

Guest Editor's Introduction

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It is my pleasure to introduce this special issue on *Psychological Well-Being and Character Development in Classical Islamic Psychology*. This special issue came together to capture some of the notable paper presentations that came out of an international symposium held in the summer of 2022 in Istanbul, Turkiye. This symposium on “The intersection of Islamic Studies and Contemporary Psychology” was sponsored and hosted by both ISAR, an Islamic research center and Khalil Center, an Islamic psychology clinic and research center. It was held at ISAR's campus in Uskudar, Istanbul.

The rationale and motivation to have such a symposium was to try to expand the available literature on psychology in the Islamic tradition in the English language. Such literature would be important to help provide greater resources and expand the nascent and new field of Islamic psychology that has become increasingly popular over the last decade as well as to serve as a greater contribution to the broader field of psychology overall. Since Islamic psychology prizes and makes a claim to the richness of Islamic traditions as it pertains to psychology, this symposium was envisioned to try to demonstrate this by excavating some of these classical discussions for potential relevance and utility in modern psychology. Therefore, all submissions required that the author draw upon Muslim scholarly works written in the classical period (i.e. 9th to 19th century) and present its potential relevance to modern questions of human psychology. It was not sufficient simply to provide a descriptive review of a particular historical scholar's works regarding psychology, but rather they needed to demonstrate its relevance, its convergence and divergence with similar discussions within the modern psychological literature. After reviewing all of the top entries, among the central themes that emerged was that of ‘psychological well-being and character development’. This was the theme selected for this special issue. This theme is very timely given the extensive and increasing interest in topics of psychological well-being, resilience, and character within the broader positive psychology movement.

This issue contains five articles, the first of which provides a scoping review of all contemporary Muslim scholars within the last fifty years who similarly attempted to demonstrate the relevance and richness of classical Islamic traditions as it pertains to the topic of human psychology. The authors conducted a review of articles and books written in three languages, namely English, Arabic and Turkish to provide a survey of the existent literature on that reviewed classical scholarly works in psychology. This paper was placed as first in the list, to provide a review of works that have already done what we were attempting to do in this symposium. Furthermore, the goal of the paper was to avoid a re-inventing of the wheel and to provide familiarity for those working within classical works and modern psychology to draw upon, rather than attempting to go into this endeavor afresh. This paper serves as a seminal article that found 132 contemporary works describing classical Islamic works in psychology and it is a must read for all students of Islamic psychology. This paper will likely serve as a reference paper for many years to

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come. While the paper covered 132 works, it raised further questions of what else exists in other Muslim languages that might be worthwhile to explore. The second article was a submission on an Islamic model of psychological well-being by Sena Aycan. It drew upon the classical works of Imam al-Birgivi a 16th century Ottoman scholar and Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, a 9th century polymath. This work demonstrated a review of the existent models of psychological well-being and how much of it are informed by Western social customs, norms, values and worldviews. These models and accompanying scales of well-being do not generalize well to non-European samples and thus, a new model of psychological well-being was proposed relying on Islamic traditions to identify well-being as it is conceived of by Islamic beliefs and Muslim scholars. The strength of the paper is in its clear ability to capture and provide a new model. Its weakness is that it is theoretical for now and needs to be turned into a validated scale for administration and subjugated to factor analysis. However, this is acknowledged by the author and this paper provides the framework for item generation and scale development. The third entry by Rothman, Yücesoy and Yalçın provides a review of some of the early Muslim scholarly conceptions of character development and provides practical approaches to its potential utilization and relevance to modern mental health practice. The fourth entry, written by Keshavarzi, Yanik, Kececi and Cinesli is complementary to third entry in that it not only provides a review of early classifications and typologies of the Islamic virtues that serve as the ingredients for overall character, but focuses specifically on the most widely adopted classical conceptualization of Islamic virtues composed by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's a 14th century Islamic scholar. It takes this classical typology and provides a revision and reclassifies it to include five chief virtues and 31 subvirtues to create a new model of Traditional Islamic Virtues (TIV). This classification's strength is that it relies and depends upon the theory and even ontology of the Islamic tradition of virtues while making revisions to make it adaptable for modern psychological practice and application. The authors propose the creation of an inventory to follow the model. The last entry is an exploration of Muhammad Iqbal's thoughts on psychology who was a 19th -20th century prolific thinker and poet. His work regarding the lower ego (nafs) and its elevation as well as his critiques of modern psychologists are captured in this paper.

It is our hope that this special issue will inspire a greater appreciation of classical Islamic scholarship and traditions and motivate renewed interest in the exploration of such traditions in order to enrich the contemporary field of psychology. We envision that the special issue, as a demonstration of the richness of the Islamic heritage of psychology will lead to a greater inclusion of such literature in academic settings, books and courses taught at higher academic institutions as well as to provide alternative windows by which to view human psychology.