Pursuing Mental and Spiritual Wellbeing through Connection to God Utilizing the Lens of the Holy Quran and Hadith

السعي لتحقيق الرفاه العقلي والروحي من خلال الارتباط بالله عبر عدسة القرآن الكريم والحديث

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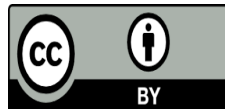
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Abstract

Humanity has been endowed with material conveniences in this era of scientific and technical growth that were unthinkable in past societies. Although man has been able to consider himself a living organism due to the wealth of resources and ease of access to material goods, there is no conclusive evidence linking scientific advancements to the mental health of these organisms. Rather, compared to earlier periods, there has been a rise in a variety of mental and spiritual ailments such as anxiety, sadness, disorders, and hopelessness. Here, the role of Religion becomes crucial to fill the gap and serve the purpose of mental and spiritual wellbeing of mankind. Religion Islam, renders multiple solutions for this by emphasizing to the Purification of heart through connecting to God. This article offers the remedies for mental and spiritual illnesses through linking with God (Allah) by using Holy Qur'an and hadith as primary means of guidance. It concludes that majority of spiritual and mental problems can be solved through meditation and Islamic meditation based on contemplation (Tafakkur), remembrance of Allah (Zikr), selflessness (Esaar), Trust in God (Tawakul). Contentment (Qannat) and gratitude (Tashakur). The article's major goal is to emphasize the scientific and religious approaches to metal well-being and to offer long-term strategies to govern mental health. Furthermore, descriptive analysis is used for the article.

Keywords: Meditation, Holy Quran, Sunnah, selflessness, contemplation, gratitude, remembrance of Allah

Introduction: Scientific approach towards mental health

Mental health is a condition of mental well-being that allows people to deal with life's stressors, recognize their potential, study and work effectively, and contribute to their community.

Mental health interventions have a long history of stigma, which encourages people to conceal their mental health issues since it links requesting care with weakness.[1] But lately, there has been a focus on de-stigmatizing mental health services, including counselling or psychiatric medication.[2]

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[1] Rössler, Wulf, Hans Joachim Salize, Jim Van Os, and Anita Riecher-Rössler. "Size of burden of schizophrenia and psychotic disorders." *European neuropsychopharmacology* 15, no. 4 (2005): 399-409.

[2] Vogel, David L., Rachel L. Bitman, Joseph H. Hammer, and Nathaniel G. Wade. "Is stigma internalized? The

Understanding the concept of mental health from a historical viewpoint is beneficial due to its Polysemic character and imprecise bounds. The roots of what is commonly recognized as "mental health" today can be found in advancements in clinical psychiatry, public health, and other fields of study. The idea of mental health that existed in English before to the 20th century. Technically, the term "mental health" dates back to before 1946. The mental health association was created in London as a result of the World Health Organization (WHO) being developed during the International Health Conference, which was held in New York.[3]

"Mental hygiene refers to all the activities and techniques which encourage and maintain mental health. Mental health is a condition, subject to fluctuations due to biological and social factors, which enables the individual to achieve a satisfactory synthesis of his own potentially conflicting, instinctive drives; to form and maintain harmonious relations with others; and to participate in constructive changes in his social and physical environment."[4]

Most scientists believe that mental illnesses result from problems with the communication between neurons in the brain (neurotransmission).[5] For example, the level of the neurotransmitter serotonin is lower in individuals who have depression. This finding led to the development of certain medications for the illness. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) work by reducing the amount of serotonin that is taken back into the presynaptic neuron.[6] This leads to an increase in the amount of serotonin available in the synaptic space for binding to the receptor on the postsynaptic neuron. Changes in other neurotransmitters (in addition to serotonin) may occur in depression, thus adding to the complexity of the cause underlying the disease.[7]

Scientists believe that there may be disruptions in the neurotransmitter's dopamine, glutamate, and norepinephrine in individuals who have schizophrenia. One indication that dopamine might be an important neurotransmitter in schizophrenia comes from the observation that cocaine addicts sometimes show symptoms similar to schizophrenia. Cocaine acts on dopamine-containing neurons in the brain to increase the amount of dopamine in the synapse.

The psychiatrist use psychotherapy for mental health treatment. Sometime, it is depending on the mental health condition weather it is used by alone or with meditations. During this session a patient discuss with doctor about his troubling thoughts. Psychotherapy deals with depression, anxiety, stress and life events like any trauma or death of loved one against mental health illness.

Moreover, Psychoeducation and awareness are effective in helping people seek mental health treatment,[8] while fears of vulnerability and shame lead to young men avoiding counseling.[9]

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longitudinal impact of public stigma on self-stigma." *Journal of counseling psychology* 60, no. 2 (2013): 311.

[3] Rosen, George. *A history of public health*. Jhu Press, 2015

[4] World Health Organization. Mental health: report on the second session of the Expert Committee. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1951

[5] Study, Biological Sciences Curriculum, and National Institutes of Health. "Information about Mental Illness and the Brain." In *NIH Curriculum Supplement Series [Internet]*. National Institutes of Health (US), 2007.

[6] Teleanu, Raluca Ioana, Adelina-Gabriela Niculescu, Eugenia Roza, Oana Vladâcenco, Alexandru Mihai Grumezescu, and Daniel Mihai Teleanu. "Neurotransmitters—key factors in neurological and neurodegenerative disorders of the central nervous system." *International journal of molecular sciences* 23, no. 11 (2022): 5954.

[7] Ibid

[8] Vidourek, Rebecca A., and Michelle Burbage. "Positive mental health and mental health stigma: A qualitative study assessing student attitudes." *Mental Health & Prevention* 13 (2019): 1-6.

Adverse opinions on seeking professional assistance are frequently linked to elevated feelings of guilt, reduced awareness, and greater contentment with one's psychological well-being.[10]

The term "mental health-related stigma" describes unfavorable perceptions and condemnation of an individual or group who is experiencing mental illness, stemming from the false belief that mental disease is a result of a weak character.[11] Attitudes towards mental health are highly stigmatized, especially when compared to opinions about physical health.[12] Stigma hinders early detection and treatment of mental health disorders by creating a barrier for those seeking assistance.[13] People experience sadness, worry, and exhaustion throughout their lives, but they choose not to ask for assistance out of concern that they would be deemed "mad."[14]. Individuals face various barriers that prevent them from receiving the help they need, such as lack of education, stigmatization, and fear of being perceived as morally deficient. Psychiatrists aim to manage mental illness through various therapies and recommended exercises.

The significance of developing a healthy mind and spirit is acknowledged by Islam, which emphasizes that mental health is essential for overall wellness. Islam provides insight into mental health and presents practical strategies for achieving emotional equilibrium and inner peace within the framework of Islamic teachings. Islam suggests methods such as contemplation, zikr, Tazkiya, and mediation to promote mental well-being.

In modern times meditation is generally defined as "an intentional and self-regulated focusing of attention, whose purpose is to relax and calm the mind and body"[15] or to have a steady mind[16].

In the field of science focused Meditation has much important. Several reports have implicated the DMN (default mood network) specifically in mind wandering, a mental state that has been studied during undirected cognition, or intermittently during periods of sustained attention. In addition, mind wandering is informally reported as the bulk of conscious experience during rest.[17]

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[9] Liddle, Andrew R. "How many cosmological parameters." *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 351, no. 3 (2004): L49-L53.

[10] Corrigan, Patrick W., Kristin A. Kosyluk, and Nicolas Rüsch. "Reducing self-stigma by coming out proud." *American journal of public health* 103, no. 5 (2013): 794-800.

[11] Chatmon, Benita N. "Males and mental health stigma." *American journal of men's health* 14, no. 4 (2020): 1557988320949322.

[12] Robinson, Jo, Eleanor Bailey, Katrina Witt, Nina Stefanac, Allison Milner, Dianne Currier, Jane Pirkis, Patrick Condron, and Sarah Hetrick. "What works in youth suicide prevention? A systematic review and meta-analysis." *EClinicalMedicine* 4 (2018): 52-91.

[13] Watts, Nick, Markus Amann, Nigel Arnell, Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson, Kristine Belesova, Helen Berry, Timothy Bouley et al. "The 2018 report of the Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: shaping the health of nations for centuries to come." *The Lancet* 392, no. 10163 (2018): 2479-2514.

[14] Vidourek, Rebecca A., Keith A. King, Michelle Burbage, and Aubrey Culp. "Nonmedical prescription drug use among Hispanic youths: An emerging problem." *Journal of Child & Adolescent Substance Abuse* 28, no. 1 (2019): 55-63.

[15]. Dorland WAN. 2012. Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary. 32nd ed. Philadelphia: Saunders. P: 2147.

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While the precise aetiology of the majority of mental diseases remains unknown, research is increasingly indicating that a multitude of biological, psychological, and environmental factors contribute to the development of these conditions.[18] Certain disorders affect the brain circuits responsible for thought, emotion, and behavior. For example, certain brain chemicals called neurotransmitters may be overactive in specific circuits, or underactive. Certain mental illnesses are also associated with brain damage.[19]

Psychological trauma experienced as a kid or teenager might cause or exacerbate certain mental diseases. Significant stressors such a divorce or death in the family, issues in the relationships, job loss, education, and drug usage can cause or worsen mental disorders in certain individuals. However, not everyone who experiences such things develops a mental disease. [20]

A broad spectrum of mental health illnesses that impact your mood, thoughts, and behavior are collectively referred to as mental illness, often known as mental health disorders. Anxiety disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia, depression, and addictive behaviors are a few examples of mental illnesses. Many people occasionally experience mental health issues. But persistent symptoms that impair your ability to perform and cause frequent stress turn a mental health concern into a mental disorder. A mental disease can lead to misery and interfere with day-to-day functioning, including relationships, job, and education. Most of the time, talk therapy (psychotherapy) combined with medication can treat symptoms.

In the aforementioned study, the causes of mental health issues and their solutions have been examined from a scientific and psychological perspective. Additionally, the next section will cover the Islamic approach to treating mental illness. But as Muslims, we are aware that worshipping Allah is our ultimate goal in life and that remembering Him is essential to maintaining our spiritual peace.

In light of this, we would like to begin the discussion of mental health with God in mind. Since spirituality and religiosity are essential elements of thriving and healing, it is impossible for a believer to separate spiritual health from this equation.

This article will explore the most effective treatments from an Islamic perspective. When an individual strengthens their connection with the creator, they experience inner peace and tranquility.

Religiosity and mental health

Spiritual meditation, in religious teachings, revelation, miracle observation, all are related to the spiritualism and the sciences about inner self and soul, are known as spiritualism in material existence.[21] The message given by the Sematic Religions is that, the creator of our internal and external senses is Allah and He cannot be known with the help of these senses.

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[18] Kirkbride, James B., Deidre M. Anglin, Ian Colman, Jennifer Dykxhoorn, Peter B. Jones, Praveetha Patalay, Alexandra Pitman et al. "The social determinants of mental health and disorder: evidence, prevention and recommendations." *World psychiatry* 23, no. 1 (2024): 58.

[19] Ibid

[20] Genuis, Stephen J. "Toxic causes of mental illness are overlooked." *Neurotoxicology* 29, no. 6 (2008): 1147-1149.

[21] Wachholtz, A. B., & Pargament, K. I. (2005). Is spirituality a critical ingredient of meditation? Comparing the effects of spiritual meditation, secular meditation, and relaxation on spiritual, psychological, cardiac, and pain outcomes. Journal of behavioral medicine, 28(4), 369-384.

Meditation is actually the fulfillment of worshiping Allah according to a proper understanding of the beautiful names that convey His perfect knowledge.

Imam al-Bukhari has narrated from Aisha (R.A) that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was granted the love for seclusion before the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān and prophet hood.[22] The Holy Qur'ān mentions that this seclusion was adopted to seek Allah's pleasure. It was neither adopted nor fostered as an act in the required manner as described by the People of the Scripture. It is stated in verse number 27 of Surah al Hadeed,

> "*But the Monasticism which they invented for themselves, We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of Allah; but that they did not foster as they should have done. Yet We bestowed, on those among them who believed, their (due) reward, but many of them are rebellious transgressors*"[23].

The term 'Monasticism' means "to leave the works of the world, renounce its pleasures, and isolate oneself from people."[24]To cleanse the heart from ill feelings and free the mind from evil thoughts, all types of Islamic meditations involve remembrance and awareness of Allah in any form. The human soul has a semblance with "a mirror that is refined by mindfulness and destroyed by un-mindfulness."[25] "Al-Ġazzālīy," said:

> "*The heart is in the position of a mirror surrounded by influential matters, and these traits proceed to the heart. As for praiseworthy traits that we have mentioned, they will polish the mirror of the heart and increase it in brilliance, light, and radiance until the clarity of truth shines from within it and the reality of the matter sought in religion is unveiled.*"[26]

Ibn Al-Qayyim states, "An integral part of one's preparation for the Hereafter is by reflecting (*Tafakkur*), remembering (*Tadhakkur*), examining (*Nathr*), meditating (*Ta'amul*), contemplating (*I'tibar*), deliberating (*Tadabbur*), and pondering (*Istibsar*)."[27] These Arabic words represent different shades of mental activity that need to be practiced by Muslims. In order to achieve mindful self-awareness, individuals focus on the practice of inward reflection: they consistently analyze their inner thoughts and emotions in quiet isolation until their mental and emotional states ("ways of thinking") become evident. The process described involves developing internal awareness to observe one's thoughts as they come to mind. It is important to examine the pattern of one's thoughts in order to enhance mindfulness. This entails analyzing how thoughts evolve through various stages and translate into actions. Practicing mindfulness is about being conscious of one's thoughts, rather than trying to suppress them, and then learning to let them go.

In everyday activities, psychology is utilized in Islam, often disguised as spiritualism. Good mental health and emotional wellbeing are highly regarded in Islam. The Qur'an serves as a guide for individuals experiencing emotional distress and strives to help them achieve a fulfilling life.

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[22] Keadan, Taghread, and Khalid Karkor. "Seclusion as a Means of Education: A Comparative Study between Muslim Scholars and Orientalists." *British Journal of Education 9,* no. 2 (2021): 71-95.

[23] Al-Qur'ān *Surah Al-Hadid,* 27.

[24] Al-Zayat, Ahmed, Abdel Qader, Hamed Al-Najjar, Mohammad. (2008). Mojam Waseet, Tehran: Scientific Library, (the meaning of Monasticism).

[25] Ibid, 2:1329

[26] al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā''Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 3:12

[27] 4 al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn 'Īsá. Sunan al-Tirmidhī. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1998), 4:348 #2687; declared to have supporting evidence (shawāhid) by Ibn Al-Qayyim in Miftāḥ Dār Al-Sa'ādah Wa Manshūr Wilāyat Al-'Ilm Wal-Idārah (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, (2002), 1:75.

'There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment' (Hadith).[28]

Mental health and religiosity are related. Religious practices and beliefs provide adherents with a sense of direction in life, and this direction is a significant predictor of mental health.[29] While there are various methods to search for meaning and purpose in life, Islam is the only religion that offers comprehensive solutions to the existential problems that we all face at some point. Furthermore, there is no shortage of advice on fostering qualities like uncertainty tolerance, resilience on the spiritual and psychological levels, and other virtues in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic tradition of psychological well-being. [30]

As Allah tells us in **_Sūrah Ṭā Ha_**, "We have not revealed the Qur'an upon you to cause distress."[31]

For this reason, Allah brought down the Qur'an to provide solace and satisfaction. This puts the Qur'an at the forefront of discussions regarding mental health among Muslims.

The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also highlighted the need to turn to Allah for our mental health needs when he said, "Ask your Lord for forgiveness and wellness in this world and the Hereafter. If you are given forgiveness and wellness in the world and the Hereafter, you have succeeded."[32]

The Prophet ﷺ taught us to pursue halal treatment for whatever affects us, and this includes both physical health and mental health. In addition to the Qur'an and Sunnah, entire genres of classical literature on purification of the soul (**_tazkiyat al-nafs_**), Islamic psychology (**_ʿilm al-nafs_**), and theology address the teleological and psycho spirituals dimensions of contentment in this life and in the afterlife.

For instance, the great classical scholar, al-Balkhī, wrote extensively on mental disorders, including depression and anxiety, and their medical and religious treatments.

Important for the recovery process are medications or valid mental health therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which has developed effective methods and procedures to increase psychological flexibility, improve emotion regulation, alter cognitive distortions, among other positive outcomes.

Yet for the Muslim, the Qur'an and Sunnah are ultimately the fundamental sources of healing and mental health. Faith is a necessary component of healing and recovery for Muslims.[33]

Conclusion

This research concludes that many of the contemporary meditative practices found the name of Science, are not mainly practical; they are scriptural and thematic especially in the context of true Islamic teaching. Several techniques are associated with these practices, which are also a threat to the individual's faith. The comparative studies have concentrated primarily on four forms of Meditation described earlier including focused concentration, open monitoring,

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[28] Sahih Al-Bukhari, book # 71, Hadith 582

[29] Gary T. Reker, Edward J. Peacock, and Paul T. P. Wong, "Meaning and Purpose in Life and Well-Being: A Life-Span Perspective," *Journal of Gerontology* 42, no. 1 (1987): 44–49

[30] Kenneth I. Pargament, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001).

[31] Al Qur'an, 20:02

[32] *unan Ibn Mājah*, no. 3848.

[33] David J. A. Dozois, "A Meta-Analysis of CBT for Pathological Worry among Clients with GAD," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 22, no. 1 (2008):

loving-kindness, or compassion, and mantra meditation. Researchers who have compared each of these approaches seem to find variations in them, for example, dispositional consciousness, imagination, concentration, phenomenological perception or heart rate, and perceived commitment in an objective manner.

Psychology is the scientific study of basic psychological functions such as perception, cognition, attention, emotion, and motivation, as well as complex processes like decision-making, volition, and behavior control. It also examines the neural and biological underpinnings, personality, behavior, and interpersonal relationships. Psychology examines normal mental functioning and actions and asks when, why, and how they can become disordered. Thus, psychology encompasses mental health as well as abnormal functions and behaviors, such as those seen in mental diseases, with the objective of better understanding people, groups, and societal systems. [34]

A person's attitude towards uncertainty is one of the main factors that determines their mental health. In life, people who are at ease with uncertainty will perform better than those who are control-obsessed. Expecting certainty from something that Allah has made uncertain would inevitably cause grief since life is inherently uncertain. A cognitive bias known as uncertainty intolerance impairs a person's ability to notice, understand, and react cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally to uncertain situations. Research has consistently linked higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression to uncertainty intolerance.

The two most popular methods of treating mental health issues are psychotherapy and medication. Psychotherapy generally aims to improve quality of life, maintain or improve everyday functioning, and alleviate symptoms. Following these therapies, the patient has mental health relief and feels at ease. The patient will be alright as soon as he uses psychotherapy and meditation, but if he stops treatment, things could start over. Thus, the teachings of Allah must provide a long-term remedy for mental health issues.

Islamic teachings on health provide a comprehensive understanding of well-being. They examine mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness simultaneously. This technique is consistent with Islamic psychology concepts, combining traditional knowledge with modern discoveries to promote mental health.

The concept of 'Fitrah' is essential in Islamic philosophy. It refers to the inherent purity and nature present in every individual. This inherent nature encourages individuals to engage in behaviors that forge a connection with God. By recognizing and nurturing this innate disposition, individuals can cultivate resilience and establish a solid spiritual foundation. Islamic approaches to enhancing mental well-being provide a distinct pathway for individuals seeking relief from stress and anxiety. These methods emphasize self-awareness, community involvement, and the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment. They are essential for improving mental health. Moreover, Self-examination plays a significant role in Islamic traditions. Activities such as dhikr, or the remembrance of Allah, serve not only as prayers but also foster tranquility and mental clarity. Tafakkur, or deep contemplation, aids individuals in gaining a better understanding of their emotions and thoughts.

The relationship between spirituality and mental health in Islam is profound and significant. Practices such as prayer (salah) and supplication (du'a) offer solace and resilience. They enhance self-awareness and introspection, which are crucial for maintaining good mental health. As Allah (SWT) says in Qur'an

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[34] Cacioppo, John. "Psychology is a hub science." *Aps Observer* 20 (2007).

When My servants ask you ˹O Prophet˺ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one's prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ˹with obedience˺ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ˹to the Right Way˺.[35]

Anxiety often comes from worrying about the future or feeling not good enough. By trusting in God, people can find clear direction and strength. This trust is a big part of Islamic spirituality and helps with mental toughness.

Islamic teachings stress the need for a balanced mind. The Quran talks about mental health in verses like "*And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.*"[36]

Moreover, Allah says: "We have not sent down to you the Qur'an that you be distressed"[37]

This article concludes by examining Islamic perspectives on mental health and overall well-being. It highlights how Islamic principles integrate spiritual, emotional, and psychological dimensions. This holistic approach aids in addressing challenges such as anxiety and depression through faith alongside therapy. Considering mental health through the lens of Islamic teachings encourages better self-care. It also emphasizes the importance of compassion toward individuals in need of support. We observe that seeking assistance is a sign of strength and represents a collective community effort.

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[35] Al-Qur'an, 02:186

[36] Al- Qur'an, 51:56

[37] Al-Qur'an, 20:02

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