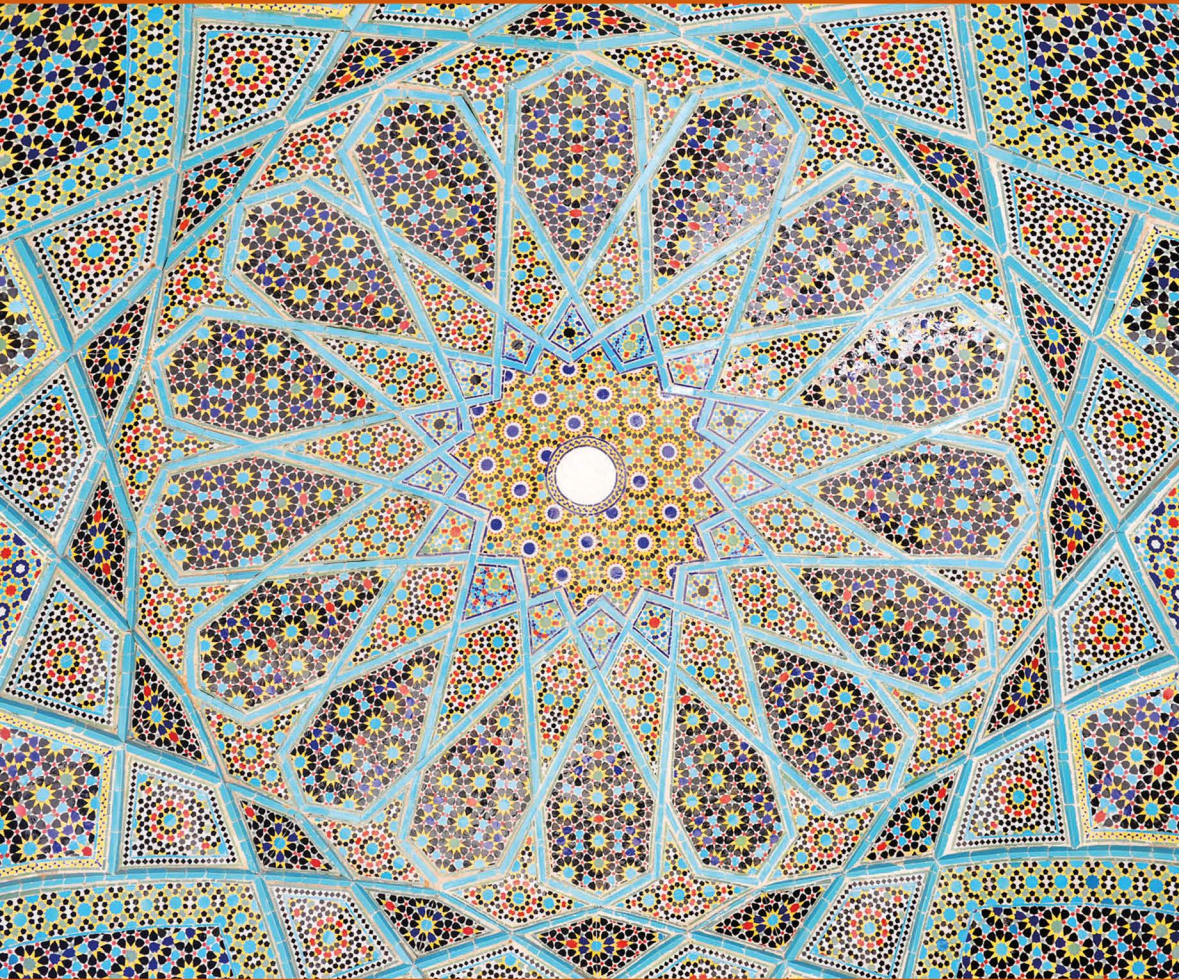


Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy

An Introduction to Theory and Practice

SECOND EDITION



G. Hussein Rassool



‘First edition, *Islāmic Counselling: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* has finally received its long awaited second edition: *Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy*. This edition builds on the comprehensive concepts and theories shared in the original and will no doubt be as valuable an asset to the world of Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy in terms of practice and education. It is an essential resource for psychotherapy students, academics and practitioners as well as an interesting read for those who have a curiosity for the subject matter.’

Khalida Haque, *SNCPS (Accredited), psychotherapist, UK*

‘The revised edition of this essential book, *Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy* 2nd edition written by Professor Dr. G. Hussein Rassool, skilfully navigates the intricate joining of spirituality and psychotherapy. The inclusion of postmodern therapeutic approaches, such as narrative and hope therapy, adds a contemporary layer to the discourse, ensuring that readers are equipped with the latest insights in the field. This edition offers a reflective exploration of the expanding role of Islāmic psychotherapists, highlighting their evolving responsibilities and contributions within the broader context of mental health. The in-depth examination of the integration of Qur’anic teachings and hādīth into the therapeutic process enriches the reader’s understanding of the profound connections between faith and mental well-being. Additionally, the book introduces an Islāmic perspective on dream interpretation, unlocking new dimensions in the exploration of spiritual and psychological realms. Addressing ethical challenges specific to Islāmic psychotherapy, Professor Rassool provides valuable guidance for practitioners navigating complex issues, ensuring a culturally sensitive and ethically sound practice. This work is not only a crucial resource for Muslims navigating mental health but also an invaluable read for anyone interested in the harmonious integration of spirituality into the therapeutic process.’

Razia Bhatti-Ali, *PhD, consultant clinical psychologist
(Connect Health Ltd/Bupa), UK*

‘At this point in the history of our Ummah, it is essential that scholars of experience and courage, each in their own field, envision a re-construction of the current disciplines and propose robust new ways of dealing with contemporary phenomena. Current systems, including in the discipline of psychology and in the variety of phenomena related to it, are proving ineffective in improving the human condition. That is why I was happy to see this extensive new study done by Professor G. Hussein Rassool, critiquing the current paradigm and proposing new ways of analysis and counselling on Islāmic foundations. May Allaah reward Professor Rassool and widen the circles of benefit of his work to Muslims and humanity writ large.’

Jasser Auda, *PhD, President of Maqasid Institute Global at the
International Peace University, South Africa*

'Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy is a groundbreaking work that seamlessly weaves Islāmic teachings into the fabric of modern psychotherapy. A vital resource for practitioners and scholars alike, this book offers a comprehensive guide, harmonising the Islāmic principles with contemporary therapeutic techniques. Its depth and relevance make it an indispensable tool, fostering a holistic understanding of counselling within the Islāmic framework.'

Zuleyha Keskin, *PhD, Associate Head of School at the Centre for Islāmic Studies and Civilisation, Charles Sturt University, Australia*

'Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy by Professor Dr. G. Hussein Rassool is an indispensable resource that bridges the gap between mainstream counselling and the specific needs of Muslim clients. This second edition represents a significant milestone, offering a comprehensive exploration of the intricate interplay between Islāmic principles and psychotherapeutic practices.

The book covers a wide array of topics, from the foundational understanding of Islāmic therapy to ethical considerations and the scope of Islāmic psychotherapy. It critically examines various psychotherapeutic approaches through an Islāmic lens, providing insights into their compatibility with Islāmic principles. Professor Dr. G. Hussein Rassool delves into practical intervention strategies within Islāmic psychotherapy, addressing the integration of Qur'anic verses, dream interpretation, halāl-harām considerations, and presenting the Siraat Al-Islāmic Psychotherapy Practice Model. What makes this edition particularly valuable is its updated content, exploring postmodern psychotherapy approaches like narrative and hope therapy. The author sheds light on the evolving role of Islāmic psychotherapists and addresses ethical challenges specific to this field. The inclusion of an Islāmic perspective on dream interpretation adds a unique dimension to the exploration of spiritual and psychological realms and tools. Furthermore, Professor Rassool emphasizes the importance of therapists integrating spirituality, religion, psychology, and cultural awareness when working with Muslim clients. The book serves as a primer in Islāmic psychotherapy, offering professionals, novice therapists, and students the tools and knowledge to enhance the effectiveness and culturally sensitive nature of therapeutic interventions.

As someone deeply invested in the field of counselling and psychotherapy at a clinical set up like that of a hospital, I highly recommend *Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy* to practitioners, educators, and anyone seeking a profound understanding of how Islāmic principles can be integrated into the therapeutic process. Professor Rassool's meticulous research, practical guidance, and commitment to cultural sensitivity make this book an invaluable contribution to the field.'

Zulekha Shakoora Rajani, *counselling and spiritual psychologist at Mind and Brain Hospital, India*

‘Alhamdulillahirabbil ‘alamiin. All praise is to Allāh, the Lord of the world. It is with much pleasure that I should write an endorsement of another of Professor G. Hussein Rassool books, titled *Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy*. As the readers of *Islāmic Psychology* have already known, he is the most productive author in the world today in the science of Islāmic psychology. Now another mark of his prolificacy will soon be published. The title that he has decided to cover, become an answer for the long-awaited guidelines in the area of Islāmic counselling and psychotherapy. The book covers the important elements of understanding counselling and psychotherapy from an Islāmic perspective: From the conceptual understanding, ethics, explanation of different approaches applied in the conventional psychotherapy seen critically from Islāmic perspective, as well as current practices based on Islāmic approaches – including family therapy. This book is a must read for those who teach, learn and practice counselling and psychotherapy. The teachers, students and practitioners who feel the need to better understand and support their Muslim clients with their unique worldview.’

Emi Zulaifah, PhD, Vice Dean of religious, students, alumni and partnership affairs, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia



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ISLĀMIC COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Islāmic Counselling and Psychotherapy: An Introduction to Theory and Practice provides foundation-level knowledge of and perspective on the fundamental principles and practices of counselling and psychotherapy from an Islāmic perspective.

This groundbreaking practical framework incorporates Islāmic spirituality, religion, and cultural contexts into the therapeutic process. It makes the case that authentic Islāmic spirituality, based on submission to God, forms the cornerstone of good mental health. The book's foundation focuses on the therapist's role and ethical considerations specific to Islāmic psychotherapy. It explores the integration of Qur'ānic teachings and hādīths and delves into dream interpretation and the clinical applications of the Siraat Al-Islāmic psychotherapy practice model. This thoroughly revised new edition also highlights advances and developments in scholarship and evidence-based practices and introduces postmodern psychotherapy approaches like narrative and hope therapy. This text provides a clear understanding of the nature, scope, and process of Islāmic psychotherapy for Islāmic practitioners or clinicians working with Muslim clients.

G. Hussein Rassool, PhD, is Professor of Islāmic Psychology, Centre for Islāmic Studies & Civilisations, Charles Sturt University, Australia. He is a fellow of the International Association of Islāmic Psychology and the Royal Society of Public Health.



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ISLĀMIC COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

An Introduction to Theory
and Practice

Second Edition

G. Hussein Rassool

Designed cover image: tunart/© Getty Images

Second edition published 2025

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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First edition published by Routledge 2016

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-59191-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-58634-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-45341-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003453413

Typeset in Times New Roman

by Apex CoVantage, LLC

*Dedicated to Idrees Khattab ibn Adam Ibn Hussein Ibn
Hassim Ibn Sahaduth Ibn Rosool Ibn Olee Al Mauritiusy,
Isra Oya, Asiyah Maryam, Idrees Khattab, Adam Ali
Hussein, Reshad Hassan, Yasmin Soraya, BeeBee
Mariam, Bibi Safian & Hassim, Dr Najmul Hussein,
and Mohammed Ali.*



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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This book, published over eight years ago, offers readers a robust foundation and insight into counselling from an Islāmic perspective. Its widespread popularity is evident in its translations into numerous languages including Basa Indonesian, Russian, Turkish, and Arabic. The book has resonated with audiences in various countries, reflecting its broad appeal and influence in the field of Islāmic counselling. For Muslim individuals, their faith plays a central role in shaping their worldview, values, and coping mechanisms. It is within this context that Islāmic counselling and psychotherapy emerges as a distinct discipline, integrating Islāmic principles with established counselling and psychotherapy theories and techniques.

This new edition represents a milestone in the development of Islāmic counselling and psychotherapy, embarking on an exploration of the intricate interplay between Islāmic principles and psychotherapeutic practices. Beginning with a foundational understanding in the opening chapters, the book establishes the ethical considerations and scopes of Islāmic psychotherapy. It illuminates the unique role of the Islāmic psychotherapist and addresses the ethical challenges inherent in this specialised field. The second part, “The Intersection of Islām and Psychotherapy,” critically examines various psychotherapeutic approaches through an Islāmic lens. The chapters explore the compatibility or incongruence of psychoanalytic therapy, Jungian therapy, humanistic therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy, and solution-focused brief therapy with Islāmic principles. Additionally, there is an examination of the Islāmic perspectives on pre-marital preparation, marital therapy, narrative therapy, and hope therapy. Advancing to the third part, “The Healing Path,” the focus shifts to practical intervention strategies within Islāmic psychotherapy. Chapters delve into the integration of Qur’ānic verses and *hādīths*, an Islāmic approach to dream interpretation, considerations of *halāl/harām* boundaries in complementary therapies, and the introduction of the Siraat Al-Islāmic

psychotherapy practice model. Further exploration encompasses addiction and harm reduction, clinical applications of the practice model, Islāmic research approaches in psychotherapy, and strategies for overcoming challenges and cultivating competence. The central thesis of the book revolves around advocating for therapists to integrate spirituality, religion, psychology, and cultural awareness when dealing with Muslim clients. However, a crucial emphasis is placed on ensuring that these therapeutic and spiritual interventions remain aligned with Islāmic beliefs and practices. The book highlights the idea that therapists working with Muslim clients can leverage a holistic approach that incorporates various dimensions of spirituality, religion, and cultural context but that this must be done in a manner that aligns with Islāmic principles and values.

The revised edition of this book brings forth a wealth of new content, delving into postmodern psychotherapy and counselling approaches such as narrative and hope therapy. Furthermore, the updated edition explores the expanding role of Islāmic psychotherapists, shedding light on their evolving responsibilities and contributions within the field. It pays special attention to ethical challenges specific to Islāmic psychotherapy, offering insights into navigating these complex issues. One significant enhancement in the new edition involves a deeper examination of the integration of Qur'ānic teachings and *hādīths* within the therapeutic process of Islāmic counselling and psychotherapy. This new edition also introduces an Islāmic perspective on dream interpretation, adding another layer to the exploration of spiritual and psychological dimensions. Addressing contemporary considerations, the book examines the *halāl/harām* considerations in complementary therapies, recognising the importance of aligning therapeutic interventions with Islāmic ethical guidelines. The clinical applications of the Siraat Al-Islāmic psychotherapy practice model are also discussed, offering practitioners practical insights into applying this model in their therapeutic work. Lastly, the book expands its scope to include Islāmic approaches to research in the field of psychotherapy. This addition acknowledges the growing importance of research in informing and advancing Islāmic psychotherapy practices.

This book is a primer in Islāmic psychotherapy and sets out to provide a clear framework on the nature, scope, and processes of Islāmic counselling and psychotherapy. The book's purpose is to provide professionals, novice therapists, and students with the tools and knowledge to bridge the gap between mainstream counselling and psychotherapy approaches and the specific needs of Muslim clients. By offering practical guidance and theoretical foundations, it aims to enhance the effectiveness and culturally sensitive nature of therapeutic interventions with Muslim clients. The book also offers much practical wisdom not only to Muslims but to readers interested in integrating spirituality in the therapeutic process.

Professor Dr G. Hussein Rassool
27 February 2024

PREFACE

The need to develop culturally appropriate counselling intervention strategies in working with Muslim clients, and to understand and accept the legitimacy of alternative worldviews, is beyond dispute. Given the rapidly growing populations of Muslims in Western societies, it is imperative to develop a better understanding of their psychosocial and spiritual needs and concerns. The Muslim community is experiencing Islāmophobia, microaggressions, prejudices, hate crimes, and social exclusion related to their cultural and religious identity. In addition, as a consequence of these interrelated factors, there are indicators of the corresponding rise of Muslims in need of psychological and counselling services. More counsellors are coming into contact with Muslim clients, and it is not unusual to find that counselling professionals find themselves at a loss to intervene effectively with these clients. For the clients, this situation is commonly experienced as an inability of counsellors to fully understand their religio-cultural needs. Muslim clients are being offered counselling primarily with a Eurocentric worldview that is rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition and reflects the dominant values of the larger society.

This book provides a basic understanding of Islāmic counselling and fulfils an emerging need in the understanding of counselling approaches congruent with Islāmic beliefs and practices. Islāmic counselling is a contemporary response that has much in common with other therapeutic modalities but is based on an Islāmic understanding of the nature of human beings. The approaches and strategies of Islāmic counselling challenge the existing mainstream models of counselling and suggest that counsellors must accept the notion of “culture-specific” strategies in delivering appropriate and effective counselling interventions with Muslim clients.

Islāmic counselling is a form of counselling that incorporates spirituality into the therapeutic process. The goal of this type of integrative counselling is to address a variety of underlying psychological needs from a faith-based perspective. Given

that the principles and practice of Islāmic counselling are not yet in a form where its actual implementation can be monitored, it first requires guidelines that can be integrated into a theoretical framework, a purpose towards which this book is directed. Designed as an introduction for counsellors, its goal is to inform the reader about how the seemingly diverse roles of the Islāmic counsellor fit together in a comprehensive manner. The book is seen as a preliminary mapping exercise and as agenda setting to provide a stimulus and encourage further examination and development of the nature, approaches, and processes of Islāmic counselling. Muslims scholars and clinicians should share in this development with non-Muslim counsellors and academics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All Praise is due to Allāh and may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon our Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) his family and his companions.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Grace McDonnell, publisher at Routledge, for her invaluable suggestions and guidance throughout the development of the proposal of the second edition of the book. Her constructive feedback has been instrumental in shaping the content and direction of this book. I would also like to express my gratitude to Sara Hafeez, editorial assistant at Routledge, for her unwavering support and assistance throughout this endeavour. I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my colleagues at the Centre for Islāmic Studies & Civilisations, Charles Sturt University, Australia. In particular, I extend my sincere appreciation to Dr Zuleyha Keskin, Associate Head of School at the Centre for Islāmic Studies and Civilizations, for her support. I express my gratitude to the past and current students of Islāmic Counselling and Psychology (Level 2); Addiction Counselling and Islāmic Psychology; Islāmic Marriage Counselling; and Mental Health, *Jinn* Possession and Islāmic Psychology at Al-Balagh Academy for the invaluable lessons and insights they have provided me throughout my journey in this field. Their dedication and commitment to learning and exploring the anatomy of Islāmic psychotherapy and counselling have been instrumental in shaping my knowledge and skills in this domain.

I am incredibly grateful to my beloved parents, who instilled in me the importance of education. Their unwavering love and guidance have been instrumental in shaping who I am today, and I am truly grateful for their wisdom and encouragement. I am humbled and deeply grateful for the unwavering love and support of Mariam, Idrees Khattab Ibn Adam Ali Hussein Ibn Hussein Ibn Hassim Ibn Sahaduth Ibn Rosool Al Mauritiusy, Adam Ali Hussein, Reshad Hasan, Yasmin Soraya, Isra Oya, Asiyah Maryam, Nabila Akhrif, Nusaybah Burke, Musa Burke, Fatima Zahra,

Dr Najmul Hussein, and Mohammed Ali. Their presence in my life is a blessing, and I am forever indebted to them for their love, support, and inspiration.

I am grateful to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of my teachers, who have played a crucial role in enabling me to deepen my understanding of authentic Islām. Through their guidance and teachings, I have been able to embark on the right path, following the Creed of *Ahlus-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah*. I sincerely pray to Allāh that He forgives me and accepts my humble effort in writing this book. May He make it a source of benefit and fruitfulness for all those who find it useful and informative. May this book serve as a means of guidance and understanding for those who seek knowledge and insight. Finally, whatever benefits and correctness you find within this book are out of the Grace of Allāh, Alone, and whatever mistakes you find are mine alone. I pray to Allāh to forgive me for any unintentional shortcomings regarding the contents of this book and to make this humble effort helpful and fruitful to any interested parties.

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ ؕ

- *Whatever of good befalls you, it is from Allāh; and whatever of ill befalls you, it is from yourself.* (An-Nisā' 4:79, interpretation of the meaning)

The author and publishers would like to thank Mohamed Omar Salem, Mohamad Medhat Ali, and the Islāmic Medical Association of North America for permission to reproduce the Islāmic version of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, originally published in Salem, M.O. & Ali, M.M. (2008). 'Psycho-spiritual strategies in treating addiction patients: experience at Al-Amal Hospital, Saudi Arabia.' *Journal of the Islāmic Medical Association of North America*, 40 (4), 161–165. In addition, we are also grateful to Dr Jasser Auda for permission to reproduce Chart 2, p. 100, and Chart 3, p. 102 from Auda, J. (2021). *Re-envisioning Islāmic Scholarship: Maqasid Methodology as a New Approach*. Swansea, UK: Claritas Books.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Praise be to Allāh, we seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allāh from the evil of our own souls and from our bad deeds. Whomsoever Allāh guides will never be led astray, and whomsoever Allāh leaves astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allāh, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger (*Sunan al-Nasa'i: Kitaab al-Jumu'ah, Baab kay-fiyah al-khutbah*).

- *Fear Allāh as He should be feared and die not except in a state of Islām (as Muslims) with complete submission to Allāh (Ali-'Imran 3:102).*¹
- *O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women, and fear Allāh through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship) Surely, Allāh is Ever an All-Watcher over you) (Al-Nisā' 4:1).*
- *O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allāh and fear Him and speak (always) the truth) (Al-Aḥzāb 33:70).*
- *What comes to you of good is from Allāh, but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself (An-Nisā 4:79).*

The essence of this book is based on the following notions:

- The foundation of Islām as a religion is based on the Oneness of God.
- The source of knowledge is based on the Qur'ān and *hādīths* (*Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah*).
- Empirical knowledge from sense perception is also a source of knowledge through the work of classical and contemporary Islāmīc scholars and research.

- Islām takes a holistic approach to health: physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual health cannot be separated.
- Muslims have an Islāmic or Qur’ānic worldview that is different from the Western-oriented worldview.
- It is a sign of respect for Muslims to utter or repeat the words “Peace and Blessing Be Upon Him” after hearing (or writing) the name of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Note

- 1 The translations of the meanings of the verses of the Qur’ān in this book have been taken, from Saheeh International, *The Qur’ān: Arabic Text* with corresponding English meanings.



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PART I

The essence of Islāmic therapy

Context and background illuminated



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1

THE FOUNDATION OF ISLĀMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

In the below verse of the Qur'ân, Allāh commands His believing servants to help one another perform righteous, good deeds and to avoid sins.

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ؕ

- *Help you one another in virtue, righteousness, and piety; but do not help one another in sin and transgression.*

(Al-Mā'idah 5:2, interpretation of the meaning)

This passage emphasises the importance of mutual support and cooperation in matters of virtue, righteousness, and piety, while also cautioning against assisting one another in sinful or transgressive behaviour. So, helping and doing good to others is part of the process. Abu Hurayrah (may Allāh be pleased with him) reported Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying,

Verily, Allāh, the Exalted and Glorious, would say on the Day of Resurrection, "O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me." He would say, "O my Lord; how could I visit Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" Thereupon He would say, "Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine was sick, but you did not visit him, and were you not aware of this that if you had visited him, you would have found Me by him? O son of Adam, I asked food from you but you did not feed Me." He would say, "My Lord, how could I feed Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?" He said, "Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine asked food from you, but you did not feed

4 The essence of Islāmic therapy

him, and were you not aware that if you had fed him you would have found him by My side?” The Lord would again say, “O son of Adam, I asked drink from you but you did not provide Me.” He would say, “My Lord, how could I provide Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?” Thereupon He would say, “Such and such of servant of Mine asked you for a drink but you did not provide him, and had you provided him drink you would have found him near Me.”

(Muslim)

This *hadīth* (a saying, action, or approval attributed to the Islāmic Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)) highlights the core principle of compassion and social responsibility in Islām. It emphasises that acts of kindness and care towards others are not only virtuous deeds but also seen as acts of worship. By demonstrating empathy, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and helping those in need, individuals alleviate the suffering of others, fulfil their spiritual obligations, and draw closer to Allāh. It serves as a poignant reminder of the vital role that compassion and benevolent actions play in both the social and psychological dimensions, as well as in one’s spiritual journey. The verse, from Chapter Al-Mā’idah (5:2), highlights the ethical foundation of Islāmic psychotherapy, guiding therapists to align therapeutic goals with Islāmic principles. It emphasises building a strong therapeutic alliance based on ethical conduct, fostering virtuous character traits, and strengthening clients’ spiritual connection with Allāh. Therapists must maintain strict adherence to Islāmic values, avoiding any collaboration in or support for sinful behaviours.

Islāmic psychotherapy is a distinctive approach to psychospiritual interventions that integrates Islāmic principles into the therapeutic process. It is rooted in the interplay of epistemology, ontology, and axiology within the Islāmic tradition. Foundational aspects include Islāmic monotheism, integration of faith and psychology, the Islāmic worldview, spirituality, culture, the role of the Qur’ān, and Sunnah, understanding human nature, and an overarching paradigm that shapes therapy. These elements contribute to a holistic understanding, facilitating healing and growth within the Islāmic framework.

Islāmic monotheism as the foundation of Islāmic psychotherapy

The concept of *tawhīd* is of utmost importance in Islām, as it underpins the meaning and significance of all acts of worship and rituals, both inward and outward. *Tawhīd*, or monotheism, is a core concept in Islāmic psychology and psychotherapy, emphasising the belief in the oneness of Allāh and His exclusive right to be worshipped. *Tawhīd* originates from the Arabic verb “*Wahad*,” meaning “making one” or “asserting oneness” (Wehr & Cowan, 2020). In the context of therapy, *tawhīd* underlines the interconnectedness between human well-being and the recognition of the divine. It stresses the singularity of Allāh’s existence and His significance in the therapeutic process.

Tawhīd comprises three main themes: *tawhīd ar-Ruboobeeyah*, emphasising Allāh’s sovereignty as the sole Creator and controller of the universe; *tawhīd al-’Ibādah*, stressing the exclusive worship of Allāh without intermediaries; and *tawhīd al-Asma wa’l-Sifat*, the Oneness of the Divine Names and Attributes. The first theme highlights Allāh’s complete control over creation, while the second emphasises the principle of directing all forms of worship solely to Allāh. The third theme’s *tawhīd* means affirming the names and attributes of Allāh and believing that there is none like unto Allāh in His names and attributes. For a comprehensive explanation of *tawhīd*, see Philips (2005). Together, these themes form the core of Islāmic theology, guiding the beliefs and practices of Muslims.

The *tawhīdic* paradigm

The *tawhīdic* paradigm in Islāmic psychotherapy integrates monotheistic principles into the therapeutic process, serving as a foundational framework, as depicted in Figure 1.1. It emphasises spiritual alignment by recognising Allāh as the ultimate source of guidance and surrendering to His will. Individuals are encouraged to align their actions with the intention of seeking Allāh’s pleasure and adhering to His commandments. Spiritual alignment involves integrating faith into all aspects of life; striving to embody Islāmic values and virtues; and engaging in acts of worship, prayer, Qur’ānic reflection, and supplication to deepen one’s spiritual connection with Allāh.

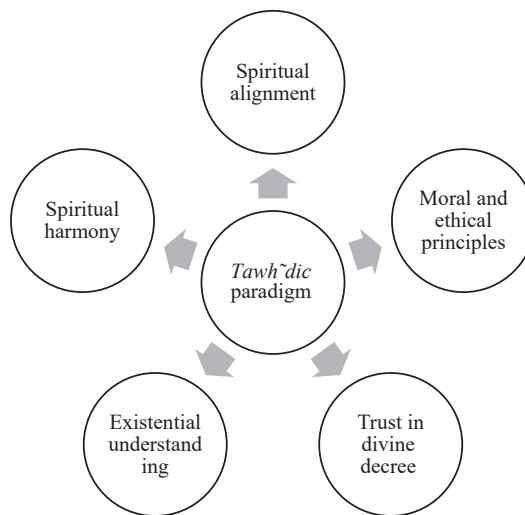


FIGURE 1.1 The *tawhīdic* paradigm.

Islāmic psychotherapy prioritises the spiritual dimension, encouraging individuals to find solace, guidance, and support in their faith. The *tawhīdic* paradigm promotes adherence to moral and ethical values rooted in Islāmic teachings. These values, including righteousness, justice, compassion, and honesty, are integrated into the therapeutic process. Islāmic psychotherapy guides individuals to make choices aligned with these principles, promoting psychological well-being and fostering a sense of integrity and accountability.

The *tawhīdic* paradigm in Islāmic psychotherapy emphasises belief in Allāh’s divine wisdom and decree. This therapeutic approach helps individuals trust in Allāh’s plan, accept life’s challenges with patience and prayer, and find comfort in divine decree (*qadr*). Trusting in Allāh’s plan can alleviate anxiety and facilitate emotional healing. The therapeutic framework encourages clients to rely solely on Allāh (*tawakkul*) for their recovery, strengthening their faith and resilience. Additionally, *tawhīd* helps individuals explore existential aspects of life, find purpose and meaning in their relationships with Allāh, and align their goals and actions with Islāmic teachings for inner peace and fulfilment.

The concept of *tawhīd* is closely intertwined with the concept of *fitrah* in Islāmic thought, particularly in terms of its metaphysical implications. *Fitrah* is often described as the innate, natural disposition or primordial nature that every human being is born with. *Fitra* or *fitrah* (Arabic: فِطْرَة) is an important concept in Islāmic psychotherapy because it is embedded in the human soul, and it is an essential facet of human behaviour:

The Qur’ān makes it clear that we are all born with an innate sense of the truth and belief of God’s existence, and we possess a certain intuitive knowledge of the moral good. The essence of the *fitrah* is the natural spiritual nature of man and having a predisposition to submit to the One God.

(*Rassool, 2023, p. 98*)

Fitrah embodies the notion that human beings are not endowed with a blank moral slate (*tabula rasa*) but are hardwired with an innate sense of morality and truth. The Qur’ān uses the concept of *fitrah* in the following way:

فَلَمْ يَرْوِجْ هَكَذَا لِيُنْجِبْهُمْ مِنْ ظُلْمٍ فَجَبَّتْ أَلْسِنُهُمْ أَلْفَ فِطْرَتِ الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَيَّ إِلَّا لَنْتَبْغِي لِلْخَلْقِ وَإِلَّهِ تَوَكَّلِينَ أَلْذِيْمَ
وَلَكِنْ كَفَّ كُفْرًا أَنْ أَسْأَلَ يَعْزُبُونَ

- So, direct your face towards the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the *Fitrah* of Allāh upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allāh. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know. (Ar-Rum 30:30, interpretation of the meaning)

According to Ibn Kathir’s exegesis (2000), the verse referenced emphasises the importance of adhering to *tawhīd*, the Islāmic concept of monotheism. Islāmic teachings encourage believers to dedicate themselves to the worship of Allāh alone

and follow the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham). This religion, guided by Allāh with utmost perfection, aligns with the inherent inclination and *fitrah* (natural disposition) of mankind. Allāh created human beings with the capacity to recognise and acknowledge His oneness and *tawhīd*, emphasising that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. It is believed that every human being is born with an innate inclination towards recognising the truth and seeking a connection with the divine, which is part of their *fitrah*.

The meaning of *fitrah* is found in the following *hādīth* narrated by Abu Hurayrah (may Allāh be pleased with him): Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Every child is born with a true faith of Islām (i.e. to worship none but Allāh Alone) but his parents convert him to Judaism, Christianity, or Magainism, as an animal delivers a perfect baby animal. Do you find it mutilated?" (Bukhārī (a)). Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) informed us that every child is born with *fitrah*; this means that the child submits to the laws of Allāh as his Lord and Creator, and his soul adheres to the correct beliefs and truth. His parents and the socialisation process make him follow the religion of the parent or significant others.

Tawhīd, rooted in the metaphysical implications of *fitrah*, reflects the innate inclination of individuals towards monotheism and the acknowledgment of Allāh's oneness from birth. *Fitrah* serves as the metaphysical basis for *tawhīd*, suggesting that belief in *tawhīd* is deeply ingrained in human nature. In Islāmic psychotherapy, spiritual growth involves reestablishing one's innate *fitrah* and belief in *tawhīd*. This is achieved through acts of worship, self-reflection, and continuous efforts to align one's life with the oneness of Allāh.

The metaphysical implications of *fitrah* extend to recognising *tawhīd* within the broader context of creation, according to Islāmic theology. *Fitrah* teaches that everything in the universe reflects Allāh's oneness, encouraging individuals to reflect on these signs to strengthen their belief in *tawhīd*. This concept transcends specific ethnicities, cultures, and times, affirming that *tawhīd* is a fundamental truth inherent in all human beings. Psychospiritual problems are seen as a symptom of misalignment with the *fitrah*, and the goal in Islāmic spirituality and psychotherapy is to return to this state by purifying one's beliefs and actions (Figure 1.2).

Epistemology, ontology, and axiology in Islāmic psychotherapy

Islāmic psychotherapy is grounded in the core principles of epistemology, ontology, and axiology deeply embedded in the Islāmic tradition. These foundational elements serve as the underpinning theoretical and philosophical constructs that define this therapeutic approach. Together, they establish a distinctive framework through which psychospiritual distress is grasped and treated, offering a unique perspective in the field of mental health.

Epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of knowledge and how it is acquired, forms a fundamental component of Islāmic psychotherapy. The term is derived from the Greek *epistēmē* ("knowledge") and *logos*

8 The essence of Islāmic therapy

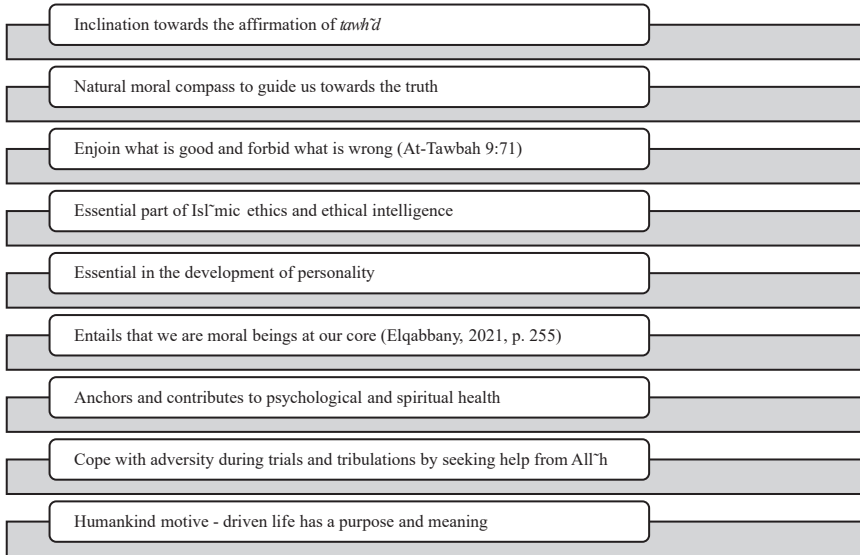


FIGURE 1.2 The role of *fitrah* in Islāmic psychotherapy.

(“reason”), and accordingly, the field is sometimes referred to as the theory of knowledge (Stroll & Martinich, 2023). In Islāmic scholarship, it is acknowledged that true knowledge comes from multiple sources, including divine revelation, intuition, empirical observation, and rational inquiry. The Qur’ān and *hādīths* (*‘ilm naqli*) play a central role in the epistemology of Islāmic psychology and psychotherapy.

In addition, in Islāmic epistemology, the sources of knowledge are from rational knowledge based on human intellect (*‘aql*), observation, and empirical evidence (*‘ilm ‘aqli*): “This systematic integration of the sources and means of knowledge into a synthesised approach is known as epistemological [relating to theory of knowledge] integration (*al-takamul al-ma’arifi*)” (Rassool, 2023, p. 5). The foundation of knowledge is the Qur’ān, which is viewed as the springhead of all knowledge and all sciences, not because it contains the knowledge itself but rather because it inspires the Muslim to develop a distinctive vision of the unity among the various spheres of knowledge. The notion of this unity arises out of an awareness of the unity of the divine and its applications to the various spheres of human knowledge (Malkawi, 2014, p. 20).

Malkawi (2014) emphasises that the Qur’ān is viewed as the springhead of all knowledge and sciences, inspiring holistic and interconnected dimensions, by recognising the unity of the divine in all spheres of human knowledge. By recognising the unity of the divine and its relevance to various fields, the Qur’ān encourages individuals to integrate their understanding of the world, society, and other disciplines, fostering a comprehensive and interconnected approach to knowledge

acquisition and application. In addition to the sources of knowledge from the Qur'ān, there are also the *hādīths* (actions, statements, or tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)). From the *hādīths*, we learn about the *Sunnah*, which are the practices of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). It is divine revelation from Allāh and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that become the primary and most fundamental sources of knowledge.

In addition to divine revelation, knowledge can also be acquired through sense perception and rationalism, which should not be overlooked. While giving priority to revelation does not diminish the value of scientific knowledge gained through empiricism, intuition, and reason, it suggests that scientific evidence should be evaluated based on the criteria of divine revelation. Rassool (2021) suggested that Muslim psychologists should prioritise Islāmic ethical considerations over rationality and empirical evidence and that these should become secondary to the primary sources. Enquiring or probing is permissible in Islām so as to arrive at the truth (Leaman, 2006, p. 571). Epistemology within the context of Islāmic psychotherapy is intricately connected to both scholarly consensus (*ijma*) and reasoning, all operating within the confines of Islāmic doctrines. While divine knowledge remains predominant, Islāmic psychotherapy places a significant emphasis on the importance of individual reasoning and interpretation (*ijtihad*) that aligns with the principles of Islām.

The notion that knowledge should be interconnected, complementary, and organically linked to the knowledge of God is an important concept within classical Islāmic scholarship. Classical Muslim scholars, despite belonging to different schools of thought, shared the belief that all branches of knowledge should ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of Allāh and His creation. Malkawi (2014) suggested that the classical Muslim scholars, despite their different school of thought, agreed that

knowledge should be interconnected, complementary, and organically linked to the knowledge of God. In the view of these scholars, the fact that all sciences originate from a single divine source is the foundation for the ultimate integration and unity of knowledge.

(p. 12)

Malkawi (2014) argues for the interconnectedness of knowledge, asserting that both religious and secular knowledge can coexist with the knowledge of God. He maintains that there is no fundamental contradiction between divine knowledge from Islāmic sources and rational, empirical knowledge. According to Malkawi, all knowledge ultimately stems from a single divine source, encouraging a holistic integration and unity of knowledge. He emphasises the Islāmic principle of divine oneness, *tawhīd*, as the foundation for both the unity of knowledge and epistemological integration.

This perspective aims to bridge the perceived gap between secular and religious knowledge, highlighting their inherent interconnectedness within Islāmic scholarship. This constitutes a frame of reference and foundation for a monotheistic

Islāmic psychotherapy, the incorporation of the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet (*Sunnah*) into the epistemological foundation of Islāmic psychotherapy. These sacred sources serve as the core upon which therapeutic interventions and techniques are constructed, all aligning congruently with Islāmic principles. Thus, these principles underline the therapist's commitment to offering clients guidance and support deeply rooted in Islāmic values.

Ontology is “the philosophical study of being in general, or of what applies neutrally to everything that is real” (Simons, 2015). Islāmic psychotherapy draws from ontological principles that explore questions of existence and reality. It recognises the dualistic nature of human beings, encompassing both physical and metaphysical aspects such as *nafs* (self), *'aql* (intellect), *rûh* (soul), *ihsas* (emotion), and *qalb* (heart). This holistic viewpoint emphasises the interconnectedness among these elements, highlighting that achieving psychological well-being requires more than addressing physical and psychosocial factors.

Islāmic psychotherapy acknowledges the complexity of human life and advocates for a thorough examination of physical, social, psychological, and spiritual aspects in alignment with Islāmic principles. It offers a comprehensive framework that considers the holistic dimensions of individuals – their mind, body, and spirit – in the pursuit of psychospiritual health. Ontologically, in Islāmic psychotherapy, the concept of *fitrah* holds a significant role in understanding human nature and spirituality. Therapists focus on reconnecting individuals with their *fitrah*, facilitating spiritual healing and self-exploration. The aim is to help clients recognise their intrinsic spirituality and connection with God, leading to a deeper understanding of life's purpose and the pursuit of meaning. Through self-reflection and introspection, clients rediscover their innate longing for the divine, fostering holistic psychological and spiritual development.

Axiology, which is the study of values, holds great significance in Islāmic psychotherapy. Islāmic psychotherapy integrates Islāmic teachings and principles as a comprehensive framework for understanding moral values and ethical conduct. Therapists emphasise the importance of ethical behaviour and moral conduct for psychological well-being. They highlight aligning actions with Islāmic ethical values such as justice, kindness, gratitude, integrity, and honesty. By incorporating these values into therapy, individuals are encouraged to live in accordance with their spirituality and religious beliefs, fostering personal growth, emotional healing, and spiritual development known as *tazkiyah an-nafs*. Integrating Islāmic values within therapy enhances psychological and spiritual well-being, providing individuals with fulfilment and purpose.

Islāmic worldview

Islāmic psychotherapy is rooted in an Islāmic worldview (*tasawur or ru'yah al-Islām li al-wujud*), which draws from the Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, and Islāmic civilisation. This worldview offers a holistic understanding of reality, human existence, and life's purpose, guided by Islāmic teachings and principles. A worldview, as

defined by Akhmetova (2021), encompasses various elements such as positions, attitudes, values, stories, and expectations that shape perspectives and behaviours. Within the Islāmic or Qur'ānic worldview, Muslims interpret and engage with the world, understanding life's purpose, human nature, ethics, relationships, and broader existence. This worldview guides decision-making processes and influences actions and interactions with others, providing a framework for navigating life's complexities. The Islāmic worldview encompasses both visible and hidden aspects of existence and is fundamentally ethical and monotheistic, grounded in the belief in a singular God. According to Al-Attas, the Islāmic worldview, or *ru'yat al-Islam lil-wujud*, emphasises the Islāmic perspective on existence and contrasts with secular or atheist worldviews by focusing on the belief in the existence and oneness of God. Relationships within this worldview must align with the Islāmic understanding of God, as highlighted by Hassan (1994).

The Islāmic worldview, rooted in the *tawhīdic* paradigm, encompasses all aspects of life for its followers. It is founded on three fundamental principles: *tawhīd* (theism), *khilāfah* (vicegerency), and *'adālah* (justice). These principles not only frame the Islāmic worldview, they also constitute the fountainhead of the objectives (*maqasid*) and the strategy of Man's life in this world (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011, p. 271). The Islāmic worldview extends beyond the concept of *tawhīd* to encompass a comprehensive ethical aspect known as *akhlāq* or morality. This dimension emphasises fundamental principles including profound respect for humanity, pursuit of social justice, promotion of equality, fostering inclusive relationships, moral courage, acceptance of diversity with tolerance, practice of restraint and forgiveness, disciplined living, commitment to charitable acts, sanctity of human life, application of reason in decision-making, acknowledgment of accountability, and the paramount importance of justice for individuals and society (Alwee, 2005). This ethical aspect of the Islāmic worldview is vividly reflected in various teachings, as exemplified by the following Qur'ānic verse. Allāh says,

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَءَاتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى
وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى
الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بَعْدَهُمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَجِبْنَ
الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا ۗ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

- *Righteousness is not in turning your faces towards the east or the west. Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allāh, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, “needy” travellers, beggars, and for freeing captives; who establish prayer, pay alms-tax, and keep the pledges they make; and who are patient in times of suffering, adversity, and in “the heat of” battle. It is they who are true “in faith,” and it is they who are mindful “of Allāh.”*

(Al-Baqarah 2:177, interpretation of the meaning)

The Islāmic worldview is characterised by its ethical and moral values, which serve as foundational principles guiding Muslims' behaviour and providing coherence to their lives. Beyond just an epistemological system, Islām offers a methodology for understanding and engaging with all aspects of life. These values provide Muslims with a framework for interpreting the world, making decisions, and finding meaning in their experiences. They also shape interactions with others and guide the pursuit of a righteous and purposeful life. By embracing the comprehensive Islāmic worldview, Muslims navigate the complexities of the world while staying firmly grounded in their faith and values. The Islāmic worldview significantly influences Islāmic psychotherapy's perspectives on human suffering, resilience, and well-being. Core concepts like *tawhīd*, *qadr* (divine decree), and *akhirah* (belief in the afterlife) are integral to this worldview. These elements shape therapists' understanding of clients' mental health issues through a distinct lens rooted in Islāmic beliefs. By incorporating the Islāmic worldview into their practice, therapists can offer clients a culturally sensitive and faith-based approach that aligns with their religious beliefs and values.

Human nature: the inner world

Islāmic psychotherapy, deeply rooted in Islāmic philosophy and theology, offering a unique perspective on human behaviour and the inner psyche. It recognises several metaphysical elements within the inner world of humans, including the self (*nafs*), the soul (*rūh*), the heart (*qalb*), and the intellect ('*aql*).

These elements, part of the inner realm (*alam-e-batin*), are interconnected and influence an individual's thoughts, actions, and character. According to Islāmic belief, developing and purifying these inner faculties are essential for spiritual growth and closeness to Allāh. Imam Ghazālī (1982) emphasised the interconnections and interdependence of the *nafs*, *rūh*, '*aql*, and *qalb*. *Nafs* represents the inner self, *rūh* refers to the spiritual essence that connects humans with the divine, '*aql* represents reason and intellect, and *qalb* symbolises the centre of emotion and spiritual perception. These elements work harmoniously to shape the nature of a person's soul within the Islāmic framework. It is essential to understand these concepts within the broader context of Islām's theological framework. For a comprehensive account of the inner world of a human being, see Rassool (2023). Here is a brief overview of these elements.

In Islāmic psychology, *nafs* represents the lower self, characterised by base desires and instincts. It undergoes three stages of development: *nafs al-ammāra bissu* (inclined towards fulfilling desires) (Yusuf 12:53), *nafs al-lawwāma* (recognising faults and seeking self-improvement) (Al-Qiyamah 75:2), and *nafs al-muṭma'innah* (content and at peace following Allah's guidance) (Fajr 89:27–28). These stages depict the progression towards spiritual growth and alignment with divine values. In Islāmic psychotherapy, the concept of *nafs* is a fundamental framework for holistic self-exploration and healing. It emphasises the understanding of

one's inner self and its interplay with desires, emotions, and thought patterns while acknowledging the intricate interplay between *nafs* and external influences.

The *rūh*, or soul, is the spiritual essence within every human being, serving as the connection between individuals and the divine in Islāmic belief. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān in various contexts, representing metaphysical entities like angels, revelation, or divine inspiration. According to Islāmic teachings, Allāh bestows the *rūh* to each human being at the moment of creation, infusing the physical body with life and consciousness. The *rūh* is eternal, transcending the confines of the physical realm, maintaining its unique identity and consciousness. In the afterlife, individuals are held accountable for the choices, actions, and deeds undertaken during their earthly existence.

According to scholars of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jamma'ah* like Ibn Taymīyah and Ibn Qayyim of Jawziyyah, the terms *nafs* and *rūh* are interchangeable. They argue that the three states of the *nafs* mentioned in the Qur'ān can also apply to the *rūh*. However, there are other scholars who assert that *nafs* and *rūh* are distinct entities. They suggest that the *nafs* refers to the soul while it is within the body, while the *rūh* denotes the soul when separated from the body. (Sharfuddin, 2021). For a critical examination and overview of different perspectives on the interchangeability of *nafs* and *rūh*, see Rassool (2023, pp. 134–137).

In Islāmic psychology, *'aql* is referred to as the rational faculty of the soul or mind. It can also be understood as “dialectical reasoning” (Esposito, 2004, p. 22). The root meaning of the word *'aql* is associated with shackles, suggesting that *'aql* acts as a faculty that restrains or controls the impulses of the *hawā* [the animal self]” (Skinner, 2019, p. 23). The *'aql* is a divine gift from Allāh bestowed upon humans, serving as a tool for maintaining moral goodness and fostering ethical intelligence. It enables individuals to engage in reasoned thinking, make sound judgments, and navigate morally and ethically complex situations. In the Qur'ān, verses highlight the importance of intellect and reasoning, stressing the failure to use it for guidance (Al-Anfal 8:22; Al-Mulk 67:10; Al-Haj 22:46). Imam Al-Ghazālī (2010) outlines five functions of *'aql*, including cognitive operations and knowledge of the heart (*qalb*). In Islāmic psychotherapy, *'aql* is important for promoting psychological well-being by challenging distorted thoughts and guiding moral and ethical development. Islāmic scholars hold divergent opinions on the anatomical seat of intellect, with some attributing it to the brain and others to the heart. A brief overview of scholars and their positions is examined in Rassool (2023, pp. 150–152).

In Islāmic tradition, the term “heart” (قلب) (*qalb*) carries profound spiritual significance, representing the innermost essence of an individual. Al-Ghazālī (1995) described the heart as having a dual nature. Firstly, he acknowledges the physical heart, the organ responsible for circulating blood, which is linked to the presence of the spiritual essence or *rūh*. Secondly, Al-Ghazālī emphasises the spiritual heart, divine and intricately connected to its physical counterpart. He regards the spiritual heart as the core and essence of a person, endowed with the capacity to perceive, know, and discern spiritual and divine realities. Al-Ghazālī attributes to the

spiritual heart a fundamental role in spiritual perception and connectivity with the divine, describing it as the locus of intuition, inner knowing, and spiritual awareness (p. 234). He goes on to maintain that the spiritual heart is the essence of a man. In man, it is what

perceives, knows, is aware, is spoken to, and is responsible for its actions. It has connection with the physical heart and the minds of most men have been baffled in trying to grasp the mode of the connection. . . . It [the heart] is like king and the soldiers are like servants and helpers.

(*Al-Ghazālī, 1980/1982, p. 3*)

Al-Ghazālī portrays the essence of a person as a complex and multifaceted entity, encompassing faculties such as perception, knowledge, awareness, and moral responsibility. This essence is closely linked to the physical heart, indicating a profound integration of the physical and spiritual aspects of human existence. Al-Ghazālī's metaphor of the heart as a king with soldiers as servants and helpers underscores the heart's crucial role in guiding and governing one's actions and moral choices. This passage indicates the intricate relationship between the spiritual and physical realms within the human experience and highlights the challenge that many individuals face in comprehending the exact nature of this connection. Ibn al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (n.d.) classified the *qalb* into three types due to its functional aspects of life and death:

the first type of heart is the living, humble, soft, attentive and heedful heart. The second type is the brittle, dry and dead heart. The third type is the diseased heart, either it is closer to securing itself or it is closer to its devastation.

(*p. 141*)

Ibn al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah's classification of the human heart into three distinct types provides valuable insights into the spiritual and moral dimensions of individuals. The first type, the living and humble heart, signifies a state of vitality, humility, attentiveness, and mindfulness. Referred to as "the truthful and sound (*salīm*) heart" (Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 136), it represents security and truthfulness. This heart is open to growth, receptive to moral and spiritual development, and responsive to positive influences. It remains secure from committing any form of idolatry or polytheism (*shirk*) due to its soundness. Free from carnal desires, it adheres to the order and prohibitions of Allāh.

According to Ibn al-Qayyim (n.d.), the spiritually dead heart represents a state in which it lacks true spiritual life and divine connection. Characterised by ignorance of Allāh's knowledge and commands, it submits to worldly temptations, fantasies, desires, and materialistic pleasures. In this state, the heart directs its emotions and actions towards things other than Allāh, driven solely by base desires rather

than seeking divine pleasure. Ibn al-Qayyim's classification underscores the significant influence of the heart's spiritual state on individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (n.d.) identifies three types of hearts: the spiritually dead heart, the sound or healthy heart, and the diseased heart. The spiritually dead heart is characterised by prioritising base desires over the true purpose of existence, devoid of genuine love for Allāh and His commands. In contrast, the sound heart seeks closeness to Allāh and prioritises His pleasure. The diseased heart presents a more diluted situation, potentially on the path to recovery or moral decay. It highlights the dynamic nature of the human heart, influenced by competing calls towards Allāh and worldly matters and responding to the prevailing influence at any given time. Shafi (2011) emphasises that the human heart is continuously subjected to the influence of two callers: one beckoning towards Allāh, His Messenger, and the Hereafter and the other towards worldly, temporal matters. The heart's response is dictated by the one that is closest and most predominant at that time.

The spiritually dead heart, driven by base desires, is susceptible to alternating between moral good and deviant behaviours. It lacks the commitment to righteousness and readily succumbs to the temptations of the material world. Its attachment to worldly pleasures causes it to be swayed by its desires, resulting in inconsistent moral choices and actions. While it may occasionally align with ethical values, the spiritually dead heart often turns to deviant behaviours when its base desires dominate. In a *hādīth* narrated by An-Nu'man bin Bashir, Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) says, "Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart" (Bukhārī (b)). According to Shaykhul-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (n.d.),

The trials that are presented to the hearts are the causes of its disease. They are the trials of carnal desires and doubts, the trials of aimless wandering and misguidance, the trials of sins and innovations and the trials of oppression and ignorance. The first type [i.e. carnal desires] leads to the corruption of desire and intent and the second type [i.e. doubts] leads to the corruption of knowledge and belief.

(p. 145)

The trials presented to the heart, including carnal desires, doubts, aimless wandering, sins and innovations, oppression, and ignorance, have the potential to corrupt and weaken the heart. Carnal desires distort intentions, doubts erode knowledge and beliefs, aimless wandering leads to spiritual disorientation, and sins hinder growth. Oppression and ignorance further exacerbate the heart's vulnerability. Despite these negative elements, the heart also serves as a conduit for divine guidance to reach individuals through the *fitrah*. This is the polished mirror.

It is important to note that according to Islāmic belief, only Allāh the Almighty has complete knowledge of the inner world of a person. This knowledge extends to the minutest details of an individual's essence, including their thoughts and intentions and the state of their inner faculties. This belief stresses the idea of divine knowledge and emphasises the importance of sincerity and humility in one's spiritual journey, as Allāh alone truly knows the depths of the human soul.

Spirituality, culture, and psychotherapy

Islāmic psychotherapy recognises the profound significance of spirituality within the scope of human existence and acknowledges that cultural factors play a vital role in shaping individuals' experiences and their psychosocial and psychospiritual health. Particularly among ethnic minorities, where religion and culture are deeply intertwined, the importance of cultural traditions and identities is emphasised (Worland & Vaddhanaphuti, 2013). Islāmic psychotherapy places a strong emphasis on acknowledging and respecting this interplay within the therapeutic context. It recognises that cultural diversity within the Muslim community greatly shapes how individuals perceive and address their mental health challenges. The approach values the rich cultural diversity present and understands that culture profoundly influences individuals' experiences and coping mechanisms. Intercultural therapy, as outlined by Kareem (1999), is a specialised form of psychotherapy designed to address the needs of culturally diverse groups. It emphasises the importance of factors such as race, culture, beliefs, values, attitudes, religion, and language in clients' lives.

Islāmic psychotherapists display sensitivity and awareness towards the unique cultural contexts of their clients, acknowledging that certain subjects or diagnoses may carry social stigma within specific cultural settings and within Muslim communities. They approach sensitive matters with tact and cultural competence, integrating cultural values, beliefs, and practices into therapy. This may include incorporating religious teachings, rituals, and practices as therapeutic tools, aligning therapy with clients' cultural backgrounds. Islāmic psychotherapy recognises the central role of spirituality and culture in individuals' identities, taking a holistic approach to mental health by exploring the interplay between spirituality, culture, and psychological well-being. Islāmic psychotherapy requires therapists to deeply comprehend Islāmic teachings and the diverse cultural expressions within the Muslim community. This in-depth understanding equips therapists with the tools necessary to negotiate the complex interplay of spirituality, culture, and mental health.

Paradigm of Islāmic psychotherapy

Islāmic psychotherapy is a therapeutic approach that integrates Islāmic principles, values, and beliefs, considering spirituality and cultural context to promote mental health outcomes. The paradigm of Islāmic psychotherapy emphasises the interconnectedness of the physical, social, psychological, environmental and spiritual