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UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGION AND THERAPY WITHIN THE AMBIT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Like all religions, Islam, its teachings and rituals also have an impact on the everyday life of an individual. This makes the study of mental health in relation to Islam an important field of research which is very much required in the current global socio-political scenario. The Qur'an can be used as a guide to those suffering from emotional distress and aims to lead people to a meaningful quality of life. It is clearly stated "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its



treatment' (Hadith)". The Qur'an describes the nafs, or self, as operating out of one of three states: nafs al-ammara (commanding self); nafs al-lawwama (accusatory self) and nafs al-mutmainna (peaceful self). The Qur'an explains how these states command our psyche and tell us what to do, they control us and dominate us. If we have nafs al-ammara, it means we are subjugated by the self, we listen and follow its commands. This stage describes the part of us that requires material possessions and sensual desires. This is the ideal state of ego, there is tranquillity and peace. By following Islamic principles, it is believed that Muslims can achieve and enjoy the ingredients of a healthy and balanced life.

Introduction

Psychology is the study of human mind, how it works and how it might affect the behaviour. It also refers to the application of the knowledge, which can be used to understand events, treat mental health issues, and improve education, employment and relationships. Primarily, it studies people and looks at why they



think and act like one. Psychology allows human to understand more about how the body and mind work together. Thus, this knowledge can help with decision-making, avoiding stressful situations, time management, setting and achieving goals and the most important is to lead a happy and effective living

Most of the contemporary scholarship that has been somewhat indiscriminately characterized as Islamic Psychology might better be referred to as ‘Islam *and* Psychology’. defining terms or discussing methods used to come up with new ones are essential components of basic scholarship. In order to reach that aim, the authors will highlight the main concepts in Islamic Psychology as to show how it is different from the conventional psychology. The concept of human nature and our goal in life will be elaborated in view of developing the personality of the Muslim Counsellors and their clients.

The background and basic principles of Islam are delineated. The centrality of the oneness of God and the five pillars of faith are discussed. Psychological benefits resulting from ablution, praying, fasting, alms giving, and pilgrimage to Mecca are noted. Islam



provides clear guidance for all of life, and its teachings have reference to care for the family, divorce and polygamy, concern for the welfare of parents and the aged, and concern for learning and work. Proscriptions against suicide, sexual perversions, crime, and racial discrimination are also included. Muslims can enjoy healthy and balanced lives by following these teachings.

The compatibility between the personality of the counsellor and his clients is important in ensuring the existence of congruency. Congruency is required to be one of the counsellor's characteristics in which the counsellor acts as a role model. Being a role model, he is needed to be as real, transparent and genuine so as to provide the clients with the necessary strength and willingness to engage in honest and accurate self-exploration. Thus, it is vital for the Muslim counsellors to have the knowledge and understanding in the area of Islamic Psychology and be able to apply them in developing the spiritual inner self of the counsellors as well as in their client

The Concept of Human Nature in Islamic Psychology



In the view of the present authors, the root of the difference lies in the source of the references. Islamic Psychology found its foundations from the Quran and Hadith. Its point of references is no other than these two sources. From these sources, the scholars of Islam expound the psychological meanings and conceptualized them into the understanding and practice of psychology. Given that our source of reference and guidance is the Quran and Sunnah, we should be able to differentiate which one is good and can be adopted, and which one is not suitable with our way of life as prescribed by Islam. Thus, Islamic psychology provides us with a holistic view in understanding human nature as prescribed by the Quran and hadith. the heart or Qalb, as Al-Ghazzali calls it, is the essence of man. **According to Al-Ghazzali¹**, the concept of the self is expressed in Arabic by four terms that is Qalb (heart), Ruh (soul), Nafs (desire-nature) and 'Aql (intellect, reason).

¹Al-Ghazali. (1988). *IhyaUlumiddin* (Vol. 1). (Yakub Ismail). Kuala Lumpur: Victory Ajensi.



Mohamed (1996)²explained although man is born in a state of fitra, he also has the potential of committing the wrongdoing, kufr (rejection of tawhid) and breaking the divine law. These are all part of the Divine scheme of Creation; their functions are important and decisive for man. Allah has endowed man with the inborn capacity to distinguish right from wrong through intellect, free will and revelation. Although man is not born evil, he is vulnerable to evil stimuli or external sources of misguidance. This property of the human constitution is intrinsic to man and is referred to as psyche or the self (nafs) of man. Thus, there is a need to keep both in a balanced state.

The existence of the conflict between animal and angelic characters in the human personality. Both are competing with one another in fulfilling their needs. *Allah said in the Quran (An-Nazi'aat: 37-41), "Then for him who transgressed all bounds (in disbelief, oppression and evil deeds of disobedience to Allah). And preferred the life of this world (by following his evil desires and lusts), verily, his*

²Mohamed, Y. (1996). *Fitra: The Islamic concept of human nature*. London: TaHa Publishers Ltd.



abode will be Hell-fire. But for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be his abode"³. Najati explained further that this conflict is a test from Allah for the human. Nik Hassan (1994) explained that the animalistic elements provide the energy for changes to take place, and the angelic elements are to ensure changes are in realm of human nobility. Those who are able to balance the needs derived from these aspects are those who belongs to the successful people and will be rewarded in this world and the hereafter. Man is a special creation due to the spark of Allah's Spirit that makes him unique apart from the rest of creation. *Allah said in the Quran (Al-Hijr:29): "So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) of My soul, then fall (you) down to him in prostration."* In essence, Islamic Psychology is the study of mind, behaviour and spiritual well-being of a Muslim based on Quran and Sunnah.

³*Quran (Al-Hijr:29)*



Applying Islamic Psychology in Counsellors and Clients Personality Development

When Muslims seek out support for mental health distress, symptoms are often described in somatic terms, for example, a client might describe his/her distress as an incongruent heart (unstable soul) that has become lost or distant from Allah. Typical locations for symptomology may be in the upper body and heart; also complaints of headaches, body aches, fatigue, insomnia, or as having a busy mind (Jafari, 1992)⁴. However, even when considering the latter, when it comes to Islamic counselling and psychotherapy the approach is not well defined. There is a growing need to establish an integrated framework, which would consist of combination psychotherapy with the basic tenets of Islam (Hussain, 2001)⁵.

⁴ Mohamed, Y. (1996). *Fitra: The Islamic concept of human nature*. London: TaHa Publishers Ltd.

⁵ Ansari, M. F. R. (2001). *The Quranic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society*. Volume 1. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust



Spirituality, Human Nature and Mental Illness

The Qur'an can be used as a guide to those suffering from emotional distress and aims to lead people to a meaningful quality of life. It is clearly stated "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment' (Hadith)". The Qur'an describes the nafs, or self, as operating out of one of three states: nafs al-ammara (commanding self); nafs al-lawwama (accusatory self) and nafs al-mutmainna (peaceful self). The Qur'an explains how these states command our psyche and tell us what to do, they control us and dominate us. If we have nafs al-ammara, it means we are subjugated by the self, we listen and follow its commands. This stage describes the part of us that requires material possessions and sensual desires. This is the ideal state of ego, there is tranquillity and peace⁶.

When our emotional needs are being poorly met, the nafs al-ammara begins to control our feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

⁶ Nik Hassan, N. M. (1994). The relevance of human centred development in the industrial era. *IKIM Journal*. 2 (1), 79-92.



The Qur'an provides guidance to learn and practise relaxation exercises to weaken the influence of the nafs al-ammara⁷. When it is in control, our thoughts are distorted leading us to take things personally, to see everything in a negative light and believe that things can't be changed for the better.

When our conscience, the nafs al-lawwama is active, we become aware that something is wrong with the way we are feeling and behaving. We can then learn to challenge negative thinking leading us to our nafs al-mutmainna⁸. The Qur'an uses a technique called Alif-Lam-Mim for strengthening the nafs al-lawwama and help bring about a more peaceful state of being. Mindfulness is a modern concept, which emphasises a mental state of awareness, focus and happiness. Mindfulness is a way in which we can become more aware of ourselves, our thoughts and our feelings, and act in a way which is mindful of ourselves and others despite our nafs and desires.

⁷ Rassool, G. H. (2016). *Islamic counselling: An introduction to theory and practice*. New

⁸ Langgulong, H. (2001). *A psycho-pedagogical approach to islamization of knowledge*. Selangor: International Islamic University Malaysia.



One can suppose that one effect of a truly Islamic cultural environment is to make it easier to maintain a state of God-consciousness and harmony within the self. Education based on *Wahy* (revelation), the *shari'ah* legal system, the acts of *Ibadat* (worship), Islamic art, the dietary rules, the prevalent social mores serves to facilitate the *Qalb's* purification and openness to *Ruh*, the wholesome channelling of the energy of the lower *Nafs*, and the harmonisation of the thinking process with the intuition of the *Qalb*⁹.

Furthermore, it is very similar to the main principle of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT explores the link between thoughts, emotions and behaviour, which aims to alleviate distress by encouraging people to develop more adaptive cognitions and behaviours. CBT is the most widely researched and empirically supported psychotherapeutic method¹⁰. There is a strong evidence

⁹ Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1992). *Al-Tawhid: Its implications for thought and life*. Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

¹⁰ Husain, A. (2006). *Islamic psychology: Emergence of a new field*. New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House.



base that is reflected in clinical guidelines, which recommend CBT as a treatment for many common mental health disorders. CBT ultimately aims to teach people to help themselves by understanding their current ways of thinking and behaving, and by equipping them with the tools to change their maladaptive cognitive and behavioural patterns. Or as the Qur'an says, to challenge negative thinking to bring serenity.

These are just a few points to show how the Qur'an highlights the importance of psychological wellbeing. If we as a society are to move forward and remove the stigma associated with mental health, the first thing we should do is not emphasise unjustified prejudices and put more hate into the world. We should all push for the same common goal of love and humility in a place where people can live free from fear.

By following Islamic principles, it is believed that Muslims can achieve and enjoy the ingredients of a healthy and balanced life.

Therapeutic Implications of the Islamic Model



A characteristic of all traditional Islamic science is its perception of the created world as being interconnected in its parts and constituting an essential unity or wholeness. The model I have presented in this paper does I think describe man as a whole, and it enables the self to be related both to the spiritual world and to the physical and social environment. The traditional Islamic approach to therapeutics can likewise be described as wholistic. If we take a common neurotic category of anxiety state, the condition can be dealt with by: (1) medicines and dietary control to weaken the primary *Nafs* of anxiety, (2) behavioural method to train the anxiety *Nafs*, (3) depth analysis and cognitive methods to correct unnatural thought and to open the *Aql's* connection the *Qalb*. Both aims if achieved help *Aql* to establish some control over the *Nafs*, (4) *dhikr* and other acts of worship can be used to open the heart and extend its control over the imbalances in the *Aql* and *Nafs*.

It can be seen that the Western corpus of psychological knowledge need not be disregarded, what is important for the Muslim is that he has the basic Islamic understanding of the self to enable him to



make the right selection from that knowledge and to use it in a harmonious way.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been suggested that Western psychology is too culturally contaminated to be accepted *prima facie* by Muslims. It have argued, however, that a comprehensive psychology cannot be evolved simply from a culture-free experimental methodology and that Muslims should consider basing their understanding of the self on models that derived from *Qur'anic* teaching. It is proposed that it is both unnecessary and impractical to do this without reference to the models constructed by traditional Islamic scholars whose work as physicians and psychologists was imbued with Islamic understanding. The rudimentary model of the self (based on my understanding of such sources) which though doubtless in need of improvement points the way of understanding complex mental phenomena more comprehensively than is possible with most Western theories. It permits an absolute definition of mental health rather than one which is socially and culturally dependant. Its use by no means excludes the adoption of various theories and



therapeutic techniques developed in the West, but enables the Muslim to be discriminating in how he uses this knowledge.

There are statements in *Qur'an* and *Hadith* referring to areas within the parameters of psychology (such as possession by *Djinn* and the use of dream analysis) It is hoped that however, that this paper will provide a stimulus to constructive discussion and enables sketching both the framework for an Islamically appropriate psychology.