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Islamic Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy at the Intersection of Theology and Social Sciences

Islamic spiritual care, belonging to the family of helping professionals, is dedicated to supporting Muslim clients through healing, sustaining, and guiding practices, such as *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), *tarbiyya* (nurturing potential), *ta'lim* (knowledge acquisition), and *ta'dib* (moral refinement). The origin of the 'Islamic spiritual' is rooted in the Prophetic tradition of *nasihah* (sincere advice) and *'ilm al-nafs* (the science of the self/soul). This tradition of spiritual care in Islam, like the Christian soul care, was also known as *ilaj al-nafs* (the treatment of the soul) or as *tibb al-qalb* (medicine of the heart) and *al-tibb al-ruhani* (medicine of the spirit).

Today, a bio-psycho-social-spiritual (BPSS) model of Islamic spiritual care remains holistic and situates spiritual/religious tradition within the lived experience of Muslims. Although the BPSS model of Islamic spiritual care is not a new understanding or concept in the Islamic tradition, it is a forgotten tradition. For example, Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna (d. 1037), was the first one to offer a biopsychosocial model in his Canon of Medicine. This model, which considers the biological, psychological, social and spiritual factors in understanding health and illness, is now being applied in the context of Islamic spiritual care. However, a contemporary understanding of the BPSS model also encourages theological reflection on how and where doctrine, tradition, philosophy, and the 'living human document' connect.

In the context of tradition and contemporary approaches to Islamic spiritual care, this presentation proposes an analysis of the BPSS model and its comparison with several other existing practice models. The specific focus will be on where and how doctrine, tradition, and the "living human document" intersect, and on how caregivers must navigate the complexities of faith, culture, and spiritual and psychological distress. This innovative interdisciplinary approach draws from *kalam* (Islamic theology), *aqidah* (creed), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *tasawwuf* (Islamic spiritual tradition/mysticism), alongside theories from psychology, including Islamic psychology, family studies, and social work.

The main question of the presentation will be: How does integrating Islamic practical theology with contemporary psychological and social science frameworks enhance the effectiveness of the BPSS model of Islamic spiritual care in addressing mental health and spiritual distress among Muslim clients? In what ways do traditional Islamic caregiving practices inform Islamic spiritual care interventions in various settings, like hospitals, schools and correctional institutions?



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