

# ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY: ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

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## Abstract

Media has been inundated with reports on various criminal acts in the society. One of the reasons why these inhuman activities occur is due to the perpetrator's mental illness or ailment of the soul. This mental state is often associated with stress which then lead to moral damage. The fall of Islamic civilization has long seen to be hugely contributed by decadence and moral decay among Muslims. Today, method of psychotherapy based on the Qur'an and Sunnah are seen as a highly relevant mechanism towards curing the stress of human psyche. The method is important in the formation of quality human personality in the world and the afterlife. A civilization may easily collapse if there is an absence of spiritual, emotional, mental and physical balance in its people. A qualitative research method, mainly library based research is used in the writing of this article. This article significance and relevance of psychotherapy method in building a Muslim identity as the foundation to strengthen Islamic civilization towards encountering various contemporary and future crises.

**Keywords:** Islamic psychotherapy; Quran; Sunnah; empowerment; Islamic civilization

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world today has witnessed various phenomena that happen, both good and bad. The occurrences of negative acts prevail due to moral decay of the perpetrators. Bad *akhlak* (moral) arises from the soul desolates of values or religious dogma. Thus, psychotherapy or treatment of the soul is seen to be imperative in curing the problematic soul because it is closely linked to a person's behaviour. When the soul becomes noble, the person will have well and good behaviour which will then strengthen a nation; creating a powerful and mighty civilization.

## 2.0 THE MEANING OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy rooted in the two words, namely '*Psiko*' and '*Therapy*'. *Psiko* comes from the Latin '*Psyche*' which refers to soul or in Arabic, it matches the word '*al-Nafs*' (soul). '*Therapy*' means treatment and healing (Wahyudi, 1991).

So, etymologically, psychotherapy means treatment of the soul. While from the point of terminology, there are several definitions given to the term psychotherapy. Among them are psychotherapy is a natural mind treatment or more accurately, psychic disorder treatment through the method of psychology. It is

also seen as the treatment of mental and emotional disorders as well as the problems associated with it by using psychological techniques (Bonnie, 2001; Knapp, 1996). Corsini summarizes psychotherapy as the formal process of interaction between two parties with the aim of improving the unpleasant conditions such as cognitive, affective, and behavioural functions (Singgih, 1996). Briefly, psychotherapy can be summarised as the soul and mind healing treatments using a psychological approach. The term was introduced in the West in the 19th century to describe a range of treatments which are believed to cure mental and psychic aspects. It's very different from the usual physical treatment.

### 3.0 THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

Islamic Psychotherapy is a discipline under Islamic Psychology. It is seen as a track to solve problems related to the man's spiritual aspect. It is a method adopted by Muslim scholars in the past to treat the soul. This method is done through prevention, treatment and construction of an individual's soul especially those which have fragile faith in Allah SWT. This method is very significant because Islam educate its believers to build relationships with Allah SWT and all His creations (Nasution, 1997).

It is thus defined as a process of psychological intervention that aims to cure spiritual and mental stress, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah of Rasulullah SAW (Sapora & Ruhaya, 2010). It is also considered a recovery process of an individual with mental disorders such as depression, stress, neurosis, psychosis, phobias and others (Ari, 2004). Islamic psychotherapy concept includes four factors which are biological, psychological, social and spiritual and all these aspects could exert influence and prevent someone from psychiatric disorders.

Psychotherapy is divided into two dimensions namely, *tabi'iyah* (detectable) and *syar'iyah* (undetectable). *Tabi'iyah* psychotherapy focuses on psychological treatments against diseases that can be detected and felt by patients in certain circumstances such as illnesses, nervousness, worries, sadness, anger, and anxiousness. On the other hand, *syar'iyah* psychotherapy is the treatment in psychology for diseases that are undetectable or cannot be felt by the patient. The diseases are extremely dangerous and can possibly damage the heart or soul such as ignorance, doubt and orgasm (Nazneen, 2014).

Mechanism of treating whether the traceable or untraceable diseases is by eliminating the cause of the disease and carrying out the Islamic practice of psychotherapy interventions according to the Sharia of Allah SWT. Among them is the use of psychotherapy mechanism in ' *Tazkiyah a'-Nafs* ' (purification of the soul) by al-Ghazali (Shahrom, 2001).

A study has been made by a researcher who runs the Islamic guidance therapy intervention in the context of Islamic psychotherapy over mentally-ill patient. This intervention adopts five therapies which are faith in Allah SWT, prayers, *tafakur* (meditation), *dhikr* (remembrance) and *du'a* (prayer), and *redha* (acceptance) on Allah's resolve. These five psychotherapies make 'tazkiyah al-nafs' a platform for constructing the Islamic guidance modules and during the implementation of the intervention. The study conducted proved able to mitigate and resolve the problems of patients with general anxiety disorders. This neurosis mental illness is similar to soul disturbances (Che Haslina, 2014).

#### 4.0 PSYCHOTHERAPY EMERGENCE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Islamic Psychology historically started with the history of mankind, but of course not under the particular title of psychology. It started with the story of Adam and Hawa when they committed sin against the injunction of their Lord and the case of one of the sons of Adam who murdered his brother. We also referred to the model of psychological methodology adopted by the Prophet Ibrahim to teach his people. Allah also had guided Noah, Daud, Sulaiman and other prophets. All these prophets of Islam applied Islamic Psychology in their lives (Husain, n.d). Meanwhile, the early emergence of Islamic Psychotherapy started during the time of Prophet Muhammad saw when the knowledge of healing is mentioned through al-Quran and his Sunnah (Mariana, 2002). During the golden age of Islamic civilization between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> years, Islamic scholars speak about psychological, psychiatry, psychotherapy concepts and their relation to mental health. The first Islamic member of medicine who introduced the method of psychotherapy and created a lot of success with regards to definitions, symptoms and treatments of mental health was Abu Bakr Muhammad Zakaria Al-Razi (Zainul, 1999). In addition, Islamic figures such as Abu Zayd Ahmed ibn Sahl al-Balkhi, Ibn Sina (n.d) talked a lot on spiritual healing and its connection with physical healing. At the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, a famous soul medical personality, Ali Ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari, was born. He has expanded the use of Islamic psychotherapy in treating patients suffering from soul disorders. This has been noted in his famous book 'Mushtaq al-Hikmah' (Khalili, Murken, Helmut, Shah, & Vahabzadeh, 2002). According to leading Islamic moralists like Miskawayh, al-Tusi and al-Ghazali, just like the body, the human psyche will also become sick and unhealthy and thus, it requires treatment such as psychiatry, psychotherapy, advice, guidance and counselling.

It is clear that the Islamic figures highlighted above are the earliest in human civilization who talk about mental health, looks at the correlation between physical and spiritual as well as performing methods of treatment based on Islamic principles. Based on the above statement, it is clearly shown that there is a need for a form of psychotherapy that can solve a range of problems including mental and soul ailments in the best way possible. In this respect, the Islamic scholars and thinkers in the era of 1960s have suggested a new transformation in the knowledge that is the Islamization of Western psychotherapy. The first person who openly voiced the issue of modern psychotherapy Islamization was Muhammad Qutb in his book on the psychology and Islamic education. The psychological agenda is the result of Muslim psychologists' attempt to Islamise modern psychotherapy (Malik, 1997).

#### 5.0 THE RELEVANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY IN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

The base of a human civilization not only depends on the physical strength and mental stability, but it is also subjected to the soul or spiritual intensity of its people. The glory of the earlier Muslim nations has been proven by history when the Qur'an and as-Sunnah were made the core of their lives (Osman Bakar, Ibrahim Abu Shah, Lelawati Abdul Hamid & Mohd. Asri Abdullah, 1997). However, the fall of Islamic civilization was still witnessed by history due to moral turpitude among Muslims themselves. This is due to the fragility in faith and religion as a result of the weak soul. Repairing one's *akhlak* (moral) can be executed through moral treatment or psychotherapy methods. This is because according to imam al-Ghazali, morality is a manifestation of nature that is in the soul. If the soul of someone is noble, then he will own the true *akhlak* (Noor Shahirah, 2012).

The role of psychotherapy is to form the human psyche in order to be in line with the demands of human nature rather than fighting it. In this regard, the Islamic psychotherapy mechanism is very relevant in the construction and development of the Muslim souls to revive the golden era of Islamic Civilization. Rasullullah SAW moulded the companions to become strong mentally, spiritually, morally and in terms of wisdom till they were lifted and recognised as the best *ummah* (people) at that time. Psychotherapy approach and its relation to *akhlak* is an essential element in building a civilization as excellent *ummah* is the *ummah* or nation that is holistic in nature surpassing various areas including epistemology, humanity, community and others.

Psychotherapy is significant in relation to Islamic civilization because it is based on a social community landscape. Humans as human capital is particularly relevant to undergo psychotherapy because an individual or a nation is unable to run away from facing the various stress and problems in developing himself, his race and his civilization. Islamic Psychotherapy interventions are needed in order to balance the stability of mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person in order to build a successful Islamic civilization. In addition, psychotherapy is important in helping individuals to understand themselves, know the causes of psychopathology and provide a brighter future in the development of the souls towards the construction of a glorious Islamic civilization (Nazneen, 2014).

Method of psychotherapy is applicable to all nations, especially the Muslims because it adopts the three key elements, namely, faith, *ibadah* (worship) and *tasawuf* (sufism) that serve as innovative energies to cleanse the soul, which has been stained with worldly impurities ('Uthman Najati, 2001). Egoism of a nation is not the parameters for the race to be labelled as civilized (Marzuki, Kamis, & Ibrahim, 1997).

Islamic Psychotherapy interventions effectively cure diseases of the soul because souls which are always at default from remembering Allah SWT will always be interrupted by the devil or its affiliates, posing a variety of 'heart' diseases. Method of soul purification or 'tazkiyah al-nafs' put forward by imam al-Ghazali is universal and comprehensive as it covers the whole aspects of life in this world and the hereafter. Thus, Muslims in particular is recommended to adopt the method based on faith, *ibadah* and *tasawuf* by iman al-Ghazali for treating mental or 'heart' illnesses.

From the explanation above, it is clear that it is time for the method of Islamic psychotherapy to be practiced for curing and treating more and more Muslims who suffer various mental emotional and spiritual problems. If the mental and soul illnesses suffered by Muslims today are left prolonged, the Muslims today would have failed to have excellent personality in the future. Therefore, the recent and future civilization may not be able to be excellently formed like those civilizations glorified and historically witnessed during the golden age of Islam. It is thus a worry that one day Muslims may experience episodes of the Islamic civilization fall for the second time as the one witnessed during the Othmaniah Empire from 13th century to early 20th-century. Hence, the proverb "dig the well before you are thirsty" shows the importance and the need to build strong Muslim identity through the formation and consolidation of mental, soul, physical and emotional stability.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Muslims civilization today has shown some signs of positive development. Muslims around the world has beginning to show interest to return to the basic Islamic dogma. Despite the existence of some groups with leakages in faith, it can be recovered via several methods. Islamic Psychotherapy is seen among the best methods for purification of the soul so that it will later produce a nobler moral character. When the soul has been fertilized with religious values, Muslims will certainly develop inherent spiritual strength. This will make them a great race and be able to face many challenges. This *ummah* will also be able to accelerate and empower the civilization in various aspects towards a more positive and glorious future. Thus, Islamic psychotherapy is very substantial and relevant in empowering Islamic civilization.

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