

## ***Islamic Psychology: A Panacea for Addressing Crises in the Muslim-dominated States in Nigeria***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aimed at discussing the Islamic psychology as a panacea for addressing crises among Muslim-dominated states. In order to showcase the aim of the paper, the authors explained the concept of Islamic Psychology to show how it is different from any other branch of psychology. The article avers that knowledge of Islamic psychology is important because it helps to modify behaviour to conform to the teaching of the Holy Prophet, and it goes a long way in addressing crises among Muslims. The incorporation of Islamic psychology into the senior secondary school curriculum will go a long way in promoting knowledge of Islamic psychology and also minimize crises among Nigerian students. The paper also explains how Islamization of approach can be used to propagate the teaching and learning of Islamic psychology. The paper also discussed the concept of crises and Islamic goals as a means of providing solutions to crises emanating from Islamic states. The paper recommended, among others, that government should incorporate Islamic psychology as a subject into the Nigerian school curriculum to help spread knowledge of Islamic psychology across the states.*

**Keywords:** Islamic, psychology, crises, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Psychology is a field of study that deals with the study of human mind; how it works and affects behaviour. It can be used as a tool for providing solutions to problems and contain crises leading to disunity among Muslims. Psychology enables human beings to understand how individual differences could result to misunderstanding among people. Thus, relevant knowledge can help towards proper decision-making, prevention of crises, proper time management, setting and achieving goals and, most importantly, lead to a happy and effective living (Phillipe, 2017). As a science, psychology attempts to study

nature and nurture; the cognitive process; emotional behaviour; normal behaviour and abnormal behaviour; animal behaviour; social and collective behaviour; evolutionary behaviour; biological bases of behaviour; developmental process; organizational behaviour; health behaviours and illnesses; and how behaviour can be modified. These are the objects of psychological investigation through research and the use of scientific methods such as observation, experiment, stimulation, comparison, generalization and robust data analysis. The main goals of psychology are to describe, explain, predict and change human behaviours and mental processes.

### **Concept of psychology**

Etymologically, psychology means the science of the soul, or “psyche” and “logia” means “study of” or “research” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2020). According to Rassool (2021) psychology is a multifaceted discipline and as a science deals with the study of the nature of behaviour and experience. Psychology is not a new scientific discipline, as its origins can be traced back to ancient Greece, 400–500 years BC, when the approach was a philosophical one. The intellectual discourse of philosophers including Socrates, Plato and Aristotle focused on the nature, origin and the destiny of the human soul, free will versus determinism, nature versus nurture, attraction, memory and consciousness, among others. The question of nature and environment factors was hotly debated. For example, Plato argued that certain kinds of knowledge are innate or inborn, whereas Aristotle believed that each child is born as a “blank slate” (in Latin, *tabula rasa*) and that knowledge is primarily acquired through learning and experience. The “*tabula rasa*” phenomenon was the seed of a school later known as behaviourism or the behaviourist school of psychology.

Psychology covers a number of areas and its applications are numerous depending on the subject matter. Application of psychology to education only covers areas that have to do with educationally related issues. Perhaps, as far as Islam is concerned, application of psychology enables the understanding of how Muslim Ummah can make use of psychology in the teaching and learning of Islam. Islamic psychology across the curriculum will go a long way in helping to re-direct the minds of individuals and make them to believe that psychology can equally be applied in the teaching of Islam in Muslim states.

### **Concept of Islamic Psychology**

Having understood the meaning of psychology, the question of what Islamic psychology is needs to be addressed. Is Islamic psychology the same as Psychology from the Islamic perspective? Islamic psychology or ‘ilm al-nafs (Arabic: علم النفس), the science of the nafs (“self” or “psyche”), is the study of psyche through the application of philosophically based theories from established Islamic points of views and more so, it goes a long way in addressing psychological issues, philosophy of Muslim minds as well as their psychiatry. Husain (2006), in his book stated that Islamic Psychology involving theoretical integration and practical application of Islamic principles concerning guidance and counselling, personality development, therapy, positive health and many other areas.

According to Rassool (2021), Islamic Psychology or ilm an-nafs means the science of the soul. This area of study has drawn peoples' attention especially Muslim Ummah who have seen its importance in teaching and learning of Islam and western education as well. Psychology makes one to understand human nature, and behaviour in social settings. Peoples' behaviours are best understood via the application of scientific methods which are from psychological points of views. The fundamental idea of Islamic psychology is its correlation with the practice of do's and don'ts of the Holy Qur'an. Islamic psychology is used in teaching and learning but under guises.

Islam values the importance of good morality and peace. The Qur'an can be used to speak the words of God to those in crises so as to prevent eventualities among Muslim states. Islamic psychology can be used to fasten the process of Islamization in predominantly Muslim states. In a real context, Islamization may not be effective without the use of Islamic psychology which helps to pass the message to the listeners in systematic and scientific ways. Because psychology uses scientific methods to study human behaviour in an environment, it is in view of this that Islamization of western education will be more effective if psychology is paired with Islam.

According to Rajab (1999), Islamization refers to the "Integration of Islamic revealed knowledge and the human sciences." In this context, Islamization of knowledge also refers to the "Islamisation of contemporary or present-day knowledge." Yusuf (2015) argues that Islamization of knowledge is an attempt to fashion out an Islamic paradigm of knowledge based on the Islamic world view and its unique constitutive concepts and factors. Islamic psychology is paradigm shift which helps to propagate Islamic doctrines at all levels of education in Muslim states. This means that incorporation of Islamic psychology into the senior secondary school curriculum will go a long way in promoting Islamic psychology and Islamization among Nigerian students especially in the rural areas of Muslim states where Islam is not practiced. Resuscitation of Nomadic Education in Islamic states will also play a vital role when it comes to the teaching and learning of Islamic psychology. Nomadic Education is meant for the Nomads who are used to nomadic way of life. Availability of nomadic schools will help to educate nomads with Islamic knowledge if Islamic psychology is included in their curriculum. Many of the problems facing Northern Nigeria today are due to the inability of Islamic scholars to reach out to those in the villages especially Fulanis who are suspected to be the brain behind the nefarious activities being perpetrated in the North. In fact, during the 8th to 15th centuries of the Gregorian calendar, the Islamic Golden Age occurred. This marked a time of numerous advancements and discoveries in Islamic arts and sciences. This made Islamic scholars to understand that certain conditions can alter an individual's spiritual and psychological states. Those who were seen as *majnun* (mad people) were believed to have an imbalance in their spiritual and psychological states. A prominent philosopher during this time was al-Ghazali (1058-1111).

Al-Ghazali further explained that divergence from this interconnectedness could result in abnormalities within an individual's mental health. Islamic Psychology emanates from the

Quran and Hadith; it is in view of this that the teachers of Islam derived the meaning of Islamic psychology via conceptualization, understanding and practice of psychology. The conventional psychology such as educational psychology provides a number of theories based on the findings from experiments of psychologists. Conventional psychology did not take into considerations the teaching of beloved Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and that is one of its weaknesses as far as Islamic injunctions are concerned. The fact that the sources of references are the Quran and Sunnah, believers should be able to make use of the teaching of Islamic psychology in their day to day activities to understand how to provide solutions to crises as prescribed by the Quran and hadith.

Since Islam has become a world religion, it is expected that Muslim scholars should use this opportunity to win the minds of those who are yet to accept Islam in the Muslim states. As the impact of Islamic teaching changed the lifestyle of pre-Islamic Arabs, the same methods used by their scholars to change the lives of these people can equally be used in Muslim-dominated states to actualize the dreams of converting non-Muslims to Muslims.

Dzilo (2012) maintains that the concept of “Islamisation of knowledge is not monospermous but involves multiple approaches to the various forms of modern-world thought in the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition, including metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and methodological premises regarding the modern issue of knowledge” (p.247). This means the integration of Islamic theology with scientific methods and evidence-based practice in diverse disciplines including psychology, sociology, health and medical sciences, economics and finance.

### **Meaning of religious crises**

Maher (2006) defines religious conflict as a situation in which religious adherents are involved in a serious disagreement or argument with one another. This is a situation in which there is opposition in ideas, opinions, feelings and wishes. Religious crisis is one of the commonest causes of violence in Nigeria and it has claimed a lot of lives of Muslims and Christians. Many of the religious crises that occurred in Nigeria were as a result of ignorance as the people involved found it difficult to understand the plight of one another due to the differences in their beliefs and doctrines. A number of Muslims misunderstand the concept of Jihad, thereby, relating any social conflict that occurred between them and Christians to religious crises. Sometimes, it happens that some religious leaders incite their followers through their preaching, and this act has given birth to unrests in the Muslim states where Christians are in the minority, and vice-versa. For peaceful coexistence to reign, religious leaders must desist from any act that can lead to violence via their preaching or crusade.

### **Religious conflict and Islam**

Religious conflict is one of the unrest that affects the lives of Muslim brothers and sisters; it claims many lives of those involved and those that are not involved in the conflicts. Many a time, the cause of the conflicts may not be known to those involved in the act

because of lack of Islamic knowledge. Islam teaches morality and it does not teach people to misbehave neither does it teach them to incite people to engage in religious conflicts. During violent religious conflicts, many people could be killed, maimed and wounded. There could also be a wide spread disruption of economic activities with negative effects on productivity. Hundreds of churches and mosques, hotels and other related business as well as vehicles, private homes, among others, could be destroyed.

### **Islam and Conflict**

It will be very difficult for someone who does not know much about Islam to know about the stance of Islam about conflicts. Al-Tirmidhi (1996) believed that there are conflicts perpetrated by Muslims that have no basis in Islam but because of little knowledge of Islam, people tend to be brainwashed and lured into unlawful fight which are not for God. Islamic psychology will indeed help to widen the thinking of Muslim brothers and sisters about what Islam says regarding moral conflicts. Because psychology helps to study human behaviours, this area of study will help to understand why Muslim brothers indulge in unlawful conflicts and it will at the same time recommend ways in which this act can be brought to an end among Muslim brothers and sisters.

### **Relationship between peace and conflicts**

Peace and conflict are two different things; Peace can only occur if there is mutual understanding amongst the Muslims or between Muslims and Christians living in the same state, or Local Government Area. Al-Momani (2007) says it is only when there is peace that people can live without fear and walk around freely. In the absence of peace, what happens is conflict. Maher (2006) opined that the opposite of peace, as far as religion is concerned, is conflict and whenever there is conflict, there should be dialogue which must involve two parties, mostly religious leaders from the two religions to have a roundtable discussion on how to bury their differences. It is often claimed that religion causes conflict and war. It is true that sometimes deeply held beliefs can lead to clashes, and there have been many wars that were caused by disputes over religion and beliefs.

### **Panacea for crises from the perspective of Islamic Psychology**

Providing panacea for violence erupting as a result of religious disputes by Islamic psychology is of paramount importance. Othaman and Mohammad (2019) opined that a Muslim who works to provide panacea for crises among Muslims with the hope of being rewarded by the almighty Allah will always strive his best to help and assist Muslims to embrace peace in the best possible manner, using his wealth of knowledge to master crises techniques and upgrade his skills to suit the needs of Muslim brothers and sisters in terms of provision of solutions to conflicts. Mitha (2020) was of the view that counsellors in the area of crises should exhibit generic characteristics such as good psychological health, self-awareness, open-mindedness, having empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness and congruence, non-judgmental, cultural sensitivity and competence (Al-Hajjaj, 2006). These characteristics, coupled with Islamic spiritual understanding will help to provide suitable solutions to crises from Islamic psychology perspectives. Islam is a peaceful religion that always seeks for peaceful coexistence between believers and

unbelievers. This being the case, it has not taught adherents to be disrespectful to anyone who is not of the same belief. That is why there are laws that bind every believer not to indulge in any forms of crises. Islamic law wants crises to be resolved out of court through tahkim (arbitration) or sulh (mediation). The crises resolution processes in Islam are part of a larger Islamic legal framework, known as Islamic law or Shariah. There are two main primary sources of Islamic law which Muslim states are using to have peaceful coexistence:

According to Abdullah (2003), crisis management has four stages:

1. The stage of mitigating the crisis, in which the quality of the risks and the surrounding circumstances and the prediction of the surrounding hazards are determined.
2. The stage of preparation and drawing up of a complete plan to face the crisis.
3. The stage of confrontation: It is a decisive stage in managing the crisis, on which the size of the losses depends.
4. The rebalancing stage: in which a relatively long-term plan is drawn up according to the effects of the crisis.

Al Eid and Arnout (2020) suggested that crises can be solved through the analysis of the Qur'anic texts and prophetic hadiths. It is clear that the crisis is an emergency situation that harms society and may lead to its collapse, and it is based on economic and social types. Islam has developed an approach for coping with crises characterized by wisdom and positivity. Therefore, the Muslim states have not weakened or collapsed. This Islamic approach is to manage crises in several steps which include: defining the crisis and determining its causes, defining its manifestations, adopting methods to deal with it and planning to overcome it.

In the story of the Prophet Noah—peace be upon him—there was crisis, which manifested in the lack of obedience of his people to him, and the non-entrust of new believers in the Islamic religion. The manifestations of this crisis turned into severe mockery of the believing group, stubbornness and refusal to listen to the Prophet, no matter how he preached to them in the morning or evening, but insisted on their stubbornness and arrogance.

As for the method of Prophet Noah's management of this crisis, he began with warning, advising, enlightening, reminding, educating, and alerting. Despite the length of time that Noah (Peace be upon Him) spent calling on his people with little or no success, he did not despair, did not retreat, and did not lazily report his ordeal to God by all possible means. He did not mind that his people had gone to the extent of putting their fingers in their ears, so that they would not hear it, and use their clothes to blindfold themselves in order not to see it. It was then that God almighty told him that none would believe him except those who had already believed. He called on them not to be a temptation for the weak believers, so God's punishment for facing the believers was a major crisis, which is the Lord's punishment that will flood the earth with those on it. In the story of the prophet Noah with his people, when they did not obey him to enter Islam, the reaction of the prophet Noah

was patience, did not give up, did not lazy, or retracted his goal in communicating the call of his Lord, and he remained for many years calling people to repent their sins and come closer to his Lord.

Al Eid and Arnout (2020) opined that Islamic state went through many crises and disasters, among these crises was the flood of Prophet Noah that drowned the world. In Surah Al-Ankabut-verse-14 God said “And We certainly sent Noah to his people, and he remained among them a thousand years minus fifty years, and the flood seized them while they were wrongdoers” (The Noble Qur'an). The crisis also included the stormy food crisis that toppled the Arabian Peninsula and the region for seven full years, including the crisis of Muslims during the era of the Prophet Muhammad when they lost safety of themselves and their families, so permission to migrate and then the siege crisis and unfairness of the faithful in the city from all of the Arabian Peninsula also almost claimed the Islamic nation. In Surah At-Tawbah-verse-40 God said “if you do not aid the Prophet—Allah has already aided him” when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, “Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us. “And Allah sent down his tranquility upon him and supported him with angels you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah—that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise” (The Noble Qur'an).

Al Eid and Arnout (2020) found that crises are multiple and varied, and can be divided from an Islamic perspective as follows:

1. Economic crises: such as poverty, unemployment, loans.
2. Social crises: including marriage crisis, divorce, marital infidelity, housing crisis and others.
3. Political/military crises: such as the Battle of Al'ahzab, Talot and Goliath.
4. Health crises: such as disease, epidemics, and plague.

### **Conclusion**

Psychology is seen as a multifaceted discipline that involves Islamic psychology as one of its areas of study and as a science which provides Muslims with the knowledge and skills to study individual behaviour as to avoid anything that may lead to crises among Muslim brothers and sisters in Muslim states. Islamic psychology attempts to study nature and nurture; the cognitive process; emotional behaviour; normal behaviour and abnormal behaviour; social and collective behaviour; evolutionary behaviour; biological bases of behaviour; developmental process; organizational behaviour; health behaviours and illnesses; and how behaviour can be modified to tally with the teaching and learning of the Holy Prophet. Islamic Psychology or 'ilm al-nafs (Arabic: علم النفس), the science of the nafs ("self" or "psyche"), is the study of the psyche through the application of philosophically based theories from established Islamic points of views and more so, it goes a long way in addressing crises.

### Recommendations

1. Government should incorporate Islamic psychology as a subject into the Nigerian school curriculum as to help spread the knowledge of Islamic psychology especially in the Muslim environs in Nigeria.
2. Trained and well equipped teachers in the field of Islamic psychology should be employed to teach the subject in secondary schools across the Muslim communities in Nigeria.
3. Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A.) should advocate for the teaching and learning of Islamic psychology in secondary schools thereby making the curriculum more relevant to the target communities in Nigeria.
4. Muslim educationists and relevant scholars should increase effort in giving more enlightenment and campaign on the importance of Islamic psychology towards human development in the Muslim States in Nigeria.

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