AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO COMMITTED SIN

BY

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ABSTRACT

Sin may seem like a stifling religious relic that has no place in contemporary psychology. However, viewing sin from within the Muslim faith and in tandem with the doctrine of its educational process of sinning can help us understand why sin is such an important concept. This qualitative study explores the educational process of the so-called 'sinner'. To give direction to the study, a conceptual framework was developed. By using a purposive sampling technique, a total of six informants were selected to participate in the study. A total of 41 semi-structured interview questions reflecting the four research questions were formulated as a guide for the face-to-face in-depth interviews to be conducted with the six informants. The interviews were conducted after acquiring informed consent from the interviewees. Two inter-raters were sought to identify the inter-rater reliability of the generated themes and subthemes at a 90.3% level of agreement. This was done in conjunction with member-checks by experts, as well as a pilot study, to ensure the credibility of the data. A thematic analysis was used as an analytic technique to process the data, and interpret the data obtained from all informants. The findings in this study suggest that the motivator for sinful behaviour is due to a lack of knowledge on the nature of sin. The informants conceptualise the nature of sin by its psychological effects, social distress, peer pressure, spiritual distress, guilt, dysfunctional relationships, and addiction. This allows the research to emphasise the importance of understanding the psychology of sin and to postulate a coping method for sinful behaviour. The findings further require the provision of a typology to understand what makes an action sinful, as well as its consequences, using a tool based on the framework of *maqasid al-shariah*.

خلاصة البحث

قد تبدو الخطيئة كأثر ديني خانق لا مكان له في علم النفس المعاصر. ومع ذلك ، فإن النظر إلى الخطيئة من داخل العقيدة الإسلامية جنبًا إلى جنب مع عقيدة العملية التعليمية للخطيئة يمكن أن يساعدنا في فهم سبب أهمية الخطيئة. وتستكشف هذه الدراسة النوعية العملية التعليمية لما يسمى بـ "الخاطئ". لإعطاء التوجيه للدراسة ، وقد تم تطوير الإطار المفاهيمي للدراسة. باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات هادفة ، وتم اختيار مجموعه ستة مخبرين للمشاركة في الدراسة. تمت صياغة مجموعة 41 سؤالاً شبه منظم للمقابلة تعكس الأسئلة البحثية الأربعة كدليل في المقابلة المتعمقة وجهاً لوجه بين المخبرين الستة. وقد أجريت المقابلات بعد الموافقة المستنيرة من المخبرين. وتم البحث عن مقيمين اثنين لتحديد الموثوقية بين المقيمين للموضوعات التي تم إنشاؤها والمواضيع الفرعية عند مستوى 90.3 ٪ من الاتفاق. أيضًا ، تم التحقق من الأعضاء من قبل الخبراء وتم إجراء دراسة تجريبية لضمان مصداقية البيانات. وتم استخدام تحليل المحتوى كأسلوب تحليلي لمعالجة البيانات وتفسير البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها من جميع المخبرين. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن الدافع وراء السلوك الخاطئ يرجع إلى نقص المعرفة بطبيعة الخطيئة. ويتصور المخبرون طبيعة الخطيئة من خلال آثارها النفسية ، والضيق الاجتماعي ، وضغط الأقران ، والضيق الروحي ، والشعور بالذنب ، والعلاقة المختلة ، والإدمان. ويؤكد هذا البحث على أهمية فهم سيكولوجية الخطيئة وافتراض طريقة للتعامل مع السلوك الخاطئ. وتتطلب النتائج كذلك توفير تصنيف لفهم ما الذي يجعل الفعل خاطئًا وعواقبه باستخدام أداة تستند إلى إطار مقاصد الشريعة.

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DECLARATION

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For my Mother and Father

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSU	Beliefs about Substance Use
DCR	Describe, Compare, Relate
DOSM	Department of Statistics Malaysia Perspective
DU	Discourse Unit
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
I	Interviewee/Informant
IPG	Intentional Personal Growth
NADA	National Anti-Drugs Agency
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
P	Participant
PGI	Personal Growth Initiative
R	Researcher
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WPA	World Psychiatric Association

Notational Conventions Used in Transcripts

R	Researcher
P	Participant
DU	Discourse Unit: It is a numerical value assigned to utterances without pauses from either the researcher or the participant. It enables the researcher to make quick and easy references when analysing and interpreting data. It also serves as an audit trail for the data collection of this research.
Um/ Hum	An utterance which usually means "yes", but is interpreted according to the context of the utterance.
-----	A sign to denote pause. Each hyphen represents one second. This indicates a pause of five seconds.
hahaha...	Laughing.
Err	An utterance which normally signals thinking or a verbal pause to search for a word or thought.
Oh	An utterance which is used to acknowledge the understanding of the content in the conversation, meaning 'I see'.
!	Exclamation mark.
( )	For added comments.
***	Ill-formed utterances.
Italicised	Non-English words.
" "	Quotation from the text for meaning.
' '	For meaning quoted from the text.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As the advancement in the field of psychology continues to progress throughout this (21st) century, psychologists and education reformists continue to be in favour of adopting a more natural scientific philosophy and praxis. The word 'psychology' originates from the Greek word meaning soul or psyche. According to Colman (1998), psychology means "the science of mind" or "the science of soul." The field of psychology perorates that it is the scientific study of thoughts and behaviour, and should as such, be the focus of psychologists' empirical attention. It should be noted that early psychology sought to establish the discipline by separating it from religious origins, which thus neglected the essence of human experience and the concept of the soul. This dates to the beginning of psychology, during which laboratories were set up to study human behaviour scientifically by William Wundt in 1879, who overlaid scholars' tendency to embrace a scientific framework to establish psychological accuracy, by which a religious worldview was disregarded and deemed unscientific (Coon, 1992).

In the 20th century, the foundation of psychoanalysis and theory of behaviour were developed to understand and interpret the human experience. Nonetheless, the religious worldview was still omitted and deemed unscientific during this period (Coon, 1992). Among the notable scholars who worked within this line of thought were Sigmund Freud (1927) and Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1967). This scientific phenomenon in present-day psychology has had little to do with the concept of sin.

Based on critical reflection and an overview of the history of psychology, the need to understand psychology with a theological reflection is deemed necessary and vital to establish and is thus the aim of this study. For centuries we have been guided towards a healthy well-being, but have not been guided to moralise it. Living in harmony in this world today is not a subjective matter any longer. The concepts of 'good' and 'bad' to humans are often defined objectively. Anything that aids progress towards our goal of perfection is good and anything that hinders it is evil.

In a study, the findings suggested that the majority of Americans are religious, but that they have little knowledge of the religion they claim to be a part of (Marcus, 2018). Religious literacy and illiteracy or subjects in this research, for the purpose of understanding religious knowledge and personal knowledge; a primary concern in this study, being that literacy and personal knowledge are often associated with religiosity, Prothero, (2007). As such, this study focuses on understanding the topic what degree religious and personal knowledge can influence people's behaviour.

Sin is often used in religious context or sanctification. The theological notion of sin is being usurped by the psychological understanding of it. Unfortunately, this hinders humans from ever understanding the concept of oneself, which could assist one in attributing meaning to their life. Human behaviour is depicted as being moulded by society's experience of reality. This is further laden with the societal values (Taylor, 1996). A communal, religious language that is shaped by experience, is also loaded with values. Language is a community's best attempt at expressing and exchanging views about their personal and shared, collective religious experiences, and their aspirations for them. Collective experiences, on the other hand, are shaped by each individual's experience, and are filtered through each participating individual's psyche.

Understanding the psychology of sin in the light of an individual's faith and perspective only illuminates the understanding, and does not dilute it (Budd, 2016). Sin is an entity. It isn't merely a list of prohibited behaviours stated exclusively in a religion's guiding texts, but rather, are sets of actions and behaviours that can be deemed as morbid. In Islam, it is believed that all humans are born in this world in a state of good and pure *fitrah*, or natural disposition (Hamid, 1998). This suggests that we are not born as sinners, nor is sin hereditary. On the contrary, Boyce (2014: 327) argues that all behaviours and beliefs are a product of "selfish" imperatives.

Wieman (1974: 153/4) states that the "sense of guilt is truly the sense of sin." He further explains that an individual will only realise his/her disloyalty to God when he/she appreciates values in depth. However, it is morbid and may serve no vital function, and merely arises due to social expectancy, or the customs established by one's group as obligatory. Therefore, guilt arises from the realisation of the depth and breadth of ultimate values, that become a necessity for noble and intelligent living.

Hence, human behaviour relates to the life of the individual and the lives of the individuals within a community. This attempt at understanding the psychological faculty of conscience is the inborn capacity to feel guilt (Wieman, 1995). Hillman (1979: 87) wrote the following,

> "Conscience is a psychological function sui generis. Conscience is the voice of self-guidance. The self-regulating, self-steering activity of the psyche gives to conscience its authority. We may alter moral codes or even do away with morality, but we cannot do away with the psychological phenomenon of conscience".

Secular psychology was primarily aimed at waning the sense of sin. In today's world, the task of dismissing the sense of sin has paved the path to liberalism, such as the current statuesque of normalising behaviours such as smoking, homosexuality,

transgenderism, trans-racism, and drug consumption. Transgressions are often construal in the act of sinning. Thus, there is a need for us to alter the course of our lives towards goodness.

The world today does not merely define education as the process of social progress; it is instead carefully intertwined with the sense of individualism, economic development, society, the competitive environment within society, the social structure of society, and the dominant beliefs within society. Therefore, having a deeper sense and knowledge of sin can serve as armour in achieving behaviour that we made expect or desire.

1.1.1 Sin

The present study is geared towards exploring the factors that can contribute to one committing a sin, as well as the psychological impacts of sinning. Studies have shown that one's actions are the product of one's psychological attitudes, that involve a reason-responsive understanding of the way things are, and an understanding on what to believe, fear, long for, have faith for, that have a level of reason behind them (Cartagena, 2017).

We are often deceived by the belief that misdeeds lead to divine retribution, which makes it difficult for the psychologist to assist the 'sinner' in psychologically managing the wrongs they are perceived to have committed. Studies on the consciousness of sin are often conducted at the surface level, as we often connect them to our history and dramas associated with human existence, such as Adam's fall, Darwin's theory, or the Aztec communities in America.

The failure to recognise and acknowledge the nature of sin opens the door to human evil (Peck, 1983). Psychologists have postulated that the primary process for

achieving health and wellness is, through the acknowledgement and confession of sin. For example, Mowrer (1961) voiced the idea that neurosis is simply the renaming of, and description of, the effects of sin. He called for a holistic balance between science and religion to address various mental disturbances. This global phenomenon clearly indicates that there is a growing need in comprehending the urgency for research on 'sin.'

In the Holy Quran, "دنب" originally means "following something constantly," which explains why the tail is called دنب as it constantly follows the animal. In Islam, sin is also called ذنب to justify the negative impact of sinning, that will constantly follow the sinner. "اثم" originally means "deceleration, slowing down and to delay." Sin also refers to اثم because it decelerates our movement on our paths towards achieving perfection or purity. It slows us down and delays our trip towards the All-Mighty Allah. "سيئه" originates from "سوء" which means "evil" and is the opposite of "good." In Arabic, فعيل as a form of the word, is termed "صفت مشبه" which implies a constant meaning. For instance, "رحيم" is someone who is constantly compassionate and merciful in contrast to "راحم" which does not connote the meaning of constant compassion and mercy. Therefore, sin is called "سيئه" because it is a constant evil. This symbolises how dangerous the impact of sin is.

1.1.2 Natural Theology of Sin

The theological notion of sin is being usurped by the psychological understanding of it. Unfortunately, this disrupts one in ever understanding the factors that make life meaningful. Situational forces such as a community's experiences have a vast effect on human behaviour, and through that community's values, a communal, religious language is shaped by experience - which in and of itself is loaded with values.

Language is a community's best attempt to express and exchange views on personal and shared collective religious experiences, and their aspirations for them. Collective experience is shaped by each individual's personal experiences and is filtered through the psychology of each participating individual.

The most important aspect of how we view sin is how we experience God. Psychologically speaking, God is not an entity, but rather an organising principle; the foundation of life that keeps us content. It can be suggested that modern psychology has lost its essence in the study of human behaviour, following its gradual movement to being more of an experimental science. For example, behaviourists portray humans as being totally void of conscious feelings, or any sophisticated mental, intellectual, or spiritual essence.

Islam highlights the connection between the Quran and psychology, and that it cannot be separated from its context (Badri, 1999). This is because Islam is not a religion that merely emphasises on worshipping, but also embodies a comprehensive system of human life. Muslims are encouraged by Allah to use His bounty to live a successful life in this world. The study of human nature is subtle in the sense that the human self contains elements such as desire, envy, and pride; therefore, intellectual reasoning is required by the measures of Islam. The understanding of sin is ubiquitous, but the questions raised - above all else - seek to address the method in which an individual undergoes the process of sin and how to avoid or reduce the amount of sin one commits.

Wieman (1974: 153/4) states that the "sense of guilt is truly the sense of sin." An individual will only realise disloyalty to God when he/she deeply appreciates values. Otherwise, it is "morbid and serves no vital function" when it arises simply from social expectancy or the customs that one's group has established as obligatory.

Therefore, guilt arises from a realisation of the depth and breadth of ultimate values, becoming a form of "clear discernment that is necessary for noble and intelligent living" (Wieman, 1974: 155). This recognition is possible through "the psychological faculty of conscience, the inborn capacity to feel guilt" (Hillman, 1979: 87).

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) once said, "Righteousness is good character, and sin is that which wavers in your heart and which you do not want people to know about." Those who sin must identify the problem, feel guilt, vow not to repeat the mistake, and then seek pardon from Allah. There is no doubt that sinning has a very adverse effect on every human life (Khan, 2015).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study begins with the exploration of immoral behaviours and its implications. This has required the researcher to understand the concept of man's responsibility and human actions related to it. To address this phenomenon, it is important to understand the modelling and simulation of human behaviour. We live in a society that normalizes actions based on societal standards and ideologies, and this has paved the way to the rise of secular liberalism in the 21st century. The freedom afforded to individuals to do as they desire, has resulted in individualism, because only their desires are the arbiters of what is right and what is wrong.

This has also led to the normalization of many behaviours that were not deemed as normal in the past. For instance, during the 19th and 20th centuries in Europe, the rise of liberal intellectuals instilled the idea that homosexuality was natural and that the culprit would not hurt themselves or society, in the minds of individuals (Pickett, 2009). In another study it defined homosexuals as merely being a product of the diminishing of morals in a spoiled society (Dynes & Donaldson, 1992).

Basically, the effects liberal thoughts began to manifest in society, through the imparting of imperfect ideas, upheld by logical and coherent realities. Consequently, this has increased the numbers of groups of individuals such as paedophiles - adults who are intrigued by, or that are sexually attracted to, youngsters (Widiyati, 2015). Paedophiles view children as objects as means of satiating their decrepit cravings (Abd Manaf & Mokhtar, 2016). As a consequence of human behaviour, many societal problems have arisen, such as the increasing number of drug abusers, alcohol abusers, rape crimes and war crimes. For instance, in excess of 264 million individuals of any age experience the ill effects of depression as indicated by a World Health Organization study conducted in 2017, WHO (2017). The recurrence of self-destructive behaviour or suicide, significantly increased amongst individuals occupying youthful age brackets (ages 15-24), somewhere in the range of 1950 to 2000. Insights dependent on enrolled recovery programs in Malaysia from 2008 to 2012 proposed that drug abuse was widespread amongst children aged 13–15 years (National Anti-Drug Agency, 2012). In this regard, the impact of human behavioural practices has created the dilemma we are now being forced to confront.

Furthermore, religious beliefs had always received little attention in the past (Freud, 1961; Freud, 1930; Ellis, 1980). Believing in a religion is a factor that can strongly influence one's behaviours. Available evidence suggests that religious belief systems are strongly correlated with the well-being of an individual (McFadden, 1995). This has resulted in the embedding of spirituality in the study of psychology, or positive psychology, which often borrows from eastern traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism (Snyder et al., 2010). As science recognizes the importance of religion in determining behaviour and the well-being of an individual, it is still given little attention in the modern era.

Studies encompassing mental health have comprehend that there is a significant relationship between religion and well-being. Therefore, psychological variables can be appropriate for demonstrating how religious variables facilitate the understanding of human behaviour. In this study, the researcher aimed to explore the religious variable, “sin” and understand how the concept of sin in one’s life can assist one in understanding human behaviour.

Traditional theologies describe sin as being acts not accordance with the Holy Spirit, which can psychologically be described as disloyalty to one’s experience of God/the Holy, turning against the urgings - as Jung would state it - of the Self, the process of individuation, and the stirrings of the unconscious (Budd, 2016). Every learned behaviour we know and feel, and every statement we make, “derives from psychic images.” (Hillman, 1977). It is through these images that we perceive and experience our world. Making a conscious study of them is how we come to understand and find meaning in the relationships between ourselves and others around us (Hillman, 1977).

So, by having a deeper sense of the concept of sin, we can create an armour to assist us in achieving the behaviour that we expect from ourselves. The study of human nature is subtle, in the sense that, the human self contains elements of things such as desire, envy, and pride, and thus, by intellectual reasoning and by the principles of Islam, the understanding of sin is ubiquitous. Modern psychology’s depiction has lost its essence in the study of human behaviour, due to psychology’s development into being an experimental science.