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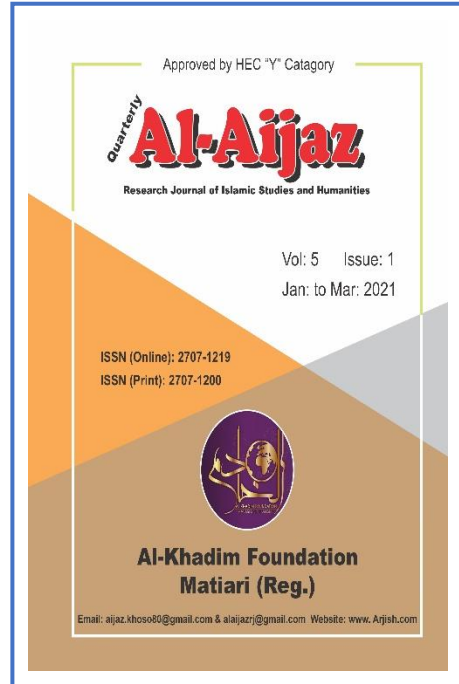
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### TOPIC:

Development of Islamic Counseling Protocol for Pakistani Muslim  
Adults to Manage their Mental Health Problems

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## Development of Islamic Counseling Protocol for Pakistani Muslim Adults to Manage their Mental Health Problems

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### Abstract

Religion plays a fundamental role in our life. Therefore, a religious approach is known as a pivotal to be incorporated in counseling session with the clients. Researchers and religious scholars emphases that there is a crucial need to integrate the religious aspects during counseling process. This qualitative study was carried out to develop the Islamic Counseling Protocol (Counselor/Client Worksheet) for Pakistani Muslims adults in the light of Holy Quran, Al-Sunnah and the relevant literature available in the realm of Islamic Counseling. In this connection, firstly all the methods used in Islamic counseling available in literature review were identified. Secondly, the Quranic Versus were identified in relation to the treatment of mental health problems (stress, anxiety and depression). On the basis of selected versus and methods from the Holy Quran as well as from Al-Sunnah, the Islamic Counseling protocol (counselor client worksheet) was developed for Pakistani Muslim adults to manage their mental health problems (stress, anxiety and depression). The results of this qualitative research proposed 6-sessions of Islamic Counseling to manage the mental health problems of the individuals with stress, anxiety and depression.

**Keywords:** Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Islamic Counseling, Mental Health, Counseling Protocol

### 1. Introduction

It is an acknowledged fact that the religion of Islam is based on the revelation to our Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) approximately 1400 years ago, which gave us the message to surrender yourself according the will of God. These teachings are also hidden in the meanings of the word Islam which means submission. As per the statistics of the current literature, there is 2 billion of Muslim worldwide and this will be expectedly increased by about 35% near in future. According to their prediction Islam will be one of the second largest religions in the world. Islam gave us the message of patience, peace and harmony which leads to the psychological well-beings. In the eyes of biologists, the religious tendencies increase the patient's level of satisfaction and stick him for the treatment (Marcotte, Margolin & Avants, 2003).

In ancient times, Muslims believe that the disease or mental illness is because of the demons or evil spirits. But the scholars of that time such as Avicenna rejected this notion and concluded that the mental disorders are due to psychological and physiological imbalances (Haque, 2004). In the dark ages, many non scientific methods of treatment were used to get rid from mental illnesses. People use the stone instrument to cut the section of the skull and also perform operations with the individuals with mental health problems. They also plead with the evil spirits to leave the body or mind. Patients were kept in the starvation mode for several days (Comer, 2005). But the work of Muslim philosophers has changed the concept of dark ages and introduced the concept of Islamic Psychology.

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### **1.1. The Concept of Islamic Psychology**

The history of Islamic psychology was influenced by the work of Muslim scholars, philosophers and ideologists. They define the concept of mental illness in Islamic perspectives. Al Kndi was a pioneering figure in introducing the term “sorrow” in spiritual context. He further connects the sorrow with a deepest state of distress, disappointment and suffering. Ibn Ali stated that the heart can perceive the reality and also connected with the mind and the body (Haque, 1998).

Another renowned physician A-Balkhi introduced the concept of neurotic disorder. He also used the rationale and spiritual methods to tread the mental illnesses. He classified the neuroses into different parts (emotional disturbance, anxiety, fear, aggression and anger, depression and sadness). He claimed that the psychological well being can be achieved by maintaining a balance between mind and body (Mohamed, 2008). Ibn-e-Sina was a famous in adopting the Aristotle’s concepts of soul. He believed that rationale soul connect the human beings to their God. He also introduced the concept of mental disorders, hallucinations, fear etc (Shuttleworth, 2010).

At that time the western practitioners started to use the Islamic values and teaching to manage the mental health problems of the sufferers. It noticed that many Muslims were reluctant to got help from mental health professionals due to the contradiction in their thoughts and beliefs about Islamic values. They began to seek help form religious counselors to solve their problems and the concept of Islamic counseling emerged (Hedayat, 2000).

### **1.2. Modern Trends of Islamic Counseling**

According to the Western concept of current times, there is a growing awareness in Islamic Counseling. This shows that they adopted the Islamic concept of human presence in the world and utilizes the different psychological techniques and methods and evidence based treatment for helping Muslim patients. Their mode of Islamic counseling was using the Quranic symbols, telling the Sirah of the Holly Prophet (PBUH) and his traditions and his life style dealings, attitude and behavioral and moral values. This provides a very brief and comprehensive guidance for therapy implementation. This type of counseling is usually considered as a modern art used in 20th century by the Western culture for the treatment of those individuals who were with mild and severe mental illness. The religious scholars had explored the notion of psychology, psychiatry during the golden age of Islamic society, psychotherapy, and their association to psychological wellbeing (Murad, 2002).

In the recent era, there is a need to use the Islamic counseling in order to overcome the psychological upsets. Our soul is not satisfied until or unless we are attached to Allah. Being a Muslim our religious practices are considered as a therapy for us. Hence, there is a dire need to use Islamic counseling for mentally ill individual.

### **1.3. Need for Using Islamic Counseling**

There are numerous important cognitive concepts from Islamic religion which can help to improve the cognitive problems of the patients. A research conducted by Azhar (2000) to examine the effect of Islamic values and traditions on patient cognitive problems and

whether these Islamic values are helpful and can be use as the intervention of specific psychiatric problems. He worked on Muslims using religiously tailored cognitive therapy for the individual with anxiety and depression. He compared the results of his study to the non-Islamically adjusted therapy. The findings concludes that Muslims showed substantially safer outcomes with cognitive behavioral therapy which had been updated to integrate Islamic values and practices.

## **2. Literature Review**

The role of spirituality in changing our lives, emotions, feelings and behavior is an acknowledge fact in the eyes of many researchers and scholars (Hadzic, 2011). Islam provides us many Islamic counseling skills, methods and ways of interventions (Baqutayan, 2011). As the religious psychology is an emerging field therefore many researchers conducted research in order to explore the Quranic practice with mentally ill peoples by incorporating Islamic principle into Islamic counseling process. One of the finding from Malaysian studies used the Islamic intervention techniques such as fasting, listening and watching Islamic lectures to change personal and social life (Haque & Masuan, 2002).

As Plato stated that by curing the soul we can cure the mind and the body. The findings of the study conducted by Leech (1980) revealed that the goal of the psychotherapy is to heal the soul. Hart (2002) argued that the Greek work "Therapeuion" refers to heal and the counseling is an art of healing the individual's ailments. Therefore, Islamic counseling is considered as a fundamental aspect of Islam. Hamjah and Akhir (2004) find out that the use of Islamic values like patience, believe in God, acceptance of Allah's will are considered vital for the intervention of patients. Isgandarova (2004) stated that by following the Islamic principles and the manners used by the Holly Prophet (PBUH) such as (dua, offer them prayers and saying the words of comfort) the Muslims expected to cure their sick persons. Aswad (2010) stated that the use of Ziker was one of the method used in Islamic counseling to treat the sick individuals. This was used in a group form by engaging the individuals to loudly saying Allah, Allah, and Allah.

The use of pillars of Islam for developing faith (Iman) was considered as one of the most important intervention method for treating psychological problems. These were involves to develop strong belief of Allah, by offering prayers, meditation (Tafakur), the remembrance of Allah (Zikr) and the belief that everything is from Allah Almighty (Abdullah et al. 2013). Another research conducted by the Naz and Khalily (2015). They worked with the clinical population to manage their mental health related problems. They used clinical techniques along with related passages from Holly Quran and the recommendations from the Holly Prophet (PBUH). They reported effective results in reducing the anger in the Muslim clients.

Religion is considered as one of the most pivotal element in our life. Therefore, a religious approach is known as one of the matter which focused in counseling process now a day. The researchers and scholars pointed out that there is a dire need to incorporate the religious aspects in counseling. In this connection a research study was conducted to identify the different aspects of Islamic approach used in counseling process with the clients with reference to Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah. The results of the research revealed that the three aspects: Aqidah (faith), Ibadah (worship) and Akhlaq (moral values) were considered

as the intervention techniques to treat the mental problems of the clients (Hamjah & Akhir 2004). The past researches proved that by listening versus of Holy Quran will heal the brain from tension toward relaxation in two ways. First it effects on the listeners and second on the readers as well (Al-Banna, 2009).

### **2.1. Rationale of the Study**

It is a known fact that our lives today are vulnerable to numerous mental health problems like stress, depression, anxiety, etc. One of the approaches that can help us to solve these issues is by offering Islamic Counseling. This is because human life wants to achieve a balance between physical and spiritual need. Without the help of this balance, man will experience failure in their social and personal life. The researchers pointed out that there is a crucial need to apply the religious element in counseling because religion is vital in a client's life. In Pakistan, such practices of Islamic Counseling are lacking. A very rare research work is available in this field. The purpose of this research is to incorporate the religious approach in counseling process in the light of Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah and with the help of existing literature for Muslims in Pakistan.

### **2.2. Objective of the Study**

- To provide a structured intervention (Islamic counseling protocol/counselor client worksheet) that can be used to manage Muslim patient's mental health problems (stress, anxiety and depression) based on the principles mentioned in the Holly Quran and Al-Sunnah and in the light of existing literature.

### **2.3. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Theoretical framework of this current study is provided from the theory of Bowlby, (1952). In his attachment theory he stated that attachment is considered as an emotional bond between one people to another. He believed that this earlier bond is formed between child and the caregiver. This bond has a tremendous impact throughout the life of the child. Having a "healthy attachment" to God would thus also be associated with better/secure psychological functioning.

### **3. Method of the Study**

This study was carried out to develop the Islamic Counseling Protocol/Counselor-Client Worksheet. This was a qualitative study in nature by using the traditional model of Islamic Counseling. This study was based on two phases. In the first phase, the researcher identified versus from Holly Quran that can be used to manage the mental health problems of Pakistani Muslim adults. In the second phase, the researcher deeply studied the relevant literature in connection to the Islamic Counseling and identified the terms, methods, techniques used to treat the individuals with stress, anxiety and depression. Lastly, the research concluded (6) session Islamic Counseling protocol/counselor client worksheet for managing the stress, anxiety and depression of Pakistani Muslim adults with the consultation of Muslim religious scholars.

#### 4. Findings of the Study

After the in depth study of the Holly Quran in connection with the mental health and illness and of the relevant literature this study pointed out that the ultimate solution of the mental problems lies in the Holly Quran. By using religious approach in counseling session as a source of prevention we can manage the mental health problems of Pakistani Muslim adults. It has been noticed that the peoples with mental illness usually keep themselves detached from reading the Holly Quran, offering prayers etc. Consequently, the severity of mental ailment becomes worse and worse day by day. Being a Muslim, we believe that our Holly Quran is a cure from Jinn or evils possessions which becomes a source of psychological issues and mental ailments among the peoples. Hence, having a close relation to Allah we can get peace of mind and can cure ourselves from the evil possessions.

##### 4.1. Concept of Mental Health and Illness in Quran and Sunnah

Our religion of Islam is based on teachings of Holly Quran. Therefore, it has great impact and effect in curing the clients from psychological ailments. In many cases we have observed that many patients with stress, anxiety and depression failed to achieve wellness by a psychiatrists or physician after using medicine. Many times physicians feel him as helpless and refer the patients to psychiatrist who also felt himself unable to conclude about the disease. The ultimate source for the patient is the teachings from Holly Quran and many patients get cured by Islamic teachings. As mentioned in the Holly Quran:

*“And when I am ill, it is Allah who cures me”* (Al-Quran, 26:80).

It is clearly evident that the curing or healing is only from Allah. It is He who creates us, guide us, feed us, drink us and He who will forgive our faults. He is the ultimate source of cure for us. It is concluded that the when we sick we must have a close relationships to Allah almighty for cure.

*“Verily, man was created as an anxious”* (Al-Quran, 70:19).

In Surah Al-Ma'arij Allah said that man is created as impatient or anxious. Whenever, he encounter any misery or evil he becomes irritable. But except those who regularly offer their prayers and those who believe in the Day of Judgment. It concluded that the prayer is a hurdle from becoming anxious or save us from the evil possessions which cause harm and mental illness.

*“And certainly, we shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth lives and fruits but gives glad tidings to those who shows the patient”* (Al-Quran, 2: 155).

In the above verse fear is a sign of anxiety and loss is a sign of guilt sadness. Both of these symptoms are the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. But Allah also said that those who believe that all these are from Allah will remain secure from these sorrows.

Similarly, the year of sorrow is considered as a grief period of our Holly Prophet (PBUH) in which the wife of our Prophet Hazrat Khadija (RA) and Abu Talib who was the supporter of the Holly Prophet died very shortly after one another and six children also died before him in infancy or adulthood. In this phase the Holly Prophet felt much grief and sorrow which leads him toward sadness or depression. But our Holly Prophet showed faith or patience to face such sorrows.

*“And the heart of the mother of Musa (AS) become empty (thought problems). She was near to disclose her case of son. Had we not provide her strength to her heart (faith)”* (Al-Quran,

28:10).

The intensity of the grief of Musa's mother made her thought less. Allah strengthen her heart with faith so she might remain as a believer of Allah.

*"O Muhammad (PBUH) would you kill you in the grief"* (Al-Quran, 18:06).

When the idolators refuse to believe in the message of Holly Prophet (PBUH) he felt sorrow and distress then Allah gives strength with patience and faith. Allah also said in the Quran:

*"And he turned away from them and said: "Alas, my grief for Yousuf. And he lost his sight because of the sorrow that he was suppressing"* (Al-Quran, 12:84).

The above verse revealed that there is a physical symptom too that leads to psychological and emotional distress.

*"Seek help in patience and by offering prayers"* (Al-Quran, 2:153).

Allah stated clearly that the best tool (therapy/counseling) to manage the mental health problems is prayer and patience. Allah said in the Quran:

*"Those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah---Islamic Monotheism) and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah: verily in the remembrance of Allah do heart find rest"* (Al-Quran, 13:28).

In the above verse it revealed that the believers of Allah find peace and comfort of heart which is achieved by offering prayer, meditation, listening Asma-ul-Husna and doing ziker of Allah. Consequently, by doing these practices we can get rid of stressors and achieve the ultimate peace of mind in our sphere of life. Allah clearly said in the Holly Quran:

*"And Allah send down the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism and act)"* (Al-Quran, 17:82).

It revealed that reading the Holly Quran is itself is a healing of mind for those who believe in one God. Allah also said:

*"Verily, I am Allah (none has the right to be worshipped but I) so worship Me, and perform prayer for My Remembrance"* (Al-Quran, 20:14).

Allah has told how to get closeness to me. The method lies in offering prayer and getting help from Allah. In Surah Taha Allah said:

*"To him belong the Best Names"* (Al-Quran, 20:08).

Asma-ul-Husna are the Best Names. By reciting the names we can get peace of mind, insight and it purify the mind from coming evil thinking, thoughts like unconscious conflicts, nightmares etc.

#### 4.2. Islamic Counseling Protocol (A Counselor/Client Worksheet)

The findings of the study proposed religiously integrated 6-sessions of Islamic Counseling for Pakistani Muslim adults to manage their mental health problems (stress, anxiety and depression).

**Table-1. Summary of Islamic Counseling Protocol/Counselor Client Worksheet**

Sr.No	Sessions	Theme	Focus
1	Sessions-1	Rapport Building	Building good relationship with the client by showing positive verbal and nonverbal interaction and by assuring confidentiality

2	Sessions-2	Assessment and Problems Identification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the primary and secondary motives by exploring immediate cause or social cause of the client problem</li> <li>2. Use assessment tools/case history of the client.</li> </ol>
3	Sessions-3	Confession and Instilling Hope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belief in one God &amp; on the last Holly Prophet (PBUH)</li> <li>2. Belief in human spiritual elements (Ruh).</li> <li>3. Belief about disease that all good and bad is from Allah and Allah heals us when we sick.</li> <li>4. True happiness is in Islam and Shifa is from Allah.</li> </ol>
4	Sessions-4	Intervention	<p>This will be done by using religiously integrated approaches in the light of Quran and Sunnah and literature such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with belief (Aqida)</li> <li>2. Establishing close relationship with Allah (Ibada)</li> <li>3. Developing social and moral conducts (Ikhlaq)</li> <li>4. Dealing with loss (Tawakal, Forgiveness and Patience)</li> <li>5. Dealing with guilt feelings (Tuba)</li> <li>6. Working with peace of mind (Ibada)</li> <li>7. Working with behavior (Amer-bilmaruf-wa-Nahe anilmunker)</li> <li>8. Listening Asma ul Husna.</li> <li>9. Listening Prophet 's method (Saber, Sukher,etc.</li> </ol>
5	Sessions-5	Change and Relapse Prevention	Change will be assured by the client and strategies for relapse prevention will be discussed with the client by developing belief in God by using Quranic verses
6	Sessions-6	Termination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The counseling process will be terminated with the sensitivity with the client knowing that it will have to be ended.</li> <li>2. The counselor develop the trust</li> </ol>



			of the client (with tawakkal) to Allah. 3. During the termination stage closure discussed and planned by the assurance that the client will return if he feels that counseling is needed.
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**(Note)**- Details of sessions and procedure are mentioned in the manual.

## 5. Conclusion

Islamic Counseling protocols developed on the notion that religion is a fundamental need of Muslims. The existence of one God Who is the creator of this world including all living things is our faith. He is the owner of each living entity in this world and is the regulator of all missions or rules in the world. So this study concluded that the process of counseling cannot be alienated from the aspects of Islamic or religious doctrine because of its close connections with counseling process. When we are sick Allah heal us. Therefore, this study concluded that by applying religiously integrated Islamic Counseling approach in counseling process we can heal the psychological and mental sufferings of the human beings. The finding of this study is a source for counselors working in Pakistan with the Muslim community.

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