



Professor Dr G.Hussein Rassool
Institute of Islamic Psychology Research (RIIPR)

Cherry-Picking and Weak Scholarship in Islāmic Psychology Literature: Are we disseminating fake information?

Prof. Dr. G. Hussein Rassool

Cherry-picking refers to the practice of selecting only evidence that supports a preferred viewpoint while ignoring contradictory facts, overlooking relevant information, or distorting data to serve a specific agenda. This tendency is particularly prevalent in contemporary scholarship, including the literature in Islāmic psychology, and it undermines the credibility and quality of academic research. Instead of engaging critically and comprehensively with sources, some authors rely on isolated or selectively interpreted evidence, or even construct new narratives to align with their intended arguments. Such practices misrepresent historical accuracy and create a skewed understanding for readers, presenting partial interpretations as authoritative while concealing contradictions, context, or alternative perspectives. Over time, these selective approaches can become normalised, reinforcing incomplete or misleading ideas and weakening both scholarly rigour and ethical accountability.

This selective methodology often leads to a subtle rewriting of history. While we frequently critique Eurocentric, Orientalist, or colonialist narratives for bias, we risk falling into similar patterns ourselves, emphasising details that support our preferred perspective while minimising inconvenient facts. In doing so, we reproduce the very tendencies we seek to challenge, producing simplified or partial accounts that appear coherent but fail to accurately reflect the complexity of historical events and developments.

In reviewing recent literature, it is evident that descriptions of programme development often focus on selective achievements, highlighting structured courses, professional training, and supporting publications, while downplaying or omitting other relevant contributions and contextual details. Accounts tend to emphasise aspects that reinforce a particular narrative of progress, such as the establishment of training initiatives, without fully addressing the broader historical development. This selective presentation can create an impression of coherence and historical accuracy. By removing ideas from their original context, scholar(s) creates new stories that feel convincing but do not accurately reflect the past. These accounts are frequently repeated without proper fact-checking, allowing errors to spread and become accepted as truth.

Another issue is the lack of professional humility. Mistakes are rarely admitted, earlier claims are seldom corrected, and the limits of one's knowledge are often left unstated. There is a tendency to simplify or soften the truth to make ideas more appealing or easier to share, even when this reduces historical accuracy. Overall, cherry-picking harms the credibility of scholarship. Honest academic work requires careful use of evidence, openness to correction, and a willingness to accept human errors rather than forcing clear but misleading conclusions.

Allah is my witness (مَ شَاهِدٌ عَلَيْيَ) ﴿١﴾

On the authority of Abu Sa`eed al-Khudree (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, “Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith.” [Muslim]

