



Reflection on the Definition of Islamic Psychology

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Islamic Psychology is the study of the soul, mental processes and behaviour according to the principles of psychology and Islamic sciences.[1]

Schools of Thought in Islamic Psychology

Professor Rassool Rassool, [2]-[3] has identified three schools of thoughts that have emerged in the “Islam and psychology movement”: The Orientalist approach, Integrationist approach and the “Tawhid Paradigm” approach. The Orientalist group, with minimalist Islamic traditions embedded within their framework, are, instead of decolonising psychology [4] globalising Islamic psychology. The Integrationist group, with a mixture of orthodox psychology, mixed with Sufi ideologies and practice, use a mixture of Islamic traditions and folk psychology; and the “Tawhid Paradigm” approach is based on the Qur’an and Sunnah embedded with the framework of the theory and practice of secular psychology that are congruent with Islamic beliefs and practices. However all three approaches claim that they are Islamic psychology in line with the traditions of Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamaa’ah (those who adhere to the Sunnah and who unite upon it, not turning to anything else, whether that be in matters of belief (‘Aqeedah) or matters of actions which are subject to shar’i [Shari’ah] rulings).[5] These indicated approaches are reflected in their conceptual framework and clinical and educational practices.

Islamic Psychotherapy and Counselling

Islamic psychotherapy and counselling is “actually as old as the beginning of spirituality in Islam” That is the rationale for the coined phrase of the “Dodo Bird Revival of Islamic Counselling” [6] Professor Rassool provides a simple definition of Islamic counselling. It is “a form of counselling which incorporates spirituality into the therapeutic process.” [7]

Decolonisation of Psychology

“Decolonisation of psychology knowledge is the process of embedding Islamic epistemologies, knowledge systems, theories, research and clinical practices in empirical psychology disciplines. In other words, it is about balancing the secular psychology narratives with Islamic psychology, ethics and sciences while both evidenced-based psychological knowledge and the Islamic intellectual tradition are maintained.” [8]

Curriculum approaches in Islamic Psychology Education

Rassool (2020) highlighted at least three approaches in curriculum development currently prevailed in Islamic Psychology educational programmes. These approaches have been labelled as: The “sprinkle” approach, the “Bolt-on” approach and the “integrated or embedded” approach.[9] “The first one, the “sprinkle” approach, is based on the principle of randomising the Islamic contents within the curriculum. This means Islamic psychology or sciences are interposed on a random basis throughout the educational programme. The second approach is the “bolt-on” approach where knowledge about Islamic psychology and sciences is developed independently of the core discipline and, generally, added at the end of the course programme or after each module of instruction. Another variation of this approach is to teach “Islamic psychology” and sciences in parallel with secular modern psychology. A third approach identified in the decolonisation of psychology is the embedded or integrated approach to curriculum development. This approach seeks to break down the barriers of the traditional curriculum in psychology based on the segmentation and isolation of Islamic sciences and psychology from an Islamic perspective. This approach is one where subjects are taught through a range of themes, disciplines and various mechanisms of delivery, as opposed to studying subjects.” [10]

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