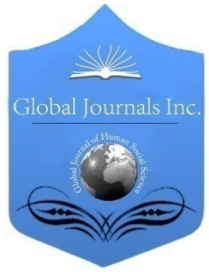
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Religion as a Resilience Tool to Manage Stress in Adolescents: Islamic Approach

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Abstract- Religions, including Islam, send a consistent message to the believers that the ultimate goal is to guarantee happiness and tranquility. The main strategy for that is through offering a spiritual sanctuary from all kinds of adversities. Using the inner strengths and having a pure soul and a strong relationship with the ultimate power, God, are the cornerstone for that approach. Adolescence is a vital phase of our lives, where many challenges are expected and potential consequences have be faced. Islam acknowledges the interior power that exists in young people, which can be exercised to have a calm mind, healthy consciousness, and positive thought. This study proposes using religion, Islam, as a resilience tool to underpin young people to cope with their hardships.

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Religion as a Resilience Tool to Manage Stress in Adolescents: Islamic Approach

Abdulraouf Y. Lamoshi

Abstract- Religions, including Islam, send a consistent message to the believers that the ultimate goal is to guarantee happiness and tranquility. The main strategy for that is through offering a spiritual sanctuary from all kinds of adversities. Using the inner strengths and having a pure soul and a strong relationship with the ultimate power, God, are the cornerstone for that approach. Adolescence is a vital phase of our lives, where many challenges are expected and potential consequences have be faced. Islam acknowledges the interior power that exists in young people, which can be exercised to have a calm mind, healthy consciousness, and positive thought. This study proposes using religion, Islam, as a resilience tool to underpin young people to cope with their hardships.

I. Introduction

Religions, in general, aim to provide to the believers feasible ways to achieve happiness and have a comfortable life. According to Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Nasello, & Koenig, (2007) religion can provide answers to the wisdom behind the difficult situations and past tragedy events, which can alleviate stress symptoms. Also, Kneier, Rosenbaum, & Rosenbaum, (2006) stated that people with spiritual beliefs can benefit from their faiths and prayers in different ways; such as having a strong sense of peace, exercising their inner strengths and capabilities to cope with challenges, and improving their psychological status and quality of life. Furthermore, through prayer and rituals, patients are able to feel connected to God and other believers from which they can derive the consolation and determination they need to handle the physical and psychological illness (Kneier, Rosenbaum, & Rosenbaum, 2006).

Generally speaking, most religions, not just Islam, encourage their followers to look at the world in an optimistic way, forget the past painful moments and enjoy their life. Pastors Osteen & Osteen, (2008) promote Christians to not waste their times in the past, ask God to revive and restore their souls, and enjoy a fresh new beginning right now. Additionally, Ritter, Preston, and Hernandez (2013) noticed that Christians tend to use more optimistic words and are more socially connected on Twitter than atheists. All of these principles are highly encouraged by Banks (1998, p.100), who stated that having an uncontaminated mind from past painful moments and no worries about the future can clean the thoughts and souls to be able to see the beauty of life.

This study will address the value of the religion as a way to solve people's psychological problems, the importance of Islam in this field, the specificity of the adolescence period, and how Islam address the psychological instability in the life of the believers.

II. Adolescents Features

The adolescent period, in particular, has some specific criteria, which make it so critical and sensitive to handle. The main challenges the majority of adolescents are exposed to include independency, responsibility, new intimate relationships, personality establishment, and gaining the required skills for adulthood (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006) (Buss, 2000). Furthermore, young people face many obstacles that make the achievement of happiness and mental wellness a difficult task. For instance, some of these obstacles are obesity, substance abuse, violence, depression, and high expectations about the future spouses and jobs (Buss, 2000). All of these challenges put extra burdens and stressors on adolescents' shoulders and make them more vulnerable for depression and other psycho-somatic problems. However, adolescents own some unique attributes which make them more capable of using their inner strengths and innate health to overcome the potential troubles. Kelly (2004) stated that Health Realization proposes that adolescents have more freedom to think without restrictions, but most of them are instructed to adopt analytical and process thinking to help them solve their current problems by using only what they have learned. Also, it is much easier for adolescents to adopt a healthy relationship between thinking and experience that can help them establish good rapport with their external environments (Kelly, 2004). Moreover, Csikszentmihalyi (1999) mentioned that though young people may face some difficulties to make a balance between the external and internal inputs, their cleared minds can guide them to ignore the negative external impacts and have healthy experiences. Dyke, Glenwick, Cecero, & Kim (2009) found that adolescents who stick to their spiritual practices had positive mentalities and more life satisfaction. A number of scholars are recommending that adopting new approaches that depend on religion and spirituality may open promising and effective ways to solve many psycho-social problems (Kelly, 2004). A number of

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studies showed promising results in terms of offering an efficient way for adolescents to overcome their psychological setbacks and have mental wellness using the spiritual approach (Kelley, 2004).

III. Islamic Strategies

Islam pays a special attention to stress and its effects on one's life. Also, it mentions that youths are an important factor in building healthy societies. Practically, Islam employs the power of the three Principles; Mind, Consciousness, and Thoughts, through encouraging people to empower their inner strengths to have a comfortable life, not wait for external circumstances to change. Islam recognizes spiritual forces as an influential tool that can impact both mental and physical wellness; Muslims usually use and value their belief as a remedy for the psychological problems by changing their insides (Laher and Khan, 2011). The Islamic approach to face life's adversities include different strategies to alleviate the burdens of life, which may push some people, especially youths, to hurt themselves so much so they commit suicide. Sedgeman (2005) stated people who understand the foundation of their thoughts' nature and healthy state of mind can enjoy the privileges of inner wisdom, calmness, and wellness. Therefore, by following the Islamic employment of the Principles, youth would be able to achieve innate health.

The first technique is to improve people's perception of life's events through having a clear consciousness, which in turn leads to positive thoughts that result in positive attitudes. Islam states that whatever happens to a Muslim carries good ultimate outcome, prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (PBUH) says; "How wonderful the statuses of a believer are, for there is a good in every affair of his, and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it" (Bin al-Hajjaj, & Siddiqi, 1981, 1779). This assurance can help adolescents to receive all events with a quiet mind and healthy consciousness. As a result, they would be able to build a constructive experience that can help them fill their thinking with optimistic feelings, regardless of the external incidents. Moreover, the Quran instructs Muslims to not grieve devastatingly over unpleasant events that are because everything that happens has already been predestined before the creation of the universe. Allah says; "No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being - indeed that, for Allah, is easy - In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful "(Saheeh International, 1997, 553). As Banks (1998, pp 131) mentioned, that satisfaction and gratitude can have positive impacts on the souls and minds and can assist people to be contented and wise.

Second, be optimistic, do and say good things to people: "Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good words and establish prayer and give charity" (Sahih International, 1997, 11). This will encourages adolescents to feed themselves with good inputs through the words and actions that would help others, and can in turn lead to healthy feelings, which can evolve a serene state of mind and fruitful thoughts. Also, Muhammad (PBUH) says; "There is no divination but the best type is the good omen. It was said to Allah's Messenger: What is good omen? Thereupon he said: A good word which one of you hears" (Bin al-Hajjaj, & Siddiqi, 1981, 1366). This concept of getting used to saying good and optimistic words is also promoted by Taylor et al.'s (2000) and Banks (1998, p. 111) who discussed the positive impacts of optimism and hopefulness on psychological well-being in general and after traumatic incidents. Therefore, the adolescents could use this principle to help themselves and each other to overcome stressful events in their lives.

Third, do not feel failure. Islam promotes those people who start a journey to have a clear Mind that can connect them with the ultimate power, Allah, that leads to release their inner strengths. Muhammad (PBUH) says; "the strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer, although there is good in both. Strive to attain that, which benefits you, seek help from Allah and do not lose heart. And if anything befalls you, do not say: 'If only I had done this and that, such and such would have happened.' Instead say, 'It is the decree of Allah and He does whatever He wills'; for (the word) 'if' surely opens the door for Satan's work" (Bin al-Hajjaj, & Siddiqi, 1981, 1594). These encouraging words help youths, who usually need to choose certain things over others or work to achieve their dreams, to have a quiet mind, get rid of any potential ill thoughts, and therefore can access their inner wisdom. As a result, youth may not get frustrated, and do not regret any choice they take. All of these assurances can bring peace, comfort, quietness, and release the inner strengths that can help adolescents enjoy, rather endure, their lives. Healthy feelings can develop good ways of thinking by eliminating deceptive thoughts, which can result in productive feelings and a peaceful mind (Sedgeman, 2005).

Fourth, Dr. Muhammad Areefi, one of the most famous scholar in the Muslim world, wrote a book under the title of "Enjoy your Life" in about 600 hundred pages where he used the Quranic versus and the prophets statements that encourage people to live a better life. In this paper, I will summarize some of those conclusions. I think the main foundation of these recommendations is

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the three Principles, where he encourages people to have a quite Mind, positive Consciousness, and healthy Thoughts. For instance, he promotes Muslims to say only the good things and do not criticize, and if someone were obligated to comment on something not good, s/he should use the gentlest terms (Areefi, 2008, p. 199). Also, he calls people to avert from trouble; "Do not torture yourself and do not gather dust upon you", and if there is a speech of hatred or vulgar language do not accompany those people (Areefi, 2008, p. 316). I believe this approach can purify adolescents' insides and clean their feelings by discarding those illusionary negative thoughts, which turns any potential distressing experience into a positive one. Moreover, he instructs to not commit suicide because Allah very merciful, and he is only testing them in this life, so enjoy your days with what you have available, and you will always be happy (Areefi, 2008, p. 325). Allah says in Quran "do not kill yourselves or one another; Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful" (Saheeh International, 1997, 74). Another important advice was that a Muslim should appreciate the valuable things in his/her life before he thinks how disadvantageous s/he is, surely that could make him/her pleased (Areefi, 2008, p.188). These concepts have been mentioned by Sedgeman (2005), where she stated that people who live their daily lives in a quiet state of mind despite their current external circumstances, past adversities, or being worried about the future can have a pleasing life and better health. He also promotes people to respond positively and with a smile to everyone, Muhammad (PBUH) says your smile and good word are a charity. Moreover, do not get preoccupied with what people say and should not burden yourself with what you are not able to do. Forgiveness and emotional balance are crucial attributes that can guarantee both internal and external peace (Areefi, 2008, p. 462). These last mentioned characteristics were also stated by Banks as an important asset for tranquility, he said that "Love and understanding harmonize the mind of humanity to its true inner nature" (Banks, 1998, p. 117).

Fifth, Dr. Ayaid Al-Qarni wrote another book "Do not be Sad" where he collected so many Quranic and prophethood recommendations that aim to make people not get sad or frustrated. The core issue of most of these advices is Health Realization, which arises from a real understanding of human psychological functioning and provides a model for practical applications of this concept. He advocates people to be thankful, forget the past, do not bother yourself with the future, keep busy with a fruitful work, live your life as it is, learn how to stay happy, and avoid anxious thoughts (Al-Qarni, 2005, p. 53). These advices have been mentioned by Kelly (2004) where he stated that the best technique for young people to resolve "specific adaptive problems" is to avoid painful thoughts and gain the wisdom and healthy thinking. Also, Al-Qarni (2005) endorses Muslims to not give up on the mercy of Allah, who can turn any bitter situation into a good one, and not be frightened by difficult events. People should not let disasters shook them, have a permanent hope, have a true faith in God Who will help them be a better person, and pay attention to their inside (Al-Qarni, 2005, p. 178). These recommendations can have positive impact on youths to develop healthy feelings and improve the quality of their thinking through having a serene mind, which can create healthy experience from inside to handle the external circumstances. Al-Qarni (2005, p.236) insists on that Allah Who took care of people in the past, and he will do the same in the future, do not complain too much, and have security of souls and calm mentality. When those inner sources, secured soul and quiet Mind, are determined and released, they can alter the worldview of those young people, then can pursue their lives in a healthy perspective. Furthermore, as advices fit the best to youths Al-Qarni (2005, p. 231), having positive attitude is the cornerstone of living well, do not get angry, and do not hate people, and keep praying and look for refuge with Allah that will give you tranquility and peace. In Quran Allah says "Allah sent down His calmness, tranquility, and peace, upon His Messenger and upon the believers" (Saheeh International, 1997, 173). This approach has been adopted by Sedgeman (2005) who stated that when people recognize and access their own innate power sources can develop a calm mind by using healthy feelings to evolve positive thinking and be able to manage all difficulties. Al-Qarni (2005, p. 297) says "Happiness is a divine gift that does not distinguish between the rich and the poor". These words are very similar in meaning to Banks' statement (1989, p. 47) "Thought is a divine gift, which serves you immediately after you are born".

IV. Implications

Implementing these recommendations and techniques can help a large portion of young people to overcome their daily life obstacles. Furthermore, these strategies can be exercised by the parents and other family members to assist themselves or their adolescents to handle the challenges and difficult situations they may face. Having a peaceful life provides the whole society with the needed building blocks that can strengthen the social fabric and construct a productive community. Future studies should explore the differences between those adolescents who employ religious beliefs to manage their hard times and those who do not. Then, the short and long term outcomes can be compared in terms of psychological, social, and academic impacts.

V. Conclusion

Islam offers a spiritual sanctuary for all people, especially youths, to live a peaceful life by using their

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inner strengths and having a strong relationship with the ultimate power, God, being optimistic, purifying their feelings, and not waiting for outside events to improve. Islam acknowledges the importance of the spiritual status as an interior power that exists in young people and can be exercised to have a calm mind, healthy consciousness, and positive thoughts. This can be underpinned through a continuous contact with Allah and have satisfied spirit regardless of the outside situations.

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