	127				

Item-Level Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for all questionnaire items (see Appendix for full questionnaire). Items related to guilt (emotional response) yielded high mean scores, with *Guilt 1* ("I feel guilty when I miss a Salat") receiving the highest average of 4.47, indicating a strong emotional reaction to missed religious obligations among participants. Other guilt items ranged from 4.00 to 4.25, demonstrating consistently high levels of guilt in response to worship delay.

Items measuring religious reminders also received high average ratings. *Religious Reminder 1* ("Religious speech and messages remind me of my responsibilities") had a mean of 4.43, while the remaining items ranged from 3.99 to 4.32, suggesting that participants generally felt positively influenced by religious cues.

For the worship delay behavior items, mean scores were moderately high, ranging from 3.59 to 4.02. This indicates a tendency to delay worship despite its perceived importance, yet also reflects sincerity in compensatory actions post-delay.

Lastly, items assessing cognitive dissonance reflected internal conflict associated with worship delay. The highest rated item in this category, *Cognitive Dissonance 1* ("I experience inner conflict when I miss worship"), had a mean of 4.34, while other items ranged from 3.72 to 4.25, indicating notable psychological discomfort and compensatory justification efforts.

Overall, the consistently high mean values across constructs reinforce the central role of guilt, religious influence, and internal conflict in shaping worship behavior among the participants ($N = 133$).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the items (See Appendix for Full Questionnaire)

Items	Mean
Guilt(Emotional Response) 1	4.47
Guilt(Emotional Response) 2	4.25
Guilt(Emotional Response) 3	4.00
Guilt(Emotional Response) 4	4.23
Guilt(Emotional Response) 5	4.25

Religious Reminders 1	4.43
Religious Reminders 2	4.27
Religious Reminders 3	3.99
Religious Reminders 4	4.32
Worship Delay Behavior 1	3.74
Worship Delay Behavior 2	3.59
Worship Delay Behavior 3	4.02
Cognitive Dissonance 1	4.34
Cognitive Dissonance 2	4.25
Cognitive Dissonance 3	3.89
Cognitive Dissonance 4	3.72
Valid N (listwise) - 133	

Results Of The First Research Question

First RQ was to what extent do guilt and cognitive dissonance predict worship delay behavior among young Muslims. To examine the predictive power of guilt and cognitive dissonance on worship delay behavior, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The assumption of multicollinearity was assessed through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, which were well within acceptable limits (VIF = 1.679 for both predictors), indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

The overall model was statistically significant, $F(2, 130) = 43.05$, $p < .001$, and explained 39.8% of the variance in worship delay behavior ($R^2 = .398$, Adjusted $R^2 = .389$), as shown in Table 1. This indicates that the combination of guilt and cognitive dissonance accounts for a substantial proportion of the variability in participants' delay of worship practices.

As detailed in Table 4, the guilt variable emerged as a significant positive predictor of worship delay, $\beta = .635$, $t = 7.200$, $p < .001$, suggesting that participants with higher levels of guilt were more likely to delay worship. This supports the theoretical proposition that unresolved guilt may lead to avoidance behavior rather than immediate spiritual correction.

In contrast, cognitive dissonance did not significantly predict worship delay behavior, $\beta = -.005$, $t = -.061$, $p = .951$. While cognitive dissonance is theoretically related to emotional discomfort arising from value-behavior conflict, its nonsignificant contribution in this model suggests that guilt may fully mediate or overshadow its direct effect on worship delay.

Table 3: Model Summary for Predicting Worship Delay Behavior

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.631	.398	.389	0.610

Table 4: Coefficients for Predicting Worship Delay Behavior

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.748	.383	—	1.957	.053
Guilt (Guilt_Mean)	.756	.105	.635	7.200	.000
Cognitive Dissonance (CD_Mean)	-.007	.108	-.005	-.061	.951

Results Of The Second Research Question

Second RQ was whether the exposure to religious reminders moderate the relationship between guilt and worship delay behavior. To examine whether religious reminders

moderate the relationship between guilt and worship delay behavior, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. Predictor variables (guilt and reminders) were mean-centered, and an interaction term (Guilt \times Religious Reminder) was computed to assess moderation effects.

In Step 1, the main effects of guilt and religious reminders were entered into the regression model. The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 130) = 12.30$, $p < .001$, and explained 15.9% of the variance in worship delay behavior ($R^2 = .159$, Adjusted $R^2 = .146$). In this step, guilt significantly predicted worship delay ($\beta = .376$, $p = .001$), while religious reminders did not ($\beta = .033$, $p = .766$).

In Step 2, the interaction term (Guilt \times Religious Reminder) was added. The change in R^2 was statistically significant, $\Delta R^2 = .031$, $F(1, 129) = 4.998$, $p = .027$, indicating a moderation effect. The full model explained 19.0% of the variance in worship delay ($R^2 = .190$, Adjusted $R^2 = .172$), as shown in Table 3.

As seen in Table 6, the interaction term was statistically significant ($\beta = -.200$, $t = -2.236$, $p = .027$), suggesting that the relationship between guilt and worship delay varies depending on the level of religious reminders. Specifically, the positive association between guilt and worship delay weakens when individuals are exposed to higher levels of religious reminders, indicating that such reminders may buffer or reduce the likelihood of spiritual avoidance driven by guilt.

Table 5: Model Summary for Moderation Analysis of Religious Reminders

Step	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. ΔF
1	.399	.159	—	12.299	2	130	.000
2	.436	.190	.031	4.998	1	129	.027

Table 6: Coefficients for Moderation Model Predicting Worship Delay

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.826	.065	—	59.10	.000
Guilt (centered)	.366	.140	.297	2.62	.010
Religious Reminders (centered)	.015	.134	.012	0.110	.913
Guilt \times Reminder	-.164	.074	-.200	-2.24	.027

These results demonstrate that religious reminders significantly moderate the effect of guilt on worship delay, offering empirical support for the theoretical claim that external religious cues—especially those perceived as compassionate or constructive—can reduce the negative behavioral outcomes associated with unresolved spiritual guilt.

DISCUSSION

The current study offers a deeper understanding of how guilt and religious reminders interact to shape religious behavior among young Muslims, particularly in the context of worship delay. Consistent with Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), results showed that guilt—a key emotional response to behavior-belief conflict—was a strong predictor of worship procrastination. This supports prior findings by Tangney et al. (2007) and Baumeister et al. (1994) that unresolved guilt can create psychological barriers to moral action, particularly when the emotional burden is not mediated by self-forgiveness or redemptive action.

Interestingly, while cognitive dissonance was a theoretical foundation of this study, its direct statistical influence was not significant in the final model. This suggests that guilt

may act as a more proximal and potent emotional driver of spiritual behavior than abstract cognitive tension, aligning with research by Fisher & Exline (2010) and Wohl et al. (2010), who emphasized guilt's immediate behavioral implications.

The moderation effect of religious reminders was a particularly notable contribution. Findings confirm that the presence of religious cues—especially those interpreted as compassionate rather than judgmental—can buffer the negative behavioral outcomes of guilt. This aligns with Pargament (2002) and McCullough & Willoughby (2009), who emphasized the motivational role of spiritually affirming messages. Furthermore, the interaction term between guilt and reminders confirms a conditional process: guilt only leads to worship delay when reminders are weak or absent.

From a practical standpoint, this study offers valuable direction for mosque leaders, youth mentors, and Islamic educators, suggesting that emotionally intelligent religious reminders—those emphasizing divine mercy over punishment—can prevent disengagement and encourage reengagement after failure. Framing religious messaging with psychological sensitivity is key to long-term spiritual consistency.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the growing field of religious psychology by empirically examining how guilt, religious reminders, and cognitive dissonance interact to influence worship delay behavior in young Muslims. Findings indicate that while guilt significantly predicts worship delay, its negative effects can be mitigated through the presence of religious reminders that promote mercy, compassion, and hope.

By extending Cognitive Dissonance Theory into the domain of worship behavior, the research highlights the importance of emotional regulation in religious practice. Although cognitive dissonance was foundational in theory, guilt served as the more direct emotional mechanism influencing behavior. The moderating role of religious reminders shows that thoughtful spiritual interventions can guide guilt toward constructive behavioral outcomes rather than avoidance.

In conclusion, fostering spiritually consistent behavior among youth requires more than doctrinal instruction—it demands a compassionate engagement with their emotional and psychological states. Religious institutions and educators must prioritize emotionally balanced messaging, using guilt not as a tool for shame but as a cue for spiritual growth. Future research may expand on these insights by exploring longitudinal impacts and cross-cultural variations in guilt-reminder interactions.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE**Section A: Demographic Information**

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Section B: Guilt (Emotional Response)

1. I feel guilty when I miss a Salat
2. Missing Salat makes me feel like I've failed morally or spiritually.
3. I often reflect on my reasons for delaying Salat.
4. My guilt increases when I delay my religious duties longer.
5. Guilt motivates me to return to my worship.

Section C: Religious Reminders

1. Religious speech and messages remind me of my responsibilities.
2. When I receive religious reminders, I feel encouraged to worship.
3. The Quranic verses of punishment increase my guilt.
4. Religious speeches about divine forgiveness make me more willing to worship.

Section D: Worship Delay Behavior

1. I delay worship even though I believe it's important.
2. I often justify worship delays for personal or external reasons.
3. After a worship delay, I usually make up with sincerity.

Section E: Cognitive Dissonance

1. I experience inner conflict when I miss worship.
2. I try to resolve my guilt through prayer or other charity activities.
3. I feel the need to justify my behavior when I delay worship.
4. My daily activities do not always align with my religion so I feel discomfort.