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The Role of Islamic Education in Mental Health

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Abstract

Man's mental health is an issue that is closely linked with knowledge and insight. Islamic education, depending on this knowledge, nurtures both body and soul and satisfies man's mental needs. Islamic approach is to bring happiness to man, to develop his faculties and talents and to create a balance between man's desires and needs so that there is no extremism. Islam as a divine religion places so much emphasis on humanity, and not on man's class, race or family. This is a universal standard that goes beyond all places and times.

Key words: Islam Education, Humanity Needs, Mental Health, Religious Values

1. Introduction

Man's mental health is an issue that is closely linked with knowledge and insight. Man is a superior and more complex being than animals. Knowing man requires a superior body of knowledge which is only presented by divine revelation and the Quran. Islamic education, depending on this knowledge, nurtures both body and soul and satisfies man's mental needs. In the cognitive area, Islamic education minimizes the number of errors and by boosting the nature of man, provides the grounds for his attaining serenity and calm. In fact, man's behavior toward others and himself based on Islamic teachings guarantees mental serenity. There are two types of education. The first type is one that considers man as an object. What this type of education fails to consider is the man himself. This often happens in the case of certain ideologies. They have a certain educational goal and try to educate their followers based on their desired models, regardless of whether the methods they use is in accordance with man's nature. These educational methods often deprive man of certain natural feelings and create mental faults in him. The second type of education does not regard man as an instrument serving its goals but considers itself in the service of man. Its goal is to bring happiness to man, to develop his faculties and talents and to create a balance between man's desires and needs so that there is no extremism; that is, every faculty is actualized so that it does not transgress the other faculties. (Motahheri, 2009, p. 180). Islam as a divine religion places so much emphasis on humanity, and not on man's class, race or family. This is a universal standard that goes beyond all places and times.

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Another teaching of Islam's educational system is keeping balance in our relationships with God, self and others (Sharafi, 1999, p. 22). The other teaching is to avoid extremism. In Islam, there is a certain limit for anything. If men go beyond that limit, which designates justice, they may face undesirable consequences. To do so they hurt themselves more than they hurt others. The Quran says: "He who does injustice to someone, he had done so to himself." There are other verses on the Quran that directly or indirectly refer to mental health. Some of these include: chapter 55, 7-9; chapter 23, 10; chapter 82, 6-7; chapter 82, 6-7; chapter 87, 1-2; chapter 94, 4; chapter 5, 87-88; chapter 13, 17; chapter 4, 170. (Dr, Khayat, 2004, 15).

2. Islamic education and mental health

Studies show that many maladies result from the factors for which man is responsible. Therefore, these factors may be identified and prevented. Any preventive measure should identify the factors with an adverse effect on personality so that stress is minimized and affective and exciting factors are reduced. It has been shown that many behavioural and mental disorders result from lack of ability of parents and educators in applying educational methods in accordance with the needs of each age group including children, youngsters and youth. Thus, prevention, boosting the religious attitude and Islamic education play an important part in creating mental health. Religious teachings can in various forms help the implementation of mental health plans for the individual and the society. These teachings, being inspired by religion and directed at human beings, can provide the greatest support for the individual, the society and the family (Gazorpoor and Barkhordar, 2003, p. 166).

2.1 Islam's cognitive approach

Role of value system in mental health - Role of knowledge and insight in mental health - Role of religious beliefs in mental health

2.2 Value system and mental health

As Chahen (1999) states, having a series of personal values and philosophical values based on beliefs and desires closely connected to the happiness of the individual and the people around him provides the necessary condition for achieving mental health. According to Mazloo (quoted in Roystariyan, 1997), the value system of the individual having mental health is based on his philosophical acceptance of his nature, man's life, social life and the nature of physical reality of life. In fact, values are the main organizers of the actions and behaviors of a developed personality (Motahhari, 2003, p. 316). There is no doubt the Islamic world-view is based on divine unity. That is, the world is created based on a wise providence and its basis is compassion and mercy. In this world-view, the world is not meaningless and man is not created in vain (Rahbar and Rahimian, 2006, p. 36). In 2006, a research was conducted by Kazem Ali Mohammadi and Massoud Jan on the relationship between religious beliefs and practice and mental health. There was a positive and meaningful correlation between these two. Also, the findings of this research correlated with the findings of other researches done on other nations, confirming that practicing religious people show a higher degree of happiness. Thus, belief in religious teachings is among the main factors of happiness as a component of mental health.

The Quran says: "Those are the people who have believed and whose hearts rest in remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest ." (Ra'd: 28). Depending on the degree of the individual's faith, this rest is different in different people. In this research, there was no significant difference between men and women: in both men and women, acting based on religious faith has an important role in reducing the degree of depression. Of course, many studies have been conducted on religiosity and positive affection. For example, it has been shown that in the United States, the people who consider themselves religious are happier and that attending church and doing religious rituals has a positive relationship with the feeling of good life (Mirez, 2000; Inglehart, 1990). Many studies have also been conducted on the effect of religious teachings on mental health (for example, Kazemi, et al.; 2006). Hadianfar (2005) reported that the people acting on religious beliefs have a better welfare and mental health.

2.3. Reflection and insight in mental health

The Islamic education places great emphasis on reflection. They teach us not to limit ourselves to time and to look at the future and to think about the consequences of our actions. The Prophet (pbuh) states: "Any act you engage in, think of its consequences." (Motahhari, 2009, p. 34). The Muslim educators tried to train people who could reflect, who could think of the consequences of an action before they engage in it. Imam Ali (pbuh) states: "Before you make a decision, think it over and before you engage in an act, think of its consequences." (Sharh-e Ghararol Hekam, Vol. 3, p. 135). It behooves a Muslim to think about the consequences of his act. The purpose of the Islamic education is to train people who have insights, and do not judge based on appearances; they can take sound steps and behave properly, which is what faith requires. The person who thinks, is mentally safe because he never regrets. The Khavarej are the best example of the people who do not think. They were people who had a superficial understanding of Islam and confined it to their very limited thoughts. As a result, they were easily deceived when they saw the cunning enemy had placed the Quran on spears to pretend they were true Muslims. (Delshad Tehrani, 2003, p. 214).

2.4 . Religious beliefs and mental health

The culture of a society is usually characterized with the beliefs and moralities of its people, which are conveyed to the individual through the education provided by the family, society and religious associations. A person's religious beliefs tell us a lot about his personality and his view of life. A person trusting in God received the least stress (Athar, 2006, p. 3). Mental and moral diseases have resemblances to physical diseases. They both kill and need to be remedies. Sometimes they are contagious and must be analyzed. After the main cause is identified, they must be remedies. The Quran is like a remedying medicine for those who suffer from attachment to the world and materialism and unconditional surrender to lust. In the Quran we read: "This book was revealed by your Lord to preach and remedy your hearts." A comparison between the status of Arabs before and after the advent of Islam provides the best proof for the truth of this claim. But like all other prescriptions, this prescription works only when it is put to practice (Makarem Shirazi, 2009, p. 36).

Maryam Gazorpour and Nasrin Barkhordar (2003) examined the question of mental health in the Quran and Nahjolbalaghe. They concluded that throughout the Quran there are teachings that are effective, each in its own way, in maintaining mental balance and providing hope and dignity to human beings. The Quran, in fact, does not use the word mental health, but a number of other terms conveying the same concept. Some of these terms include: *sakineh*, *ghalbe salim*, *hayate tayyebah*, *nafse motmaenneh*, appearing in the chapters Fath, Naml, Safat and Fajr. Also, in the Nahjolbalagheh, Imam Ali refers to certain variables such as faith, charity, piety, honesty, etc, which guarantee man's mental health if they are observed and which afflict the person with mental health if they are deviated. These researchers showed that there were 101 variables, extracted from the Quran and the Nahjolbalagheh, that could damage mental health. Listening to the Quran when it is recited aloud has an affect on physiological parameters such as heart beats, blood pressure and the tension of muscles. This effects has been reported on every one whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim, Arab or Non-Arab. All people can take delight in listening to God's word (Athar, 2006, p. 13). A study conducted in Sheffield university on the people who pray showed that they are happier and healthier. About prayer, God Almighty says in the Quran: "When my servants ask you about me, tell them I am close to them and answer the question of the person who calls me. So they should listen to me and have faith in me if they wish to be salvaged." William James says that any form of prayer indicates that through connection with God the person who prays has obtained that spiritual power that is the food for the soul. For such a person the world finds a different manifestation. Prayer is a power which is real as the force of gravity. Remembering God Almighty constantly is very effective in the health of the soul and strengthens the bond between man and God (Bayan Memar, 2003, p. 264). One of the techniques used by psychologists is to make the patient calm. Praying has the same effect as it reduces the stress and brings serenity to the person. This is very similar to the method used by Joseph Velpi (Botorabi, 2003, p. 208). The person who is deprived of prayer, finds himself alone when facing difficulties but the person who seeks help from God finds a strong support which strengthens his mind and spirit. AS God says in the Quran: "It is only in remembrance of God Almighty that hearts find rest". (Dimateo, 1999, p. 760).

Hope: In all its teachings, Islam places emphasis on hope. As God says in the Quran: “Don't despair of God's mercy, for only the disbelievers get disappointed from God's mercy” . According to Lazaros and Folkman, the person who has hope has confidence in himself and as a result, uses his own strategies, trusts others and depends on God and finds strength. (Sadeghian: 2008, p. 70). Based on this principle, there is now a kind of psycho therapy which is called hope therapy, which considers hope as a definitive stimulus for behavior and the stronger this stimulus the more certain the manifestation of certain behavior (Hosseini, 2000, p. 202).

Trust: If trust is defined correctly, the society will be more hopeful and dynamic with a better mental health. In its true sense, trust means "using natural means to reach goals and yet leaving the results of the action and its effectiveness to God Almighty" (Mousavi Asl, 2008, p. 58). The believe believes that if he does his duty correctly, God does not leave him to his own resources but helps him out of his difficulties through a way he never thought of. If a person has such a belief, he will have no anxiety and fear. That is why God says in the Qur'an: “He who trusts in God, God would be sufficient for him.” (Sadeghian, 2000, p. 52). Have you ever thought why after examinations, you feel depressed.

Belief in the hereafter: Man has certain instincts and wishes, all of which he cannot satisfy. For example, man is in search of absolute calm, absolute safety and absolute comfort, but he cannot achieve all these. This results in a feeling of depravation. On the other hand, life's problems and the loss of the beloved ones is so painful. If man has no solution to these problems, he will feel disappointed; sometimes he may even commit suicide. But the person believing in the hereafter knows that life does not end in this world, and that there is another world where all his wishes are fulfilled. (Sadeghian, 2008, p. 88). Those who live a spiritual life, feel so calm toward the end of their lives because according to their world view there is another life waiting for them and so they have no reason to be sad (Koobker, Ross, 1969).

Self-knowledge and self - development: Tolstoy, the Russian writer describes a man who is ideal in every respect, but this is all at the surface. His life is meaningless that he thinks of committing suicide, asking himself: Why should I live? Tolstoy did know the pain he was describing because he asked himself: What is the good of what I am writing today? What shall I do tomorrow? Why should I live? Why should I do anything? Is there a valuable goal in life which is not threatened by the imminent death? These are simple but vexing questions every person asks himself. In my experience, it is not possible to live without having answers to these questions. Self-knowledge is an introduction to self-development. According to Mazlo, self-development is the highest stage of mental growth. That is, if someone attains self-development, he attains the highest stage of serenity. Islam helps the individual, both practically and theoretically, toward self-development. Theoretically, Islam gives an insight into man's self and, practically, helps man attain his destination (Sajedi, 2008, p. 16). Self-development is one of man's basic needs. All human beings like to attain a certain level of development and have sublime experiences. If man reaches this stage, he is sure to attain serenity.

Unity of personality: The people having unity of personality are consistent in thought, action and emotions. For example, the supreme leader describes the Imam's unity of personality as follows: His fortitude and grace was such that if a hundred people spoke in a meeting and he did not agree with the speakers, he did not raise his voice in protest unless he deemed necessary (Islami, 2004, p. 27). In fact, there are three factors affecting mental health: uncertain insight, unhealthy attitudes and imbalanced actions. A person constantly suffering from these is likely to lose his mental health and become depressed, doing illogical behavior. Islam coordinates these three factors and provides the grounds for mental health (Sajedi, 2008, p. 20). For example, if a person is suspicious of his wife, this will affect all his behavior. Or the person who has no particular opinion is easily affected by every one. Or the person n who lives a corrupt life, will soon be left alone by others, and a result he will feel lonely and depressed. Therefore, if any part of our personality is affected, the other parts are affected too. That is why Islam places great stress on unity of personality. Imam Ali (pbuh) says: "Real faith results from sincerity in thinking, speaking and acting."

Maryam Gazorpour and Nasrin Barkhordar (2003) extracted from the Nahjolbalagheh 101 factors that prevent mental health. In this paper, we will refer to some of them.

Anger: The person who gets angry shows certain physical manifestations: his hearts beats faster, sweats, loses his balance, etc. If this state happens frequently, he may suffer from mental; disorder and mental breakdown or even frenzy. The angry person may have the illusion that he can do things that are in fact beyond his ability. In such a state of intense emotion, the person may reveal his opinions and attitudes toward others. After his anger subsides, the person may feel regret for what he has said and done. When angry, we tend only to see the faults of others. Anger is a great enemy of healthy thinking. The opinions of the angry person are transient. Islam is well aware of how to remedy mental ills. Islam advises both parties to control their anger when they become angry. In the Quran we read: "Those who spend of that which Allah has given them in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind: Allah loves the good." (Al-Emran: 134). The physical effect of controlling anger is silence and calm, because those who control their anger attain a mental calm, which gives them the opportunity to think properly.

Will power and patience: The Quran does not explicitly refer to will power and ways of strengthening it, but as an educational guide it places emphasis on practical strategies. To do so, it offers examples to follow. There are many verses in the Quran about patience and its relationship with steadfastness and will power has been referred to. Patience, in fact, has been said to be the criteria distinguishing strong will power from weak will power. A Muslim is recommended to be patient in the case of misfortunes, acts of worship, in the fight against the satan of the soul. By trusting in God and showing patience, a believer reaches mental strength (Arafi: 2006, p. 152). If man does not show patience in the face of difficulties, he acts angrily and aggressively in his social interactions, jeopardizing his mental health. After each such action, the person feels worried and disturbed for some time and his mental function is affected negatively. The person may even show physical disorders (Dimateo: 1999, p. 762).

Dignity: Imam Ali (pbuh) states: "The person who knows the value of his dignity, will find the world too small for him." Elsewhere he states: "It is bad transaction to consider the world as your price (Gharar Al-Hekam, quoted in Doost Mohammadi, 2008, p. 192). The fact is the person who respects his dignity, considers this beyond himself to engage in inappropriate actions. Imam Ali (pbuh) states: "The people with a strong sense of self respect do not surrender to low desires." The people with a low sense of self respect could be dangerous to the society because they may indulge in any crime and abject themselves. The people with a poor dignity always depend on the opinions of others and always follow others. They do not have their own independent views and are as a result always hesitant and cannot make decisions for themselves.

Self-restraint: By nature, man has a tendency to possess things, but when he realizes that things, while giving him power externally, weaken him internally, rebels against things. This rebellion is called self-restraint (Mousavi Asl: 2008, p. 68). Self-restraint is to quit worldly pleasures in order to achieve a high spiritual or intellectual state. Imam Ali (pbuh) says: "In a nutshell, self-restraint is not to regret fro what you have lost and not become too happy for what you have obtained."

Frugality: As a practice of acquiring goods and services in a restrained manner, frugality is effective in maintaining mental health. Ragheb Isfahani defines frugality as follows: frugality is to be content with the little you have and not to try to have more and to get oneself into trouble. Common strategies of frugality include the reduction of waste, curbing costly habits, suppressing instant gratification by means of fiscal self-restraint, seeking efficiency, avoiding traps, defying expensive social norms, and embracing cost-free options. The person who limits his desires, will live a peaceful life, but the person who is polluted with greed, loses his calm, is always anxious, is dependent on others and loses his face and dignity (Sadeghian: 2003, p. 348). The Prophet says: "Frugality is an endless wealth." (Mizan Al-Hekmah; tradition number 1741).

Jealousy is a negative feeling which leaves undesirable effects on the worldly and spiritual life of the individual. Normally, when a person finds that someone possesses a property, he may develop two different emotions: he either wishes he had it too— this is envy, which is desirable because it motivates him to work harder— or he wishes he had it but not the other person. This latter feeling is jealousy, which is undesirable. (Sadeghian: 2003, p. 257). The jealous person, having this disposition, wishes to be superior to others and denies greatness to them. Imam Ali states: "I know no cruel person who is more oppressed than a jealous person because a jealous person is always engaged with negative thoughts and feelings of anxiety, anger, sadness, and disgust.

3. Conclusion

Man's life is like a rusty wheel that moves slowly and noisily. What makes it move smoothly is spirituality. Our more attention to the ideas suggested by the Quran and Nahjolbalagheh. As the Quran states: (There is no compulsion in religion). The right direction is henceforth distinct from error." (Ahzab: 256).

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