



A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT:

The study aims to critically review the Islamic teachings on mental health policies and practices for the psychological well-being of public sector secondary school students. The major objectives of the study are to analyze the influence of Islamic teachings on the mental health policies and practices for school children. The study is conducted through purposive sampling technique for the selection of school Principals and senior Islamic education educators serving in public sector secondary schools in Punjab. Unstructured interview is used as a main tool of research for this study. Findings: The study concludes Islamic teachings provide a clear picture to streamline the mental health policies and practices for school children and concrete policies and practices in Islamic perspectives are essential need for the psychological well-being of secondary school students in any country of the world. In general, findings of the study are applicable anywhere for school education department concerning the significance of policies and practices for the psychological well-being of secondary school students and can also be used to improve the strategies for training school Principals and educators.

KEYWORDS: Islamic teachings, Significance, Psychology, Health, Policies, Practices.

INTRODUCTION:

Gazorpur & Barkhodar¹ investigated the question of mental health in the Holy Quran. They concluded that the teachings of the Holy Quran are very effective in streamlining the health policies and practices for the individuals of a society. The study concluded that terms used for mental health in the Holy Quran are, sakineh, ghalbe salim, hayate tayyebah, nafse motmaenneh, appearing in the chapters Fath, Naml, Safat and Fajr. Various studies concluded that remembrance of Allah keeps a person healthy mentally. The Holy 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). A study at Sheffield University concluded that performing prayers five times a day keeps a person satisfied mentally. William James concluded that spiritual power is concerned with the prayers and recitation of the Holy Quran. Prayer is very effective in keeping a person spiritually healthy. Various studies concluded that prayers reduce the effects of stress and anxiety in the individuals.

Islamic teachings have particular emphasis on hope. Hope should be

¹ Gazorpur & Barkhodar (2003). *Mental Health Promotion: A Lifespan Approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

taught at school level to keep the school children mentally healthy. Similarly, dignity should be taught to keep the individuals spiritually healthy. Imam Ali (pbuh) states that the individual who knows about the value of his dignity, he will find the world too small for him.

World Health Organization² reports that 20 percent adolescents suffer from mental disorders like depression and anxiety at school level. Swami³ determined that life satisfaction is attached with mental health of any individual. The National Institute of Mental Health⁴ determined that depression has been frequently perceived in the adolescents. In various countries of the world, mental health has not been given such a preference and neglected at large scale. It has been reported that the mental disorders contribute thirteen percent of the global drain diseases⁵. According to World Health Organization Bangladesh⁶ in Bangladesh, mental disorders

² WHO (2011).Mental health: a state of well-being. http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/retrieved on 7.6.2019

³ Swami, V & Furnham, A. (2010). General health mediates the relationship between loneliness, life satisfaction and depression. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*

⁴ National Mental Health Policy (2013). Directorate of Community Mental Health: Directorate General of Community Health: Department of Health-Social Welfare: Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, March 2001, p-19.

⁵ Mathers, C. (2008). The global burden of disease: 2004 update. World Health Organization, USA

⁶ World Health Organization Bangladesh (2019). Developing a national mental health policy in Bangladesh.

exist in adults and children and the ratio of effect of these disorders in adults is 16.1percent while 18.4 percent in children. World Health Organization reports that, “about 7.5 per cent Indians suffer from major or minor mental disorders that require intervention of an expert”. Similarly, China Daily⁷ reports that, “mental health specialists warned of rising mental health issues among Chinese children and adolescents”. According to Zhang & Zhao⁸ with the announcement of second national mental health work plan (2015-2020), China has paid more attention towards mental health care (p-629). In Indonesia, the vision of mental health development program is, “Toward Healthy Indonesia through Comprehensive and Integrated Mental Health Program” (National Mental Health Policy)⁹.

The WHO¹⁰ elaborates that mental health policies should clearly define the

⁷ China Daily (2018, May 24). Mental health issues rise among children.<http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201805/24/WS5b0604b0a3103f6866eea3d8.html> retrieved on 7.6.2019

⁸ Zhang, F & Zhao, J (2015).China is prepared to fight against Emerging Mental Health

⁹ National Mental Health Policy (2013). Directorate of Community Mental Health: Directorate General of Community Health: Department of Health-Social Welfare: Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, March 2001, p-19.

¹⁰ World Health Organization (2013) Draft comprehensive mental health 2013-2020. The World Health Organization: Executive Board

strategies to address the mental disorders. Tilford¹¹ elaborated that the major attention of mental health policies would have to address the mental illness. National mental health policy was framed in 1986 in Pakistan to address the mental health problems and issues. But unfortunately, this policy was completely implemented until 2002¹². Unluckily, the assigned annual budget for upgrading mental health is very low which shows 0.4 percent of the entire budget of the health department in Pakistan. Mental health problems and issues have not been focused in many countries of the world¹³.

Several studies revealed that school environment plays significant role in reducing mental health problems and issues but it depends on the geographic situations of the countries¹⁴.

ISLAMIC TEACHINGS ON MENTAL HEALTH:

Islam is a complete code of life that provides comprehensive guidelines regarding the mental health. Spirituality has an important role in healing the mental disorders. Islam lays special emphasis on the mental health.

¹¹ Tilford, S. (Eds.) (2006) *Mental Health Promotion: A Lifespan Approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

¹² Karim, S. & Jenkins, R. (2004). Pakistan mental health country profile. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 16(1–2), 83–92.

¹³ World Health Organization: *Mental Health Atlas* (2005).

¹⁴ Comer, J.P. (1984). Home-school relationships as they affect the academic success of children. *Education and Urban Society*.

One mode of Islamic counseling is the healing through spiritual leader called, “peer”. Sufism plays an important role in healing the mental disorders. Sufis’ have played a vital role in healing the mental disorders¹⁵. Use of alcohol and drugs cause the psychological and mental health problems. Islam prevents its followers to use the drugs and alcohol¹⁶.

The Holy Quran says that, *“They ask you concerning wine and gambling.” Say: “In them there is great sin, and some profit, for men, but sin is greater than the profit” (Quran 4:43). “O you who believe! Approach not prayers, with a mind befogged, until you can understand all that you say” (Quran 2:219).* Islam elaborates a very beautiful family with peace, pleasures and unity. Islamic family system is enriched with values and ethics that keep individuals psychologically healthy. Chahen¹⁷ highlights about the philosophical values that are based on beliefs for the happiness of the people. Islam pays particular emphasis on remembering of Allah in the whole life. The Holy Quran says, “Those are the people

¹⁵ Al-Abdul-Jabbar J, Al-Issa I.(2000). Psychotherapy in Islamic society. In: Al-Issa I, editor. *Al-Junun: Mental illness in the Islamic world*. Madison CT: International Universities Press; pp. 277–93.

¹⁶ Al-Krenawi A, Graham J.(1997). Spirit possession and exorcism in the treatment of a Bedouin Psychiatric Patient. *Clin Soc Work J*;25:211–22.

¹⁷ Chahen, D. (2010). The Role of Islamic Education in Mental Health. December 2010 Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 5:1991-1996

who have believed and whose hearts rest in remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest) (Ra'd: 28). Islam elaborated well about how to address the mental health issues of the individuals of the society. Therefore,

anger is prohibited. Islam advises to control their anger. The Holy Quran says that “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). Islam emphasis on hope. Hope keeps the people away from the mental health disorders. The Holy Quran says that “Do not despair of God's mercy, for only the disbelievers get disappointed from God's mercy”.

Therefore, it's important to teach the school adolescents about the mental health in Islamic perspectives. Policies regarding the mental health of school adolescents should be streamlines in views of the guidelines and instructions of Islam.

EXISTING SITUATION OF MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES IN SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES:

According to Humayun¹⁸ in daily, “Dawn” mental health regulations can support to succeed quality in mental health care for the new generations in

¹⁸ Humayun, A. (2016, November 19).Mental Health Priorities. Daily, “Dawn”.

Pakistan. Mental health systems are established in various countries in South Asia such as India, Afghanistan and Nepal, where legislations concerning mental health were endorsed in 1987, 1997 and 2006 respectively. In Afghanistan, the mental health of an unpredicted number of students has been unobserved that have experienced serious mental health problems and issues in the current war¹⁹ Liu and Lu²⁰ identified in the study that large percentage of the participants were reported with high level of academic stress in educational institutions. No more studies have been directed to explore the nature and causes of mental health disorders in Bangladesh²¹.

DISCUSSION ON SIGNIFICANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:

The collected data from the participants declare that a concrete policies and practices in Islamic perspectives are compulsory concerning assessment of mental health problems and psychological well-being of

¹⁹ De Pedro, K. & Esqueda, M.C. (2011). The children of military service members: Challenges, resources, and future educational research. Review of Educational Research.

²⁰ Liu, Y. Y., & Lu, Z. H. (2011). The Chinese high school student's stress in the school and academic achievement. Educational Psychology.

²¹ Hossain, A. & Razia, S. (2018). Mental Health Disorders Status in Bangladesh: A Systematic Review; JOJ Nursing & Health Care. Vol 7, Issue 2.p-3.

secondary school students in public sector schools worldwide²². Most of the school Principals and Islamic education educators were agreed that mental health problems in adolescents was a worldwide issue and a number of secondary school students could be observed with some forms of mental health problems including loneliness, anxiety and depression because of low socio-economic circumstances anywhere in the world²³. Therefore, it is need of the day to train the teachers about the Islamic teachings on mental health. One participant shared that, “this is a universal phenomenon that mental health problems exist in the students belonging to financially deprived, physical and psychological broken families”. Similarly, another participant replied that, “with clear and concrete policies, teachers can sufficiently support to overcome the mental health problems and issues in the students in the schools located anywhere in the world”. The participants were agreed that mental health problems in secondary school students could be reduced with special attention by teachers in South Asian countries.

RESEARCH METHOD:

²² Mathers, C. (2008). The global burden of disease: 2004 update. World Health Organization, USA.

²³ World Health Organization (2013) Draft comprehensive mental health 2013-2020. The World Health Organization: Executive Board

The participants were school Principals and senior educators serving in public sector secondary schools in Punjab. Unstructured interview was used as a tool research. For the experiences of the participants, unstructured interview is used as tool of research. Three districts were included in the sample of the study (Jhang, Chiniot & Sargodha). The participants were asked open ended questions concerning the mental health policies and practices at schools. The study was qualitative in nature. After collecting the data, thematic content analysis was used in which themes were identified to meet the objectives of the study²⁴. The researcher personally collected the data. On the basis of similarities and differences in themes of the collected data, data was analyzed to achieve the objectives of the study.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION:

The study concludes that clear and concrete policy in Islamic perspectives is one of the basic needs in school education department concerning the mental health sickness of secondary school students

²⁴ Jafari MF.(1993). Counseling values and objectives: A comparison of Western and Islamic Perspectives. *Am J Islam Soc Sci.*; 10:326–39

worldwide²⁵. The school Principals and educators need further professional training in Islamic perspectives to assess and to apply the strategies to overcome the mental health problems in the students including depression, anxiety and aggression anywhere in the world. The participants agreed that mental health policies and practices for secondary school students need to be improved within passage of time for the psychological well-being of students.

Schools play a significant role in improving children's mental health and preventing mental health problems. Teachers need to be aware of the significance of fulfilling their role in school-wide mental health care²⁶. It is also important to understand the impact of factors at four levels: school ethics. Schools need to manage the different aspects of the model at each of the four levels described in this article. It is also important that all teachers be able to identify the various mental problems and disorders they may face and implement actual approaches to deal with them. More

²⁵ World Health Organization (2013) Draft comprehensive mental health 2013-2020. The World Health Organization: Executive Board

²⁶ Karim, S. & Jenkins, R. (2004). Pakistan mental health country profile. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 16(1–2), 83–92.

information on children's mental health issues and how teachers can help in the School Mental Health Handbook²⁷.

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²⁷ Atkinson, M. & Hornby, G. (2002). Mental Health Handbook for Schools. London: Routledge Falmer
