

# Islamic Psychology: Definition, Subject, Scope, Goals, and Foundational Thinkers

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## Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive academic overview of Islamic Spiritual Psychology, a discipline that integrates the spiritual and religious dimensions of the human experience with mental health and well-being. Contrasting the reductionist, materialistic paradigms of secular Western psychology—which often marginalize the metaphysical—Islamic psychology proposes a holistic model of the human being as a three-entity of Ruh, Body and Soul.

The research emphasises that modern existential crises and the search for inner peace require a return to "sacred science" and the spiritual principles of the monotheistic worldview.

The article defines the subject of Islamic psychology as the study of the nature, levels, and diseases of the soul (*Nafs*), grounded in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Intellect (*Aql*). It outlines primary therapeutic goals, including the dominance of rationality over emotions, the purification of the soul (*Tazkiyah*), and the attainment of Divine Love.

A significant portion of the work is dedicated to the historical foundations and the contributions of four "peaks" of Islamic thought:

1. Ibn Sina (Avicenna): Focused on the mind-body connection and the detailed psychology of internal faculties.
2. Imam Muhammad Ghazali: Formulated the "Alchemy of Happiness," providing a framework for behavioural and mystical self-treatment.
3. The works of Attar of Nishapur, particularly the *Ilahi-nama* (The Book of God), *Mantiq al-Tayr* (The Conference of the Birds), and *Tadhkirat al-Awliya* (Memorial of the Saints), have gained significant attention in contemporary research as invaluable resources in the field of Islamic psychology. Due to their profound insight into the human condition, the journey towards perfection, and pedagogical methods, these works have been compared and contrasted with many modern psychological theories.
4. Jalaluddin Rumi: Offered a comprehensive mystical psychology within the Semantic Structure of the *Masnawi*, addressing the fluctuations of the human spirit.
5. Mulla Sadra: Introduced the concept of Substantial Motion (*Al-Harakat al-Jawhariyyah*), viewing the soul as a dynamic, evolving reality moving toward spiritual perfection.
6. The works of Mulla Ahmad Naraqī (*Mi'raj al-Sa'adah*) and Mulla Mahdi Naraqī (*Jami' al-Sa'adat*) are recognised in contemporary research as two foundational sources in Islamic psychology. These two books—one written in Arabic by the father (Mulla Mahdi Naraqī) and the other summarised and compiled in Persian by the son (Mulla Ahmad Naraqī)—present a complete system of Islamic ethics whose foundations are compatible with many concepts in modern psychology.

The article concludes that Islamic psychology offers a robust scientific and spiritual framework for contemporary psychotherapy, bridging the gap between clinical health and metaphysical transcendence to achieve a state of *Taqwa* (God-awareness) and lasting psychological balance. **Soul (*Nafs*)** undergo **Substantial Motion**, guided by **Monotheism**, leading the human toward Divine **Love** and **Peace**.

**Keywords:** Islamic Psychology, Soul, Substantial Motion, Monotheism, Love.

## Introduction

Islamic spiritual psychology examines the critical role of spiritual and religious dimensions in fostering mental health, the meaning of life, resilience, and overall well-being. This field of psychology—transcending traditional approaches that focus primarily on the material dimensions of human existence—pays specialised attention to the existential and transcendent facets of the human being. In contemporary times, with the unprecedented increase in life's complexities, psychological pressures, and existential challenges, the need for more holistic approaches to mental health promotion is felt more acutely than ever.

Modern man, despite significant material and technological advancements, continues to search for meaning, purpose, and inner peace. Current research indicates that purely materialistic approaches in secular psychology, by ignoring the spiritual dimension of humanity, are incapable of responding to the full spectrum of existential needs and deep human yearnings. Love, prayer, and faith have been recognized as powerful sources of peace and spiritual strength that provide essential support along life's journey. The orientation toward Islamic spiritual psychology is not only an academic transformation but also a fundamental response to the existential void many experiences in modern life, providing a pathway to achieve peace and spiritual stability in the face of life's adversity.

In the modern life of the present era, which is full of intellectual, financial, cultural, and social fluctuations, human mental health remains essential. Islamic psychology, based on the teachings of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and intellect, offers a methodology for mental health and the elevation of the soul. Islamic psychology transcends the materialistic models of Western "mental health." The pioneers of this discipline are spiritualist scholars such as Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Muhammad Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Mulla Sadra.

The exclusive tendency of modern science (as claimed) to act as the sole interpreter of the human psyche or mind through modern psychology often results in analyses that ignore the most important aspect of existence: the metaphysical order that prevails throughout the ruling world. The reductionist turn of modern Western psychology from its metaphysical roots has altered the form and content of the original "psychic science." The marginalisation of spirituality and metaphysics in modern Western science is often assumed to be the logical path of progress; however, ironically, the fundamental lack of metaphysics is a convincing reason for the turmoil of contemporary psychology. By returning to its origins in metaphysics, sacred science, and spiritual principles, psychology can once again be worthy of the title "science of the soul."

- **Keywords:** Quranic Psychology, Mental Health, Family Psychology, Social Psychology, Love, Theoretical and Practical Divine Monotheism, Behaviour, Personality, Emotion, Anxiety Disorder, Stress, Attachment, Depression, Personality Disorder, Islamic Psychotherapy, Cognitive Therapy (CBT).

## Definition of Islamic Psychology

Islamic psychology may be defined as a branch of knowledge that studies the human soul (nafs), its faculties, developmental stages, disorders, and means of purification, on the basis of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and rational inquiry.

It examines psychological phenomena such as cognition, emotion, motivation, behaviour, and personality within a monotheistic worldview that recognises God as the ultimate source of existence, meaning, and value. Unlike secular psychological models, Islamic psychology

does not regard spirituality as an optional or peripheral variable but as the central axis of psychological health.

Within this framework, the soul is understood as a real and dynamic dimension of the human being. Psychological disorders are not interpreted solely as neurochemical imbalances or maladaptive cognitive patterns but as manifestations of imbalance across cognitive, emotional, behavioural, moral, and spiritual domains. Anxiety, depression, despair, and compulsive behaviour are frequently linked to disordered attachments, weakened moral agency, and estrangement from one's innate nature (*fiṭrah*).

Islamic psychology is concerned with both prevention and treatment. Preventively, it emphasises self-knowledge, ethical discipline, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), prayer, and conscious moral choice as protective factors against psychological distress. Therapeutically, it offers strategies for addressing common mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, anger, obsession, and grief through cognitive restructuring grounded in Qur'ānic principles, behavioural regulation, spiritual counselling, and communal support. As such, Islamic psychology represents an integrative science of mental health and spiritual development, oriented towards both worldly well-being and ultimate human perfection. (Safavi, 2018b)

## The Subject of Islamic Psychology

The subject matter of Islamic psychology is the human being as a unified yet multidimensional reality.

It studies human behaviour, internal psychological states, and spiritual conditions within the framework of divine unity (*tawḥīd*). Central to this inquiry is the concept of the *nafs*, which encompasses desire, emotion, self-awareness, moral struggle, and personal identity. The soul is not static but capable of growth, refinement, and transformation.

Islamic psychology recognises multiple levels of the soul, most notably the *commanding soul* (*nafs al-ammārah*), the *self-reproaching soul* (*nafs al-lawwāmah*), and the *tranquil soul* (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*). Psychological development is understood as a transformative journey through these stages, guided by intellect, revelation, and spiritual discipline. Mental health is therefore inseparable from moral effort and spiritual orientation.

In addition to individual psychology, Islamic psychology encompasses family psychology, social psychology, and communal well-being. Human beings are inherently relational, and psychological health is closely linked to family harmony, ethical social structures, and collective spiritual values. Furthermore, Islamic psychology extends its scope beyond the temporal boundaries of birth and death, acknowledging pre-existence, moral accountability, and the afterlife as integral dimensions of human meaning. This extended ontological horizon profoundly shapes concepts of responsibility, resilience, and hope.

## The Purpose of Islamic Psychology

The primary goal of Islamic psychology is the attainment of psychological balance and spiritual integrity. This involves harmonising intellect, emotion, desire, and moral conscience under the guidance of divine principles. Psychological health is not defined merely by the absence of symptoms but by the presence of inner tranquillity, ethical clarity, and purposeful living.

A central objective is the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Purification entails the removal of destructive traits such as arrogance, greed, envy, resentment, and excessive attachment to worldly pleasures, while cultivating virtues such as patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), humility, and sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*). Through this process, the soul progresses from domination by impulse toward stability, self-regulation, and spiritual awareness.

Another key goal is the cultivation of love, both human and divine. In Islamic psychology, love is not merely an emotion but a transformative force that orients the soul towards truth, beauty, and transcendence. Love motivates ethical behaviour, strengthens resilience in the face of suffering, and ultimately directs the individual towards closeness to God. The final aim of Islamic psychology is the realisation of *taqwā*, understood as a stable state of God-consciousness that integrates moral responsibility, emotional balance, and spiritual insight. (Safavi, 2006)

## Key Concepts of Islamic Psychology

Several foundational concepts distinguish Islamic psychology from secular psychological frameworks.

**First**, the monotheistic worldview (*tawhīd*) provides the ontological and ethical foundation for all psychological inquiry. Safavi, S. S., & (Safavi, S. S., 2018). Human life is meaningful because it is oriented towards divine purpose.

**Second**, Islamic psychology affirms the dual nature of the human being as body and soul, with psychological health dependent upon their harmonious integration. (Safavi, 2018), (Daftari, 2011)

**Third**, the concept of *fiṭrah* denotes an innate disposition towards truth, goodness, and recognition of God, which serves as a criterion for psychological normality.

**Fourth**, Islamic psychology adopts a perspective of existential continuity, recognising that human life extends beyond earthly existence. This perspective reshapes attitudes towards suffering, responsibility, and death.

**Fifth**, knowledge in Islamic psychology is derived from an integration of reason and revelation. Rational analysis, empirical observation, and revealed guidance function together rather than in competition.

These principles collectively form a coherent framework for understanding mental health, personality development, and human flourishing.

**Major Topics:** Analysis of behaviour, personality, norms, and psychological processes such as motivation, emotion, and stress; concepts of psychosocial development, cognitive stages, and attachment; examination of common disorders and therapeutic methods such as Psychoanalytical and Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) based on Quranic criteria.

## The Difference Between Islamic and Western Psychology

Western psychology has generated valuable empirical methods and therapeutic techniques, particularly in the treatment of acute mental disorders. However, it largely operates within a secular and naturalistic paradigm that prioritises symptom reduction, functional adaptation, and subjective well-being. Ethical and spiritual questions are often treated as secondary or culturally relative.

Islamic psychology, by contrast, situates psychological health within a moral and metaphysical order. Healing is not limited to restoring functionality but involves transformation of character and orientation towards transcendence. Spiritual practices such as

prayer, remembrance, self-accounting (*muḥāsabah*), repentance, and ethical discipline are integral therapeutic tools rather than supplementary interventions. Nevertheless, selective integration is possible. Techniques such as cognitive-behavioural therapy may be employed within an Islamic framework when aligned with Qur'ānic values, demonstrating that Islamic psychology can engage critically and constructively with contemporary clinical practice.

Islamic psychology differs from Western psychology by focusing on the soul (*Ruh*) and the divine purpose. It sees human beings as integrated beings of body, mind, and spirit. It aims at holistic mental health, spiritual cleansing (purification), and closeness to God, using faith-based practices such as *Dhikr* (remembrance) and *Fikr* (thought). While Western psychology often focuses on secular, biological, and environmental factors seeking symptom reduction through methods like standard CBT, Islamic psychology treats spirituality as essential rather than optional.

#### **Key Differences:**

- **Metaphysics and Spiritual Principles:** Islamic Psychology pays deep attention to metaphysics and sacred science, while Western Psychology often lacks these foundations.
- **Look at Human Nature:** Islamic Psychology holds a holistic view, emphasizing the soul, heart, and love as interconnected with the divine nature of man. Western Psychology is often secular, focusing on the brain (neurons/cognition) and behavior.
- **Treatment Objective:** Islamic goals involve the health and elevation of the soul and the realization of *Taqwa* (God-awareness). Western goals involve reducing discomfort and increasing performance or self-actualization.
- **Methods and Tools:** Islamic tools include Thought, Consultation, Meditation, Calculation (*Muhasaba*), Prayer, and Patience. Western tools include talk therapies and medication.
- **Ethics:** Islamic ethics are rooted in divine revelation (virtues like justice and trust). Western ethics often prioritize autonomy and cultural relativism.
- **The Role of Faith:** Central to identity and healing in Islamic psychology; optional or secondary in Western models.

**Integration:** Some modern Muslim therapists combine both approaches, utilising secular techniques (like CBT) while incorporating Islamic values, recognizing the human being as a complete spiritual being for deeper healing.

## Origins and Founders

The roots of this field lie in the emphasis of the Qur'an and hadiths, Islamic Philosophy and Sufism on self-knowledge.

Key historical figures include:

### 1. Ibn Sina (Avicenna): The Pioneer of Psychosomatics

Ibn Sina profoundly shaped the field by defining the soul as an immaterial, eternal essence—the source of knowledge acquisition.

- **Mind-Body Connection:** He explored the link between mental states and physical health, recognizing how belief influences healing (a precursor to psychosomatics).
- **Faculty Psychology:** He distinguished between five external and five internal senses, including the "common sense" and imagination.
- **Holistic Development:** He promoted the idea of the "Perfect Humanan" (*Insan Kamil*) achieved through integrated growth.

## 2. Imam Muhammad Ghazali: The Alchemy of Bliss

His work *Kimiya-yi Sa'adat* (The Alchemy of Happiness) is a masterpiece of behavioural and mystical psychology.

- **The Four Pillars:** He divides the path into self-knowledge, theology, worldliness, and eschatology.
- **Clinical Ethics:** He provides remedies for "diseases of the heart" like anger, hatred, and greed. He advocates for salvation through repentance, patience, gratitude, and *Tawakkul* (trust in God).

## 3. A Summary of Attar's Psychology

The works of Attar of Nishapur, particularly the *Ilahi-nama* (The Book of God), *Mantiq al-Tayr* (The Conference of the Birds), and *Tadhkirat al-Awliya* (Memorial of the Saints), have gained significant attention in contemporary research as invaluable resources in the field of Islamic psychology. Due to their profound insight into the human condition, the journey towards perfection, and pedagogical methods, these works have been compared and contrasted with many modern psychological theories.

Below is an overview of the most significant links between Attar's works and psychology:

### 1. *Mantiq al-Tayr* and the Seven Valleys: A Model for the Evolution of the Soul

Attar's most vital work in this field is *Mantiq al-Tayr*, in which he describes the seven valleys of the spiritual path (*Suluk*):

The Seven Valleys of Mantiq al-Tayr	Equivalent Psychological Concept
<i>Talab</i> (Yearning)	Initial need and motivation for change
<i>Ishq</i> (Love)	Emotional attachment and commitment
<i>Ma'rifat</i> (Gnosis)	Cognition and awareness
<i>Istighna</i> (Detachment)	Independence and self-sufficiency
<i>Tawhid</i> (Unity)	Integration of personality
<i>Hayrat</i> (Bewilderment)	Existential crisis and redefinition of identity
<i>Fana</i> (Annihilation)	Self-actualisation and transcendence

These seven valleys can be compared to the stages of the soul's development and the human journey towards **self-actualisation** in humanistic psychology (such as the theories of Maslow). In *Mantiq al-Tayr*, the birds encounter obstacles and hardships whilst searching for the Simorgh (a symbol of Truth), each representing a layer of the soul and internal human needs.

### 2. *Ilahi-nama*: Pedagogical Methods and Learning Theories

Research indicates that in the *Ilahi-nama*, Attar utilised educational methods that were only formalised in psychological theories centuries later:

- **Parallels with Bandura's Social Learning Theory:** Attar employed "modelling" techniques for the cultivation of disciples. In this method, students refine their behaviours by observing and emulating a master or perfected wayfarers.
- **Convergence with Humanistic Psychology:** Attar's pedagogical approach shares striking similarities with the views of **Rogers** and **Maslow**, emphasising spontaneous growth, self-actualisation, and attention to internal experiences.
- **Alignment with Cognitive Development Theories:** Certain educational principles in Attar's work align with the theories of **Piaget**, **Vygotsky**, and **Bruner** regarding the stages of cognitive development and learning.

### 3. *Tadhkirat al-Awliya*: Psychoanalytic Concepts (Projection)

*Tadhkirat al-Awliya* is a rich source for examining concepts such as **projection**. In this work, Attar describes the spiritual and internal states of the saints, demonstrating how humans sometimes attribute their own internal characteristics to others or to the Divine.

Interdisciplinary research has shown that Attar's understanding of projection (as a psychological defence mechanism) does not differ significantly from the definitions provided by psychologists like Freud. This suggests that Attar was analysing the hidden layers of the human psyche centuries before the formation of psychoanalysis.

### 4. The Search for Meaning (Logotherapy)

Both *Mantiq al-Tayr* and *Ilahi-nama* are narratives of **existential anxiety** or the "anxiety of meaning." This concept, prominent in existential psychology and **Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy**, is artistically articulated in Attar's works.

In the *Ilahi-nama*, each story character possesses a unique concern and seeks something lost within themselves. This quest is the very "anxiety of meaning" that drives human movement. Attar believes that Truth is something to be discovered, rather than constructed.

## Conclusion and Evaluation

From the perspective of contemporary research, Attar of Nishapur can be regarded as a "spontaneous psychologist":

- He mapped the evolution of the soul from its lowest stages (*Nafs al-Ammara*) to its highest peaks (*Fana* and Divine Proximity), which is equivalent to self-actualisation in humanistic psychology.
- His pedagogical methods (modelling, experiential, and rational) were applied centuries before educational psychology emerged as an independent science.
- His analysis of defence mechanisms, such as projection, resonates with modern psychoanalytic perspectives.

Attar's works hold high research and practical value as primary sources of **Islamic psychology**. The *Ilahi-nama* and *Mantiq al-Tayr*, in particular, remain central to scholars due to their focus on the perfection of the soul and transformative educational methods.

## 4. Jalaluddin Rumi: The Storm of the Soul

Rumi's *Masnavi-I Ma'navi* is a comprehensive source of "Mystical Psychology," detailing the fluctuations of the human soul.

- **Semantic Structure:** As discovered by **Dr Seyed Salman Safavi (2006)**, the *Masnavi* has a sophisticated structural unity. Safavi's discovery of the semantic structure of the first book was a "great event" in mystical literature studies, as noted by Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

- **Applications:** Rumi's work is applicable to developmental, personality, social, and health psychology, focusing on the experience of the sacred.

## 5. Mulla Sadra: Substantial Motion of the Soul

Mulla Sadra moved psychology into the realm of metaphysics, bridging the mind-body gap.

- **Substantial Motion (*Al-Harakat al-Jawhariyyah*):** He proposed that the soul is dynamic, undergoing continuous transformation from material origins to spiritual states.
- **Unity of Being:** His model supports inner purification and higher consciousness, contrasting with reductionist views.
- **The Actantial Model of the Soul's Journey in Mulla Sadra's Philosophy**  
According to Dr. Seyed Salman Safavi's approach, applying the **Actantial Model by A.J. Greimas** to Mulla Sadra's concept of "Substantial Motion" (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*) reveals the dramatic and structural narrative of the soul's evolution. In this model, the soul is not a static observer but a dynamic protagonist on a cosmic quest.
- **Analysis of the "Substantial Motion" Structure**
- In this psychological narrative, the **Subject (Soul)** undergoes a continuous "intensification of existence." Unlike Western static models of personality, Sadra's model presents a soul that literally changes its essence over time.
- **The Material Stage:** The soul begins as "bodily in its origin" (*jismaniyat al-huduth*).
- **The Transitional Stage:** Through the help of spiritual practices and rational thought, it overcomes the **Opponent** (pure materiality).
- **The Spiritual Stage:** The soul becomes "spiritual in its survival" (*ruhaniyat al-baqa*), achieving the **Object** of the quest: a state where the mind and the divine realities become unified. (Safavi, 2018a)
- This structural transformation is the foundation for Islamic psychotherapy; it suggests that healing is not just returning to a "norm," but moving forward in a journey of becoming.

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## 6. Summary of Naraqı's Psychology

The works of Mulla Ahmad Naraqı (*Mi'raj al-Sa'adah*) and Mulla Mahdi Naraqı (*Jami' al-Sa'adat*) are recognised in contemporary research as two foundational sources in Islamic psychology. These two books—one written in Arabic by the father (Mulla Mahdi Naraqı) and the other summarised and compiled in Persian by the son (Mulla Ahmad Naraqı)—present a complete system of Islamic ethics whose foundations are compatible with many concepts in modern psychology.

Below is an overview of the most significant psychological aspects of these two works based on academic research:

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### 1. The Theory of the Four Faculties of the Soul (Personality Framework)

The most important psychological concept in Naraqı's works is the theory of the "Four Faculties of the Soul". In *Jami' al-Sa'adat*, Mulla Mahdi Naraqı considers the human soul to possess four primary faculties:

- **Intellective Faculty (*al-'Aqilah*):** The power of discernment and reflection, responsible for guiding the other faculties.
- **Irascible Faculty (*al-Ghadhabiyyah*):** The source of energy, defence, and overcoming obstacles (anger).

- **Appetitive Faculty (*al-Shahwiyyah*):** The source of desires for food, reproduction, and material pleasures (lust).
- **Imaginative/Apprehensive Faculty (*al-Wahmiyyah*):** The power of imagery and imagination, which can serve either the intellect or the appetites.

A comparative study in 2017 demonstrated that these four faculties can be compared with modern psychological concepts. In this research, a model for treating domestic violence was presented based on Naraqī's theory, integrated with the stages of change by Prochaska and Norcross (2007). According to this model, violence is the result of an "excess in the irascible faculty," and balance is restored when the intellectual faculty governs the others.

## 2. Happiness (*Sa'adah*) as the Ultimate Goal of Psychotherapy

In Mulla Mahdi Naraqī's intellectual system, the ultimate goal of the human being is "Happiness" (*Sa'adah*), which he defines as "Justice of the Soul". For Naraqī, justice means each of the four faculties occupying its proper place and remaining under the obedience of the intellect.

This concept is comparable to the definition of "mental health" in positive psychology and Maslow's theory of "self-actualisation". Essentially, from Naraqī's perspective, a healthy person is one who has successfully moderated the faculties of the soul and achieved equilibrium.

## 3. Stages of Self-Purification: A Model for Behavioural Change

*Mi'raj al-Sa'adah* (authored by Mulla Ahmad Naraqī), which is effectively a summary and completion of his father's *Jami' al-Sa'adat*, describes the practical stages of self-purification in simple language for the general public. A 2025 study indicated that the stages of self-purification in this book include:

- **Self-Knowledge:** The first step in treatment.
- **Striving (*Mujahadah*):** A conscious effort to oppose the whims of the soul.
- **Discipline (*Riyadat*):** Regular practice to solidify virtuous behaviours.
- **Self-Vigilance (*Muraqabah*):** Continuous monitoring of thoughts and actions.

These stages bear a striking resemblance to behavioural change models in contemporary psychology, such as the stages of change by Prochaska and Norcross.

## 4. Relationship Between the Two Works and Their Place in Islamic Psychology

To clarify the differences and connections between these two works, consider the following table:

Feature	Jami' al-Sa'adat (Father: Mulla Mahdi)	Mi'raj al-Sa'adah (Son: Mulla Ahmad)
Language	Arabic	Persian

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Jami' al-Sa'adat (Father: Mulla Mahdi)</b>	<b>Mi'raj al-Sa'adah (Son: Mulla Ahmad)</b>
<b>Audience</b>	The Elite (Scholars and Students)	The General Public
<b>Approach</b>	Theoretical, Philosophical, and Rigorous	Practical, Simple, and Applied
<b>Role in Islamic Psychology</b>	Primary source for the Four Faculties theory and philosophical framework	Primary source for practical stages of purification and daily self-building

Some researchers believe that *Mi'raj al-Sa'adah* is not merely a translation and summary of *Jami' al-Sa'adat*, but rather a "completion and revival" of it for the needs of its time.

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## 5. An Example of Clinical Application: Treating Domestic Violence

A contemporary study published in 2017 specifically showed how Naraqı's theory in *Jami' al-Sa'adat* can be utilised to treat violence. In this therapeutic model, the following steps were proposed:

1. **Character Explanation (*Sha'akele*):** Understanding the individual's psychological structure.
2. **Soul Drives Recognition:** Identifying which faculty (anger, lust, or imagination) has become overactive.
3. **Consciousness about Priority of Motives.**
4. **Recognition of Barriers to Change.**
5. **Meditation and Self-Questioning.**
6. **Continuity.**

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## Conclusion

Mulla Mahdi Naraqı (the father) established the theoretical foundations of an "Islamic psychology" based on the four faculties of the soul and the ultimate goal of "Happiness" (soul justice) in *Jami' al-Sa'adat*. Mulla Ahmad Naraqı (the son) transformed this theory into a simple and practical language for all Muslims in *Mi'raj al-Sa'adah*. Contemporary research has shown that these works can be employed as credible sources for developing indigenous models of psychotherapy and personality assessment in Islamic societies.

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## Discussion: Dialogue Between Islamic and Western Psychology

Contemporary developments in psychology increasingly call for dialogue between diverse theoretical frameworks addressing mental health and human well-being. Within this context, a critical dialogue between Islamic psychology and Western psychological traditions is both timely and necessary. Such engagement does not imply theoretical integration or epistemological reduction; rather, it seeks to clarify conceptual

boundaries, identify areas of clinical relevance, and situate Islamic psychology within broader psychological discourse.

### **Shared Clinical Concerns and Conceptual Overlap**

Islamic psychology and Western psychology share several core clinical concerns, including the understanding and treatment of anxiety, depression, stress-related disorders, and existential distress. Both traditions aim to promote psychological stability, resilience, and adaptive functioning. In recent decades, Western psychology has increasingly acknowledged the limitations of narrowly biological or behavioural models, leading to renewed interest in meaning, spirituality, and religious coping as clinically relevant variables (James, 1902; Pargament, 1997).

Empirical research within the psychology of religion has demonstrated that religious belief and practice can play a significant role in coping with illness, loss, and psychological distress (Koenig, 2012). These findings create a point of convergence with Islamic psychology, which has long emphasized the therapeutic role of faith, prayer, and moral orientation in mental well-being.

### **Western Approaches Closest to Islamic Psychology**

Among Western psychological traditions, existential, humanistic, and transpersonal approaches show the greatest conceptual proximity to Islamic psychology. Existential psychology focuses on meaning, responsibility, suffering, and mortality—factors that are increasingly recognized as clinically significant, particularly in cases of depression, trauma, and end-of-life care (Yalom, 1980). Frankl's logotherapy, which identifies the search for meaning as a primary motivational force, has been widely applied in clinical settings and resonates with Islamic conceptions of purpose-oriented life (Frankl, 1959). Humanistic psychology emphasizes personal growth, authenticity, and psychological integration. Later developments in this tradition acknowledge self-transcendence as an important dimension of mental health, extending beyond self-actualization alone (Maslow, 1971). Transpersonal psychology further expands the clinical lens by addressing spiritual experiences and altered states of consciousness, particularly in relation to trauma, addiction, and psychosomatic disorders (Grof, 1985; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993).

Jung's analytical psychology is also relevant in clinical dialogue due to its focus on symbolic meaning, inner conflict, and individuation processes, which parallel aspects of spiritual development discussed in Islamic psychology (Jung, 1959, 1964).

### **Epistemological and Theoretical Differences with Clinical Implications**

Despite these overlaps, significant epistemological differences remain. Islamic psychology is grounded in a theistic worldview in which revelation, intellect, and empirical observation function together as sources of knowledge. The soul is treated as an ontologically real dimension of the person, and psychological distress is often understood as reflecting imbalances across cognitive, emotional, behavioural, ethical, and spiritual domains.

In contrast, mainstream Western clinical psychology largely operates within an empirical and naturalistic framework. Mental disorders are typically conceptualized in terms of cognitive dysfunction, emotional dysregulation, neurobiological processes, or maladaptive behaviour patterns. Even philosophical critiques of materialism within Western thought—such as those addressing consciousness and subjective experience—remain theoretically contested and clinically indirect (Chalmers, 1996; Nagel, 2012).

These differences have practical implications. Islamic psychology conceptualizes mental health as inseparable from moral conduct, spiritual discipline, and purposeful living. Western clinical models, by comparison, often prioritize symptom reduction,

functional improvement, and subjective well-being, without reference to transcendent meaning or ethical teleology (Taylor, 1989).

### **Limitations of Western Spiritual Interventions**

Although spiritual and mindfulness-based interventions are increasingly used in Western clinical settings, they are frequently presented in value-neutral or decontextualized forms. Spiritual practices may be employed as techniques for stress management or emotional regulation, detached from coherent moral or metaphysical frameworks (Koenig, 2012). While such interventions can be clinically beneficial, their effects may remain limited when deeper existential or moral conflicts are present.

From the perspective of Islamic psychology, spirituality is not merely an adjunctive therapeutic tool but a central dimension of psychological functioning. Detaching spiritual practices from belief, ethical responsibility, and communal context risks reducing their long-term effectiveness and depth of impact.

### **Islamic Psychology as a Clinically Relevant Paradigm**

Islamic psychology offers a clinically relevant framework that addresses psychological distress at multiple levels: cognitive, emotional, behavioural, ethical, and spiritual. Rather than focusing exclusively on symptom alleviation, it emphasizes long-term psychological balance through self-regulation, moral development, and spiritual growth. Concepts such as self-accounting (*muhasaba*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), patience (*sabr*), and remembrance (*dhikr*) function as both preventive and therapeutic mechanisms within this framework.

In clinical contexts involving Muslim populations—and increasingly in multicultural settings—Islamic psychology can complement evidence-based Western interventions by providing culturally and spiritually congruent models of healing. More broadly, it contributes to ongoing discussions in clinical psychology concerning the role of meaning, values, and spirituality in sustainable mental health outcomes.

## Conclusion

Islamic psychology represents a comprehensive and coherent paradigm for understanding the human psyche. By integrating spiritual wisdom with rational inquiry, it reclaims psychology as a discipline concerned not only with mental processes but with the soul's journey towards truth, balance, and divine proximity.

In contrast to reductionist models that fragment human experience, Islamic psychology offers an integrated vision of psychological health grounded in meaning, ethics, and transcendence. Within the contemporary context of global psychological distress, moral uncertainty, and spiritual alienation, this tradition provides enduring conceptual and practical resources for healing, resilience, and human flourishing. The present article contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse in *Transcendent Philosophy Journal* by articulating Islamic psychology as an intellectually rigorous, philosophically grounded, and clinically relevant field of inquiry capable of meaningful dialogue with contemporary psychological science.

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