ISLAM'S LEGACY OF MENTAL HEALTH

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SESSION 1

Islamic History of Mental Health

- Early Muslim scholars had a very holistic understanding of mental health.
    - They understood mental health from a scientific and spiritual perspective.
- Muslims also had an understanding that medical, therapeutic, and spiritual remedies all existed and were all recommended remedies for complete healing.
- The scholars wrote and theorized and they also implemented it.
- They created healing institutions, herbal medicines, therapies, etc. to actually help people.
- Hospitals were built by Muslims which had flowing fountains and greenery.
    - They gave people food and clothing and cared for everyone that came into the hospital.
    - Imam Al-Balkhi classified OCD as a disorder and provided treatments for it in the 9th century, yet his research is completely neglected in history.
    - Muslims were doing this at the same time that other countries like Europe were persecuting people who had mental illnesses.

- How did the patients pay for this care?
  - Zakaah funds went towards supporting the institutions.
  - People would give endowments (waqf system) to support the institutions because they understood how important it was in Islam to care for the mentally ill.
  - In fact, when patients would leave the institutions, they were given 3 dinars to help them get back on their feet.
- The hospitals were made in the center of the towns so that whenever you go from one side of town to another, you had to stop by the hospital and visit those who were ill because that is their right in Islam.
- One of the treatments used during the Ottoman empire was using Maqaamat (rhythmic tones used in Quran recitation, nasheeds, ect.), which is what modern psychologists call "music therapy."
- Ibn Sina was a scholar in the 10th century and he wrote a book on medicine that was used until the 18th century.
  - His work withstood centuries of advancements which shows how far advanced Ibn Sina was in his understanding of medicine.
- Today there are two very extreme sides that Muslims take when viewing mental health.
  - We need to be able to understand mental health from a holistic perspective and bring back the Islamic perspective of the early Muslim scholars who understood mental health from both the scientific and spiritual understanding.

Q&A

- Can you share with us the books you read to learn more?
  - "Islamic Integrated Psychotherapy"
  - https://profiles.stanford.edu/Rania_Awaad?tab=publications
  - "Islamophobia and Psychiatry"
- Who are the names of early actually known scholars that has works about mental health?
  - Abu Zaid Al-Balkhi
  - Ibn Sina (The Canon of Medicine)
  - Imam Ar-Raazi
  - Imam Ghazali, Ibn Al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyyah all focus more on purification of the soul – treatments for envy, pride, etc.
- How do we approach the discussion of therapy?
  - Oftentimes, the pushback to therapy comes from a lack of understanding of the connection between mental health and Islam.
  - Prove that mental health and therapy does have to do with Islam by educating your family, community, etc.
  - Use resources to prove that there is a connection.
  - Allah SWT said in the Quran:

$$\text{فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُون (21:7)}$$

"Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know" (21:7)

  - If you are having difficulty and do not know how to handle it, then you have to ask the professionals who do know (i.e. therapists, psychiatrists, etc.)

- Are there associations where you can get certifications in Islamic psychology?
  - Khalil Center
  - International Association of Islamic Psychology
- Do you think we sometimes prioritize social norms over individual wellbeing?
  - We often priorities other people's wellbeing and overlook self care
  - فَاقِدُ الشَّيْءِ لَا يُعْطِيْهِ - A person who does not have something cannot give it.
  - So, if you do not have wellbeing yourself, then how will you give it to others?
  - There is always a balance – take care of yourself and others.