

Understanding The Dilemma of Religious Epistemology in the Islamic Psychology

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Abstract

Objectives: This study explores the challenges faced by Muslim psychologists, especially those with Islamic Studies background engaged in psychological research, as grasped by the authors. It examines the struggle to uphold Islamic principles while adapting to global secular systems.

Methods: A qualitative autoethnographic methodology is employed, utilizing Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) to explore the researcher's personal and professional experiences. Abductive reasoning further contextualizes these reflections within broader scholarly frameworks.

Results: The findings indicate that prolonged exposure to unresolved polarizing demands can lead to moral injury and identity crises, as wounded by very strained emotional strings, bound by enforced constraints that cannot be altered until systemic change occurs. Such unresolved tension exacerbates psychological struggles, leading to emotional fatigue, cognitive dissonance, and spiritual distress from emotion-cognition interdependence in self-regulation between secular ideologies and uncompromising Islamic beliefs.

Conclusion: Thus, we need to advocate Islamic Psychology ongoing discourse on religious identity crisis in professional environments via metacognitive awareness strategies to align with Psychology related professions without compromising faith – plus, extending similar support to the Muslim population they serve.

Keywords: Islamic Worldview, Malik Badri, Islamic Psychology, Islamic Religious Epistemology, and Muslims' Identity Struggles in Secular Systems.

فهم إشكالية الإبيستمولوجيا الدينية في علم النفس الإسلامي

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ملخص

الأهداف: تتناول هذه الدراسة التحديات التي يواجهها علماء النفس المسلمون، وعلى وجه الخصوص ممن لهم باع بالدراسات الإسلامية، عند مشاركتهم في الأبحاث النفسية ذات الطابع الإسلامي. وتهدف الدراسة إلى استكشاف الصراع بين التمسك بالمبادئ الإسلامية والتكيف مع الأنظمة العلمانية.

المنهجية: اعتمدت الدراسة منهجية ذاتية إثنوغرافية، من خلال استخدام التحليل الموضوعي التأملي (RTA) لتحليل التجارب الشخصية والمهنية للباحثين. كما تم توظيف الاستدلال الاستنباطي لوضع هذه التأملات في إطار معرفي أوسع.

النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن التعرض المستمر لمتطلبات متضاربة وغير محسومة قد يؤدي إلى أزمات هوية وأضرار معنوية، حيث تتأثر المشاعر بقيود مفروضة لا يمكن تغييرها بسهولة دون إحداث تحول جذري في النظام. هذا التوتر المستمر يؤدي إلى تفاقم الصراعات النفسية، مما يؤدي إلى الشعور بالإرهاق العاطفي، والتنافر المعرفي، والمعاناة الروحية، نتيجة التفاعل بين مبادئ التنظيم الذاتي في ظل الأيديولوجيات العلمانية وبين المعتقدات الإسلامية الراسخة.

الخلاصة: من الضروري تعزيز وتطوير علم النفس الإسلامي من خلال تعزيز خطاب يركز على إعادة مواءمة الكفاءات الدينية في المجال المهني النفسي، مع التأكيد على دور الإيمان في التغلب على أزمات الهوية الدينية وذلك من خلال توفير استراتيجيات للوعي ما وراء المعرفي، وتقديم دعم موجه للمجتمعات المسلمة التي تواجه هذه التحديات.

الكلمات الدالة: الرؤية الإسلامية، مالك بدري، علم النفس الإسلامي، الإبيستمولوجيا الدينية، صراعات هوية المسلمين في الأنظمة العلمانية.



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Introduction

Ironically, the year 1963 marked a significant moment at the University of Jordan when the late Prof. Malik Badri, often regarded as the Father of Modern Islamic Psychology, delivered his historical inaugural speech that echoed “Muslim Psychologists in the Lizard’s Hole” (Rahmatullah Khan, 2015). It was quoted from the Prophetic Tradition (Ar. *hadith* - Sahih Muslim, Book 47: Book of Knowledge, Chapter 3: Following the Ways of the Jews and Christians, Hadith No. 7). He boldly expressed and shared the unfathomable struggles faced by Muslim psychologists working within Western secular frameworks. Secular is a practice where religion is separated from influencing and interfering other aspects of life especially politics and science. Historically, it was an outcome bursting from past social injustice of the long-bloodied struggle in Europe where tyrant rulers were oppressing people up to massacring huge mass of people (genocide) due to different religious beliefs (Berger, 2014).

As Beth Azar stated, *“That distrust causes much of the world’s strife and violence and is one of the reasons the “new atheists” emerged”* (Azar, 2010) {website}. This actually has nothing to do with Islam directly – maybe indirectly Islam in the Spain had influenced people to question the Church (it was heretic for Christian people then to ask anything – they must accept only, and their laymen were prohibited from learning (Berger, 2014)) because in Islam everyone must learn, and reading is the first worship (Ar. *‘ibādah*) prescribed in the Qur’anic revelation: Read! (Ar. *“Iqra!”*) - unlike the restriction in the ancient Christian community where the priests and the elites only were allowed to study (Berger, 2014). Back to the historic speech, during an interview with Prof. Rahmatullah Khan, Prof. Malik Badri recalled being mocked by the audience, underscoring the challenges of promoting Islamic principles in the professional psychology (Rahmatullah Khan, 2015).

This historical scenario exemplifies the psychological tensions and identity struggles Muslim psychologists continue to face when adapting to global secular academic systems. Secular accreditation frameworks, such as in the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), further complicate this reality by imposing standards that often conflict with Islamic values and humans’ pledged servitude commitments to Allah S.W.T in the time immemorial mentioned in Surah Al-A’raf 7:172 from Mustafa Khattab’s Clear Quran translation, p. 151:

“And ‘remember’ when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and made them testify about themselves. ‘He asked,’ ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They replied, ‘Yes, You are! We testify.’ ‘This was so’ lest you say on the Day of Judgment, ‘We were not aware of this.’” (Q7:172)

This verse emphasizes the concept of human accountability from a spiritual standpoint. It reflects the primordial covenant between Allah and humankind, where every soul testified to Allah's Lordship. This is the foundation of Islamic servitude commitment (Ar. *taḳlīf*), which plays a key role in the discourse on how Muslim psychologists struggle to maintain faith-based coherence within secular systems.

The mental toll of operating in such environments can manifest in cognitive dissonance, moral injury, and identity crises. Prolonged exposure to contradictory demands makes emotional tension intractable, bound by enforced constraints that cannot be changed without systemic reforms. This study draws upon the legacy of Prof. Malik Badri’s ideas that explore the roots of the dilemmas in the religion of Islam against other worldviews surround, not only Muslim psychologists who are constantly struggling to adjust to maintain coherence between their faith and professional practice but also in supporting the Muslim population they serve as well.

This far, the hope is brighter after the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization agreed to include back and accept the significance of spiritual dimension for health. Spirituality is defined as *“a phenomenon that is not material in nature but belongs to the realm of ideas, beliefs, values, and ethics that have arisen in the minds and conscience of human beings* (Spiritual Aspects of Health, 1984, pp.1-2).” It completes the holistic definition of health that gradually allows Muslims to function as instructed in the Divine Guidance: the Qur’an as the holy text or sacred scripture of Islam as the primary source of the religion supported by the Prophetic Tradition (Ar. *Sunnah*) (Baasher, 2001).

Reframing the West in Present Context

While the late Prof. Malik Badri's speech precisely highlighted the historical dominance of secular ideologies in the "Western" geo-socio-politico-ideological location, the situation today is more complex. The West is no longer synonymous with secularism, as many Muslims now live, work, and thrive in Western societies. Renowned Islamic Psychology scholars themselves are among "the West" now such as Prof. Rasjid Skinner, Prof. Hussein Rassool, Prof. Rania Awaad, Prof. Jasser Auda, Dr. Rothman Abdallah, and Dr. Karam York as they are living there. They are actively contributing to Islamic discourse within Western populations as well as influencing the 2 billion global Muslim population. Apart from the displaced Muslims who migrated from Islamic countries, which mostly the Arab countries due to wars, or other economic crises e.g., Sudan, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen etc. – others: Uyghur, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia-Herzegovina, etc.

Furthermore, prominent Western scholars, such as Prof. Harold Koenig (Duke University, USA) and Prof. Simon Dein (University of London, UK), also challenge secular systems through their work on religion and spirituality in healthcare, psychiatry, and psychology. Their efforts demonstrate that the West cannot be reduced to a purely secular framework, as it increasingly accommodates religious discourse and faith-based practices. So, this phenomenon is not unique to the Muslims only, it is a shared struggle among people with religious beliefs like the Abrahamic monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Jewish; or other world-famous religions: Hinduism and Buddhism; or other forms of faith like Viking, hippies or First Nations' Nature Spirit (the Aboriginal American Red Indians), etc. Hence, Muslims should be given equal chance as advocated by the American Psychological Association (APA)'s Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Framework (Akbar and & Parker, 2021). Only, it has always been misunderstood by propaganda of popular media, unlike academically, the misinformation is baseless: fear-mongering agenda.

In fact, since the beginning of Islam, the identity crisis of "epistemology" i.e., "knowledge system" being identified with "Islamic" had been through many challenging phases since its first physical civilizational clash with the neighbouring Persian, and Roman civilizations after the troops of Prophet's Companions defeated both of them soon after he passed away. The civilizational contact exposed early Umayyad Caliphate with Persianized Islam of Shiism and Sufism. Later, Abbasid Caliphate was exposed more to Greco-Romanized Islam of Philosophy and Science. Due to vast expansion of Islam, Muslims were exposed and struggling to process knowledge and advancement brought in from the Greek, Persian, Roman, European, African, Russian, Mongolian, Balkan, Indian, and Chinese civilizations (Zaidan, 1902).

The "tricky" e.g., of filtering, purifying the other worldviews before integrating Islam into the blending processes had been there all along the Islamic history in their "salad mixture" reality (ontology) then. It inevitably bred countless creative mixed ideologies by probabilistic statistical logics. We should not forget in the beginning of Islam as a divine monotheistic religion also had already clashed with the Arabs' pre-Islam paganistic polytheism, which Allah S.W.T. Terms pre-Islamic period as "Ignorant Era" (Ar. *al-Jāhiliyyah* in Q5:50). Even some new Muslims' epistemological challenge against Islam was recorded during the Battle of Uhud in (Q3:154) as prejudice (Ar. *ẓan*) of the Jāhiliyyah era where Allah SwT Put the first principle: "He Determines everything" (Ar. *Inna al-Amra kullahu lillah*) in the Islamic System. In reality, the problematic infusion was dragging along in the history of Islamic civilization one after another. Unsurprisingly, it just grew greater in the absence of the Messenger of Allah/Prophet Muḥammad's (s.a.w.) live guidance among the early Muslims (Zaidan, 1902).

In contrast, Muslims' conforming attitude to the selection of the golden era in the Islamic history after the expansion of Islamic territory (Ar. *futūḥāt*) also reflects 'this crisis was there' because the cursor of assessment had shifted its value from religious and spiritual to more inclined toward material and tangible i.e., It seemed a typical materialistic yardstick, but everyone is free to discern i.e., we cannot blame how the different lenses see through the same thing in life e.g., worldviews. The results of search engines showed almost all association of being 'golden' has to do with assessment on comparative scientific, economic, and cultural curves of graph across the Islamic history. For instance, in "The Golden Era of the Arabs" (Ar. *'Aṣr al-'Arab al-Dhahabī*) by Philippe de Tarrazi (2014) selected the period was during the reigns of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd and his son Caliph al-Ma'mūn. Albeit the Qur'an announced that the best is the generation who lived while the

Prophet Muḥammad was among them: "You have become the best human community ever produced among humankind" (Ar. *kuntum khayra ummatillinnās* in Q3:110). In comparison, the measurement that fits the original Islamic epistemology where the primary religious source of reference is the Qur'an. Allah's requirements for '*khayra ummah*' are: to command people doing good deeds, prohibit them from doing what is proscribed, and truly believe in Allah (Q3:110). These characteristics of model identity for Muslim community who lived while the Prophet Muḥammad s.a.w. was still alive seemed not as much emphasized as in the 'golden era' of human's assessment that soon it deteriorated and experienced fall because it had reached the protective thermostat of *Sunnatullah* (En. the Law of Allah) by transgressing (i.e., crossing the limits He Outlines): Ar. "*labaghau fil ard*" in (Q42:27).

Or else, the era of 'diamond', which is better as more solid than gold – because the pure gold is easily bendable to any shape and form vs. diamond, which is difficult to shape and form. Definitely, diamond era would be crowned to that era when the Prophet was around because they sufficed to champion with its shortest duration and lightning speed of ascending vertical civilizational mobility in the history of humankind within less than 30 years (i.e., 23 years of prophethood). It is not that easy to change anyone even one's own self compared to change other people... Let alone changing the core of plain illiterate polytheistic nomad Bedouin people who live in a very harsh environment like the Arabs. Moreover, to direct them into certain path other than the one they used to submissively and intentionally (because in Islam what counts is at the core of intention in contrast of coercion (Ar. *ikrāh*). Instead, people accept Islam by the antonym (Ar. *mafhūm al-mukhālafah*) for *ikrāh*, which is *iqnaʿ*: i.e., through convincing persuasion).

As in Islam as a "*Dīn*" (Q2:256), which is an equivalent Arabic word to the English word "religion": institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices - what distinguishes is the connotation religion holds being used in different European culture as etymologically it was from Italian word: "*religare*": 're' means again, while 'lig' means to bind/tie [literally it is closer to the meaning of *ʿaqidah* in the Arabic intuitive sense (Aunee, 2021). Meanwhile, *dīn* directly means being submissive or obedient – here, to a sacred force [with unique nuances from] the mixed feelings of being vulnerable, love, desirable, but also a sense of fear toward His Power and losing His desired Love – terminologically from the Qur'an is that Allah Associates *dīn* with His only Acceptable form of religion is Islam (Q3:19 & 85; Q5:3) as a continuity from the Prophet Adam a.s. until the last Messenger of His Tawḥīdic Message (throughout the Qur'an). It keeps reminding of the ancient testament when humankind agreed to accept Allah SwT as their Lord (the recorded dialogue: "Am I not Your Lord? They said: Certainly, yes! We do testify so." (Ar. *Alastu birabbikum?* *Qālu: Balā shahidnā* in Q7:172)). Culturally, the Arabs use it in daily life when curiously asking someone else about what is going on with someone who was behaving quite questionably: (Ar. Jordan: *Shū dīnuh/ dīnha?*).

In the far past, the Arabs were known more as nomad shepherds and were unimaginable to the Persians and Romans then to conquer them one day in the future. What suddenly led them to defeat the Persians and Graeco-Romans who already established matured civilizations aged about two thousand years, if it was not for the miraculous force of the 'divine' intervention? In comparison, many aspects that once belong to this generation were already diluted (i.e., the reverence of revealed knowledge and its primary source over the rational approach and empirical sources), opted out (i.e., *baīʿah* and non-monarch caliphate (Ar. *khilāfah*)), or gone during the 'golden era' (i.e., Madīnah al-Munawwarah as the main city of the Islamic administration). So, are we being assessed by our Islamic worldview standard or according to whose standard?

Positioning Islamic Epistemology 'Problem' in the Bigger Picture

Accordingly, - what had happened to the brake of Islamic civilization that it had stalled mobility for so long since the fall of Andalus (Grosfoguel, 2013; B. Smith, 1999)? The present Islamic awakening force is still sensing it is due to the influence of European/Western colonialism, imperialism, and secularism on the Islamic knowledge system (Al-Faruqi, 1997). It is analogous to the reaction of virus invasion into human's system in the pandemic incident we faced with Covid-19. Perhaps, the Muslim scholars also need to have cooperative efforts of what to do with the next ideological clash like was set in the health field on how to prepare for the next pandemic together (WHO Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Prevention (EPP) Team, 2021). WHO collaborate with faith leaders and organizations then, apart from continuously detecting and

studying the aetiology of the illness. Coincidentally, the pandemic also put us on the 'pause' mode in the Movement Control Order e.g., long lockdown. Much like how whatever was blamed to 'pause' productivity of Islamic scholarship activities from its past exciting endeavours to surviving mode of doubting own tradition and identity (Shah, 2005).

So far, we knew that this crisis of knowledge system [read: epistemicide] did not befall Islam and Muslim community only (Hall & Tandon, 2017; Santos, 2016; Seedat, 2021), as the decolonial trend in the research methodology was being embraced by all who were affected globally. We came across indigenizing methodology under that approach being applied on the First Nations of Canada and America, the Chinese, the Indians, the Buddhists, the Hinduists, and the Māoris of New Zealand, other indigenes of colonized regions (Aiello et al., 2021) too, etc. (Cull et al., 2018).

Even Prof. Malik Badri (Allah Yarhamhu) also applied "filtering" approach, had accepted what is compatible and rejected what is incompatible with Islamic epistemology (Shahin, 2019) on this subject. He always mentioned in his talks that our Christian counterparts were/are also proactively retaliating against secularism (Cox, 1973; Reich, 2000; Reich & Hill, 2008; Reich & Paloutzian, 2002) way ahead than us. Muslims were more in awe with their knowledge and "imitating" their identity, some were following them almost blindly enchanted (Badri, 1976, 2019) like the ḍabb hadith mentioned in his famous speech (Badri, 1963, 1976). For instance, some of his colleagues were so fanatic more than the Westerners and the rest of the world in letting go Sigmund Freud's bizarre psychoanalytic ideas although he explained the incompatible parts that opposes Islam (Badri, 1978) and made fun of him.

Thus, similar direction is already geared with regard to the "health epistemology" parameter of traditional knowledge systems for other affected traditions and nations. Islamic Medicine also strives anew under "Traditional Arab Islamic Medicine" (AlRawi et al., 2017; AlRawi & Fetters, 2012; Azaizah et al., 2010) but still, Chinese and Indian Traditional Complementary Medicines are standing taller where progress is concerned (WHO: World Health Organization, 2019). For example, Asian Buddhist/Taoist herbalism, mindfulness, meditation, and breathing techniques as well as Indian Ayurvedic medicine, Yoga exercise, and Unani Tibb are more advanced that they have a ministry (known as AYUSH in India) in their countries that take care of this traditional approach to prosper (Gureje et al., 2015; WHO: World Health Organization, 2019, 2022). So, where are we heading in the identity crisis of knowledge system in comparison to the development in the health field as WHO reports illustrated both in facing Covid-19 initiatives and the revival of other traditional medicines? Whose fault is to blame as *"the chief cause of the weakening of Muslim minds and as the main factor explaining why Muslims are unceasingly subservient to Western ideas and ideals"* (Aljunied, 2022, p.2)?

Maybe we need some pragmatic insights from abductive analysis within the naturally "consilient" mind that instinctively wonders on comprehending the dilemma of religious epistemology today. Supporting the idea of Aljunied's "consilience" (Aljunied, 2022, pp.2-27), which simply means jump together, terminologically, is linking principles from different disciplines together especially when forming a comprehensive theory as in (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022 - website). Only, to exclude from Edward O. Wilson's theory of re-unifying knowledge (Wilson, 1999) because Islamic worldview based on tawḥīd is already a unifying epistemology as Osman Bakar stated: *"tawḥīdic epistemology or vision of knowledge that affirms the view that all true human knowledge ought to be ultimately related to the unity of God, since all things are ontologically related to their Divine Origin."* (Aljunied, 2022, p.3). Else, it will be like the paradox of Islamisation of Knowledge that was altered into Islamisation of Human Knowledge (Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS), 2013) because revealed knowledge is already Islamic.

Usually, human's cognitive content is wired to the words of the language/s content of communication (i.e., language contact) that reach and shape the people's mind cognitively and their identity metacognitively while monitoring and controlling their way of thinking e.g., in assessing the cognitive content, to accept, reject, adopt, adapt, or bring something novel from an idea although unrelated (Shirley et al., 2019). This basic idea of believing as an important aspect of cognition is mentioned in the Qur'an when Allah S.W.T. Revealed the reality of "some people" (Ar. *min al-nās*) as per His Assessment:

..."Actually they are "NOT" true believers (Ar. *wa mā hum bimū'minīn*)" (Q2:8)

Although they alleged saying that they believe in Allah and the Last Day (Q2:8) – as Allah S.w.T. Revealed to the

Prophet Muḥammad s.a.w. that "Most people will not truly believe – no matter how much keen you are" [to persuade and convince them to believe] (Q2:103). In another Qur'anic verse: "Some of the Nomadic Arabs say, "*Āmannā*" [we believe (in Allah), [but] O'Prophet, tell them to say "We became Muslims (Ar. *aslamnā*) [instead of we are Mu'mins i.e., believers] for faith [belief (Ar. *al-īmān*)] did not enter your hearts yet. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger full-heartedly, He Will not Reduce anything from the rewards of your deeds. Allah is truly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Q49:14). Apparently, it is distinguishing the difference between being Muslim and Mu'min, plus, the relation of belief with deeds [or behaviours].

Should they internalize the Words of Allah and practice what is obliged on them as His Servants towards The Lord, their behaviours would match Allah's Divine Guidance intentionally sincere. This alignment is the key of being true believers because everything starts from beliefs; [be it religious or not]. Then, it will affect the attitude, tendency, intention, intention to behave, behaviours (Fishbein, Martin & Ajzen, 2010) or having crisis of cognitive dissonance when any belief mismatches other belief or those listed after the belief above (Festinger, 1957).

Allah Considers such misalignment as 'a trick/deception' (Ar. *Khidā'* a noun for the verb used (tricking Allah and those who had believed Ar. *Yukhādī'ūn Allah walladhīna āmanū*) in Q2:9)) against the testament (Ar. *'ahd* (Q7:172) when all of us, humans were once pledging Him as Our Lord – and now based on the creedal proclamation (Ar. *Shahādah*)). He even Warns this mismatch will consequently cause disease (Ar. *maraḍ*) that will cause another disease in variety and intensity (Q2:10). Identity crisis is a serious spiritual pain that hits self at the core anyway - imagine like how the people who fight for their self-determination among Moro Muslims in the Philippines (Juan, 2007) are, or Andalusian Morisco Muslims who were forced to be Christians in Spain after the fall of Andalusia... how much they suffered being denied to be Muslims and later expelled in exile – mostly migrated in the North Africa regions (Carr, 2017; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013). Their predicament is worse than our present struggle with the identity crisis to be Muslim academics applying tawḥīdic religious epistemology.

As a matter of fact, any stress begets stress over stresses can lead to epigenetically affect our physiology to dampen within the body with the hormone named "cortisol" mainly. This hormone will compromise the body immune system where experiencing long stressful period is like inviting diseases to infect the weakened body system (APA, 2018). Likewise, it may also involve many other endocrinal hormones as well: catecholamines, vasopressin, gonadotropins, thyroid hormones e.g., T3 and T4, growth hormone, prolactin, insulin, etc. that may impact cognitive impairment under prolong stressful conditioned (Ranabir & Reetu, 2011).

Methodology

Mainly, this study employs a qualitative autoethnographic approach as the governing methodology to explore the lived experience of Muslim psychologists navigating tensions between Islamic principles and global secular academic contexts. Autoethnography, as described by Ellis et al. (2011), allows the researcher to reflect on personal experiences and connect them to broader cultural, social, and academic contexts. It is particularly well-suited for this research, where the author's experience serves as both the subject and the data. It offers an insider's perspective, uncovering nuances that traditional research methods may overlook.

The research further applies Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA - 2021), a method consistently updated by Braun and Clarke since 2006, which emphasizes reflexivity and researcher subjectivity during the data analysis process. Reflexivity ensures that the researcher remains aware of how their own experiences, assumptions, and biases influence the interpretation of the data. This approach aligns with the Islamic worldview, which values deep reflection (Ar. *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*) and accountability in personal and professional conduct (Badri, 2018).

Given the complexity of steering conflicting paradigms, the study also integrates abductive reasoning. This iterative method, rooted in Gadamer's (2004) philosophical hermeneutics, allows the researcher to move between theory and lived experience, generating insights by bridging gaps between seemingly contradictory frameworks. In this context, abduction is instrumental in aligning modern psychological theories with Islamic principles to offer practical solutions. This combined

methodology provides a coherent framework for addressing the identity fragmentation and cognitive dissonance that Muslim psychologists experience. By situating the personal narrative within a broader context, the study seeks to explore: How prolonged exposure to conflicting secular and Islamic frameworks creates psychological tension.

This study builds upon the legacy of Prof. Malik Badri's (1979) foundational legacy: "The dilemma of Muslim Psychologists". Badri's concept of cognitive dissonance within secular environments provides a critical lens to analyze the tension between professional obligations and Islamic faith commitments. The methodology also addresses Koenig's (2012) argument that the exclusion of spirituality from mental health frameworks results in fragmented care, reinforcing the need for integrated, faith-sensitive approaches. Together, these methods offer a holistic way of understanding how Muslim psychologists struggle adjusting to professional obligation while avoiding anything that compromises their integrity of religious commitment. This methodological framework not only reveals the lived realities of these professionals but also contributes to the ongoing demand of Islamic Psychology, particularly, giving priority on solving the problems of the practitioners themselves first, before serving others.

Results

What are the Dilemmas in Common?

The dilemmas in common lie in regulating self cognitively and emotionally for spiritual and social demands between conflict and coherence while struggling to stay Islamic while in contact with the domineering Secular Psychology practice. Therefore, evidentially it is a priority to improve health practitioners' mental health first by solving identity crisis for the sake of their mental hygiene maintenance to serve others better.

Academically

Naturally, there is imposition of the secular standard supremacy over professional academic functioning since it is the nature of globally practiced academic systems. For example, one of the key performance indicators (KPIs) requirement is to publish in journals that are indexed in the World of Science, or Scopus, especially, the higher quartiles of Q1 and Q2 ranks. Among the dilemmas are, editorial bias towards secular standards that reject the validity of data extracted from the Qur'an as invalid data from an ancient manuscript (AbuSulayman, 2013) like when applying Qur'anic Thematic Analysis (Ar. *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*) methodology embedded with Reflexive Thematic Analysis method from social science as an analytical tool. Regretfully, there are limited journals indexed to both standards belong to Muslims' institutions, not as many as to the non-Muslims' institutions but majority of them usually reject religious epistemology approach almost by default. There was an institution replied that such research is of no interest of any of its stakeholder.

More specifically relevant with religious epistemology: Will one replace Islamic Traditional Methodology like Qur'anic Thematic Analysis (QTA Ar. *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*) with Critical Analysis of Thematic Analysis (TA) practiced in the Social Science alone, which is championed by the Psychology since QTA is not yet established in any Research Methodology Textbook or Handbook of Psychology to avoid problem with the Western knowledge system for better chance to get reviewed? Will one wait and thrive to get it published and established in Western prestige publication platforms for journals and books first, which is uncertain in terms of will finally get published and accepted or not – and when? Commonly, it will get rejected due to worldview clash of the religious epistemology, which is 'unscientific' through the lenses of secular worldview - but most of editorial board members of prestigious journals are load of such members. Majority of the editors are not Muslims and suspicious because they confessed have no idea or information about Islam. Even it is hardly to read any Muslim names throughout the list of editors and reviewers. Sadly, a Muslim name is not a guarantee of a practicing Muslim either, thus, may as well reject the religious epistemology due to his/her affiliation to secular approach. It is a standard reply to be informed that there was no available reviewer from their database to review religiously integrated study intended to serve Islamic Psychology discipline.

One of the journals turned the reviewing process interactive where the reviewers were allowed to ask the author about Islam and to detail it in parts of the article up to the very basics like the Six Articles of Faith (Ar. *Īmān*) and the Five Pillars

of Islam (Ar. *Islām*), and the CCTV-like surveillance of Allah awareness in the concept of *Iḥsān* to motivate improvement of performance like in the case of Hawthorne Effects. Actually, the participants' production increased due to the awareness of being observed by the researchers instead of the lighting factor (James, L., & Vo, H. 2010).

Accordingly, the credibility of present-day scholars is often tied to international merits established by the Western knowledge system (epistemology), based on strict quantitative metrics such as KPIs, i-index, h-index, PlumX metrics, etc. provided by them since it is the accredited body worldwide to achieve better rank in the career (Rizvi, 2020). One has no choice but to choose economic gain to fend the family in order to fulfil familial duty under constraint timeframe too rather than fighting for the rights as Muslims, which may risk reprimanded by the authority before could achieve anything, or to avoid involvement to prevent identity crisis at all. Most of the times than not, one has to choose between career or religious commitment even though belong to Islamic Studies field which is still struggling to be decolonised too (Tayob, 2018).

Philosophical dichotomy – cognitively and emotionally

Another paradoxical element too is philosophical stance of choice in doing research like the dilemma to avoid applying positivistic quantitative methodology since it has been established historically on secularistic and atheistic fundamentals as mentioned by Seyyed Hussein Nasr: One needs to know the philosophical nature and historical motive of a methodology to avoid accepting/using anti-religious ones unknowingly (Nasr, 2010). There is a cognitive dissonance that burdens an Islamic belief system compliant heart when the author bumped into a blog about Positivistic Temple but failed to verify that it has nothing to do with the (post/neo)-positivistic approach in research methodology - (Olaf Simons, n.d.). Moreover, there is a stream of Positive Psychology under the big umbrella of Psychology. How an "Islamic" Positive Psychology (Please see: (Ingle, 2020)) relates to both of them? Thus, will one opt for qualitative methodology study to get 'purified' from the historical contamination if the quantitative methodology is more highly regarded as more scientific? Additionally, when usually the quantitative ones are easier to get published as considered more rigorous? Plus, when it has advantage of commonly shorter duration of time to complete rather than the tedious qualitative methodology?

Previously, everything must be certainly objective as white or black, day or night, and nothing is in between, mixed, or not widely accepted as 'normal' like their valence theory of emotion (Izard, 2009) that categorizes emotions into strict negative or positive value. In contrary, the Islamic view that provides both sides of a coin for each emotion into blameworthy (Ar. *madhmūmah*) and praiseworthy (Ar. *maḥmūdah*) mannerism (Ar. *al-Ādāb wal-akhlāq*) according to the way one regulates the emotion as it is inevitably value-laden in Islam (Rahmatullah Khan, 2015). Only, as Sunni of South-east Asia we adopt al-Ghazali's golden means philosophy that referred to the concept of *wasāṭiyyah* – some translated it being in moderation or adjusting self in between two edges of an emotional spectrum or attitude for example, normal sadness is healthy because it is located in the middle of the range between apathy where one is unable to feel sad versus depression when one cannot stop or control from persistently feeling sad (Kukkonen, 2015). He based his idea on the Qur'anic verse "*ummataṭan wasata*" (Q2:143) means middle position/ moderate/balanced community.

This is the consequence of Western tendencies of classifying things into dichotomies (Aljunied, 2022) as well as structures as in structural psychology or unrelated compartments like metacognition is unrelated to cognition (Wells, et. al. 1989 and onwards). The tradition continues - see how things being argued like blind men were studying an elephant at respective areas of the animal they accessed to assess; thus, each was describing the particular part in isolation without connecting the dot to the complete picture in entirety of what an elephant should be/looks like. That is the entire thing altogether, not its ears only, or nose only, or head only, or feet only, or tail only, or back only, or any other specific parts. Similar phenomena of guessing took all the way in psychology, previously, in its parental field: philosophy. Anyhow, they are closely related and inter-influencing each other until today. Furthermore, epistemological and ontological stances are crucially shaping any research.

We can see the timeline aligns history on how it evolves when the trend was on the algorithm of analytical psychology, which was mimicking philosophy shifted into structural psychology to adapt to the natural science atomic/molecular study to move to functional psychology, when it turned machinery days of industrial revolution era and then, behavioural

psychology imitating ethology where the trend was studying animals. Later, we got stuck with cognitive psychology in 1970s with Beck's Cognitive-Behaviour therapy (CBT) until the advent of psycho-neurology seems to bring back the necessity to unify all aspects of human to better understand human psychology holistically as seen in the neuroimaging evidence like Jaak Panksepp's ethological influence, before his affect neuroscience study (Panksepp, 1990). Damásio (2005) – revolted philosophical assumptions accepted since the Greek era with neuroimaging evidence especially on the notion that emotion is separate independently from the rational like the common "Stoic fact" that the nature of guys is rational and women are emotional.

But unfortunately, they found there is no such thing in the brain neural circuits but rather both aspects of human work together overlappingly sometimes, if not communicating each other in regulating [read: managing] many things in our life consciously as well as sub- and unconsciously. Both are important. Impairment of any of them will interfere in how we function as normal human beings. The emotional toll of these tensions, manifesting in moral injury, identity crises, and emotional dysregulation. Is it an extreme example?

Purposely

Of course not, worse; today in 2024 after 61 years of the first Dabb Lizard Speech – nothing much changes. One may still feel embarrassed to commit and admit that he/she works in the sake of Allah S.W.T. aiming at pleasing Allah (Ar. *ibtighā' wajhillah/riḍallah*) – as the ancient Muslim scholars of *khayra* community were. Phenomenologically, with highly statistical probable, most people who did so openly got ridiculed by peers and colleagues alike similar to what the late Prof. Malik Badri was treated after his first talk: "*Muslim Psychologists in the Lizard's Hole*" (Badri, 1976)

That has to do with the influence of science categorization, which is based on the consideration of the more "rational", the more "scientific", it is like the natural sciences are far more superior than those belong to the social and human sciences (Aljunied, 2022). It is like a shame to the family if one has to join social and human sciences, which may be socially interpreted that one's national examination results were lower than those in the natural sciences, thus, less intelligent than them. Reflectively, similar goes to the Islamic or Religious Studies because it is now under humanities and arts. It is no longer considered the highest rank science as it was in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad s.a.w. was still alive and the generation who lived with him regarded based on hadiths assessment. Previously, *ilm* or knowledge was specifically denoting the hadith sciences during the selected first three diamond Muslim generations. - Except for limited institutions that dare to combine both religious and conventional sciences together like al-Azhar University but usually in the end, the students still have to choose to practice in either one of the streams while have to ignore the other. The same fate goes to most IIUM students who took twinning studies of majoring and minoring either from Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage or Human Sciences courses. There is no ready platform available to function as a unified asset of both streams after they completed their study – thus, the efforts taken with the goal to unify sciences ended up futile ones.

Discussion

Is it just to blame "*the West*" and its secularism to what befalls Muslims?

Most of the Eurocentric views usually clashes with the original Islamic worldview. But historically, this had happened to the West/Europe before when they themselves termed that they were being "Islamized" (Bevilacqua, 2018) too. We can grasp some realities of them as described in the first paragraph of the chapter: Epilogue - Islamization of Europe, or Europeanization of Islam? in "*A Brief History of Islam in Europe*" (Berger, 2014, p.239):

"What do thirteen centuries of Islam in Europe tell us? Does the story of this interaction consist of a series of episodes and events that we have conveniently thrown together under the title 'Islam in Europe'? Or is it justified to speak of a single experience or narrative that continues through the centuries? And if so, how can we characterize this experience? We have seen in the previous chapters that the European interaction with physical as well as virtual Islam has been very diverse. Muslims have been enemies and allies, foreigners, and compatriots, Us and Them. Their civilization has been feared as aggressive and expansionist, but also praised for its religious tolerance and its culture that has produced great and

innovative artists, scientists and intellectuals to which Europe is indebted. On the other hand, Europe has consistently upheld the picture of the Muslim Other that embodied everything that the European was not. Still, some patterns do emerge, and here the distinction between physical and virtual Islam is helpful."

Personally, I agree the need to be unique and differentiated from others (here, Muslims) by having an independent identity like the European Westerners expressed. This is innate in humans' nature and that is also the cry of Muslims to have to reject secular worldview and way of life on the basis of religious identity for themselves in living (read: functioning) their life. It is the crave of freedom to practice Islam without being restricted by secular (or any otherism, e.g., communist or atheist alike) ideologies and systems. That does not mean to have incessant physical wars forever with whoever is secular because they are different, no! It is because they were/are being denied freedom to be religious and to choose their ideology as they convinced true too. They are the other side of the coin of our Muslims' story in the early past.

What is the reality over the disguise of secular system?

Similarly, we have the need to distinguish between the past especially Dark Age Europe, its present, physical, or virtual (e.g., written in the books or broadcast in the media), secular, and non-secular Europe as much as they also accept how diverse Muslims are (Knutson & Ellis, 2021) now. In fact, there are secular Muslims too unfortunately; and this is more common than we thought. For instance, some of the mosques in Malaysia did not accept information about health during the pandemic is appropriate to be talked/discussed or just even shared in the WhatsApp group. It is restricted only about dogmatic and ritualistic Islam. This is secularly segregating too. There is this mocking ambience of silent rejection toward the unifying Islam in the air everywhere. The same secular mindset and practical aspects are everywhere in the countries known to have "Islam" as the official religion like Malaysia, and the majority of the countries in the Middle eastern and North African Islamic region like a plague.

Are we against any type of secularism in anyone? In author's experience, it is far more difficult to deal with fanatic secular or Muslims who are unconsciously practicing secularism than the non-Muslims who we are not living together with them like those in different regions, thus, do not interfere directly with us. Evidently, the ones who opposed the late Malik Badri were his fellow Muslims in his efforts Islamising Psychology who were more fanatic than the non-secular Christian counterparts who were also apologetic i.e., defending the truth of their Christianity (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022) as a religion. Even when he was mocked while working in University of Jordan but did not report the same while he was trained outside his country (Sudan) e.g., when he went to meet Hans J. Eysenck at the Institute of Psychiatry in the Maudsley Hospital who was helpful and introduced him to Dr. Victor Meyer who was the best trainer in behaviour therapy in England at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School. Surprisingly, Meyer was happy to train him! He was trained with three other trainees informed from the Netherland and the USA who became his friends also. Instead, they were not reported to do anything against his endeavours like when his was ridiculed by his fellow Muslims previously. Meyer even encouraged him to publish his innovative therapy termed: "*systematic desensitization*" where patients are treated more humanely rather than like a Pavlovian dog in behavioural science. They were asked to gradually imagine the problematic situation from the least provoking to more intensifying degrees and alternately doing the relaxing techniques through baby breathing and muscles stretching in between the degrees until the problem waned (Rahmatullah Khan, 2015).

In the same vein, Lazarus who is famous with his stress theory once wrote that "*scholars are products of their times but their work also changes the way scientific issues are studied after them. This reciprocal influence between the outlook of a period and the research people*" (Lazarus, 1993, p.1). Exactly, changes are constant and expected, some facts are not factual forever like the Freud's psychoanalysis supremacy was challenged by psychobiologist Erik Kandel (1979) who got a Nobel prize for his research in 2000. But why we Muslims have to practice "*social referencing*" where we depend on others' emotional expressions (here, the "West" - is it for acceptance, or waiting a nod, to please them?) to decide about our own behaviour/to clarify a situation – e.g., about Religious Epistemology vs. Secular Epistemology? Initially, this concept is studied between babies and their mothers, so what is it in this relationship between Muslims and the non-religious secularism?

What is the reality of this secular enigma we are facing? Why can the religious Christians still stand taller than the

religious Muslims especially in the health field specifically in the Psychology? They even cooperatively helped us the Muslims by collaborating in developing religious Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Sunni Muslims in Malaysia in coping with chronic pain (Zuraidah Ahmad Subki, et. al, 2018). Their Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health at Duke University Medical Center in USA also collaborates with other world religions like Jewish, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. It is led by Harold G. Koenig, H. G., MD who is also a Distinguished Adjunct Professor at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health of Duke University, 2022).

It is a great example of emotional intelligence in practice, which is a subset of social intelligence when people are able to empathize others, thus, relate positively with each other. This way, many people will satisfy with life more and lower each other's stress by being altruistic, supportive, and helping others in a win-win situation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). They also gain greater substance together; nobody can deny the positive relationship between religion and health nowadays because they brought the evidence-based research to peacefully substantiate what they hold dear in life: religion (Dolcos et al., 2021; Koenig, 2018; Lüddeckens et al., 2022; Pargament, 2013; Pargament & Exline, 2022; Pargament & Raiya, 2007).

So, the attitude is not true for all – we cannot/should not “overgeneralize” it. As a matter of fact, we cannot please everyone in being true or authentic selves expressing Muslims' identity. It was so since the Prophet Muḥammad's time even to other prophets were experiencing rejection and retaliation too - even from his own close relatives! Moreover, there is no ideology that is accepted by all. So, why do we care much about this rejection? Why must this rejection become like handcuffs to us? Make us cannot do anything or halt us being who we are as Muslims? Why they can be as they want to be? Why the Prophet Muḥammad, and his companions endured being Muslims regardless of all the tribulations as we read in his autobiography (Ar. *Sīrah*)?

Thus, it just left us wondering why we have to be affected by the secular epistemology, although from afar physically, or virtually, from the secular fanatics? Physically, we are far from the place where secularism was originated, how the ideas reached us and shaped our collective attitude as a society? Why must we accept it? What will happen if we reject it like they rejected religion? What makes Muslims who were convinced by the idea of secularism firmly defending it? What mediates the acceptance of the secular epistemology among Muslims despite its contradictory nature toward Islam as an anti-religion ideology? There are so many questions unanswered. Plus, there are many other un-Islamic practices too besides secularism from within the Muslim Community itself [as the Qur'an reminds from early days of Islam] and outside it equally. Are we on war with each and every one of them incessantly as much as we are fixated on the secular issue? Is that fair and beneficial?

Apart from the fact that Muslims are 'imitating' [or mirroring] the superior civilization what is it in the enigmatic authority of secular epistemology that we are inevitably influenced by it? It seems irrelevant to us because we are Muslims as much as the Christians (Harris et al., 2009; Hodge, 2003; Jacobs, 2013) or Jews are surviving against secular influence in resiliently practicing their religions (Dein, 2018). Prof. Simon Dein is a Jew and researches on Hasidic Jewish's mental health care via his psychiatry practice. Other world religions are also diverse respectively, as well as Buddhists (Center Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics, 2022; Raison, 2008; Samphel et al., 2021), or Hindus (Holmes et al., 2019), or culturally: like the people of colour like African, Asians, Latinos, e.g., specifically Chinese (Ting et al., 2019) as respective race is successfully rejecting structural racism against them (Madara, 2021; National Institutes of Health, 2021). Even in secular science there are different schools of thoughts, secular people also differ among them, being different ideologically is inevitable as humans. Even the Christians disagree with evolutionary theory that opposes creationism (Village & Baker, 2018) - not just us the Muslims – the non-religious secular are against all religions. We Muslims embrace diversity from the time of the Prophet Muḥammad s.a.w., later, suffice with the survival of the four main jurisprudential schools of (Ar. *Madhāhib al-Fiqh*) alone throughout more than a millennium as undeniable evidence, and it is equally influencing people worldwide until now.

Furthermore, the First Nations (or we knew them as Red Indians or Eskimos) of the USA and Canada as well as the Māori in New Zealand (School of Psychology of the University of Auckland, 2018; L. T. T. R. Smith, 1999) already got respected back nowadays, the governments apologized them for being mistreated in the past especially being forced to get

educated like the colonizers, and they forwarded to the governments to respect their needs for their nations especially the special education that appreciates the nature they transgenerationally inherited since they knew they existed (Cull et al., 2018). They are confident, resilient about being themselves, proud of who they were and are presently.

But why Muslims are doubtful?

Actually, the Qur'an informed us about this unavoidable diversity, and the clear reason for the possible differences to incessantly co-exist. If we are truly believers we need to align as revealed: "We have Revealed to you O'Prophet this Book with The Truth (Ar. *Al-Haqq*), as a confirmation of previous Scriptures and a supreme authority over them. So, judge between you and them by what Allah Has Revealed, and do not follow their desires over The Truth that has come to you. We have Ordained to each of you a code of Law and a way of Life. If Allah had Willed (otherwise), He would have Made all of you one (uniform/homogenous) community, *but His Will is to Test you with what He Has Given each of you*. So, compete with one another in doing good deeds. To Allah all of you will return, then He will Inform you the Ultimate Truth over which you had differed on." (Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:48)

How Western History Contextually Scopes the Rejection of Religion?

So, let us step back a few steps to understand better from the root of history. Why religious epistemology was rejected by the West/European region as claimed in the past actually? Ironically, religious epistemology had existed along the religion more than 100 000 years ago according to scientific discovery across regions and eras of human existence (Azar, 2010). It is inherently within human beings to worship a sacred being more superior than them since time immemorial (Pargament, 2013). It was the common way to live everyone knew until the European region was facing civil wars mainly between the Catholic Christians and the Protestant Christians (and other denominations). The former belongs to the denomination that had the majority of followers in the Europe before. It was considered the only truth and did not tolerate religious diversity. Anything different is heretic to its church thus would be punished severely even with death sentence.

The neighbouring countries also were being controlled by the Vatican Church in Italy. Until Islam unloaded within their region different religious, cultural and historical baggage of Umayyad caliphate II after they conquered Spain/Andalusia. The major time bomb factor that shook the region was the freedom to learn for all in Islam that was envied by the poor European laymen because by the decree of the church only the priests and the elites/royals were entitled to study. Their protest for freedom and equality had long due since most of the population belonged to masters of certain lands who enslaved laymen to work under them especially in the farms for the Lords' family. Basically, they were called 'Sir/Lord' and other higher ranks of social statuses/titles up to the Kings and Queens, plus, the royals. These elites controlled everything in the name of religion – in Malay language is "*tunggang agama*" (i.e., riding on the religion like controlling a horse to take advantage) - (Berger, 2014).

Hence, the laymen had long endured miserable life according to the history of the proletariat (slaves) vs. bourgeois (masters) conflict in the Europe, century after century since Greek civilization (Marx, 1844; Rogers & Konieczny, 2018). They were oppressed and terribly ill-treated as discovered in the archaeological site of Pompeii, Italy. It is a place where the people there were preserved by the volcanic ash that covered them from a volcanic eruption of the nearby Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE about 2000 years ago (Jashemski, 2022). – How many centuries slavery exists in the human history until Islam freed most of them? It was first detected in 6800 B.C. in Mesopotamia, so, about 8800 years of slavery history. (Slavery Today, 2022). Slaves and laymen were not equally respected as fully functioning humans as the elites were. They were traded and sold like commodities and business products in nowadays scenario. Their accommodation always was small-spaced area cramped into it with so many slaves who were scanned by imaging technology to suffer from various health problems like back bones cracked, teeth chipped due to endurance of unbearable weight, cold weather without heaters sleeping on the cement floor, or other harshness of unjustified inhumane life adversity as slaves (Slavery Today, 2022). As a result, no wonder they fought for freedom if their life was that unbearable, right? (By different era analogy to relate, it burst like Arab Spring revolution in our time. In the end, being humans, we have a lot of shared grounds at the resemblance

of 99.9% identical genetic properties (The National Human Genome Research Institute, 2018) where regardless of who are/were we as humans we hate threats and harms (Ar. *al-sū'* as in Q39:61). These two factors will lead us to react and retaliate against the pain and fear factors (Goleman, 1996)).

Besides, the adversity also led to religious struggle (Kenneth I. Pargament & Julie J. Exline, 2020) phenomena where laypeople started to question about the God – like the explanation of suffering through Christian theodicy to understand their suffering (Montgomery, 1979). That was how Protestant Christian denomination came into history (Berger, 2014). Religion was the only hope and the last string of awaited sweet dream to live like the elites in the other world in after death life promised by religion if they obey their masters. But their situation did not improve... The doubt was increasing toward the God as to why did not provide help to them as they were hoping and begging for Him to Bless them like the Elites. The freedom to learn under the Muslim rulers was a heretic action according to the dominating church that had tendency to uniform people under one religion: Catholic Christianity, thus, killing people who were against them although from other Christian denomination like the Protestants who were the second biggest majority of the European people (Knowles et al., 2020).

The 'zero religious tolerance' with other religions also induced social problems among growing diverse Christian denominations and other religions like Islam because more religious exposure from others under the Islamic rulers. This was also the reason other affiliations of Christians cooperated with Muslims especially the Ottoman Turks due to religious tolerance over other religious affiliations as expressed in this famous idiom: "Better Ottoman than Pappies (Berger, 2014). "Pappies" are from "popes": the Christian religious leaders who were stern in treating other religiously affiliated people than Catholic Christians at that time especially during the Inquisition period. They were also intermediaries of the controlling power of the royals and the elites. People were scared under tyrant rulers who transgressed the original (orthodox) religious practice, to avoid living in crushing fear, they just succumb to the Royal Orders.

Similar Extreme Religious Manipulation that Impacts Social Sufferings in the History of Islam

This also happened in Islamic history during the Inquisition of Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun. But it seemed difficult to differentiate between the religion and the ones who were practicing the religion without comparing the acts with the original source of the religion and understanding how things change throughout interpretation process, political interference, psychological impacts of "birds of same feathers flock together" also involved as being mixed Arabian like al-Ma'mun whose mother was Persian, of course, the educational input was different due to cultural influence especially inclination to Shiite version of Islam, and the urge of civil wars conflicts on survival of either parties of power (Contributors of New World Encyclopedia, 2022). Thus, the labelling of Orthodox Sunni as mentioned here is equivalent with the Orthodox Christianity. It reflects the point of reference and worldview bias that are inevitable in understanding something foreign through a lens that one is familiar with within the dialogues. They were once within the psyche, were transferred among those suffered the long endurance over the severe treatment meant to control the lower caste: the slaves and laymen. They forgot that those were also thinking and feeling beings who burst their cognitive-emotional activities into the external world into physical and ideological revolution in the Europe in unison to put an end to the unbearable "holistic" sufferings.

Similar Extreme Religious Manipulation that Impacts Social Sufferings Religiously Worldwide Until Now

In fact, their traumatic tragedy echoes its traces in the remnant of Karl Marx's strong expression over rage on the violation of their humans' rights at that time when he retaliated to Hegel's Philosophy of Right that sided the elites. People were suffering from their unfortunate experience as ordinary people especially the 'slaves' being oppressed by the political ends and the elites who were the masters (Marx, 1844). The advent of Islam in Spain had unlocked the phase of the Dark Age to the light of knowledge and freed their leashed logics that helped their struggle to end their long misery by defeating the tyrant political ends and the elites who manipulated religion for power abuse. But obviously the laymen-slave strata people have no equal power to fight against the injustice of the powerful end. Moreover, they need to sensibly keep themselves and their family safe from the powerful bullies' (read: dictators') harms. Thus, 'toppling' religion for "a domino effect" with secularism would perfectly do the trick to achieve their ambition to be free human beings who did not belong

to anyone and could live peacefully with equal humans' rights according to their context.

Speculatively, it obviously reflects the opposite tactic of the tyrant political ends, and the elites who had exploited the control over institution of mental illness (Horwitz, 1982) onto the sadness from their suffering by establishing it as an integral part of depression, or melancholia before (Jansson, 2021, 2022; Mouchet-Mages & Franck J. Baylé, 2008) - in order to *'SILENCE'* them. Hence, 'the dictators' could keep oppressing "their subjects" for how many millennia... Sadly, it seemed ongoing parallelly with the history development of mastery-slavery, philosophy vs. religion, and protested rulers exploiting ideology to control since Greek civilisation into the Roman Catholic era. The Westerners were extremely phobic with religion due to their Dark Age history (Knowles et al., 2020) that they develop intergenerational PTSD-'allergy/phobia of religion' stored in their genetic memory from generation to the next (Mackin, e.al., 2022).

Consequently, the religious epistemology became unaccepted by the Western secular philosophical epistemology especially after the French Renaissance. Basically, because logics cannot prove that God Does Exist empirically (Clark, 2022). Accordingly, creationism: a belief that the universe is being created by a Creator: God/gods - (Ruse, 2022) and divine revelation are labelled 'superstition' (AbuSulayman, 2013) in the secular supremacy era, especially among 'evidentialists' who need evidence for everything (Clark, 2022) like evidence-based medical practice. In particular, the field of psychology began to reject religion in 1880s (Koenig, 2012) after Jean Charcot, and Sigmund Freud quoted "*religion is like opium to people*" (Azar, 2010).

There is fat chance he got influenced by his German counterpart communist philosopher Karl Marx who analogically used the same phrase in 1844, earlier than Sigmund Freud did. Marx was metaphorically saying that religion functions like opium [i.e., drugs] in numbing the physical pain [as the poor cannot afford the opium like the rich were able] to dope their psychological pain being poor slaves. Sigmund Freud actually quoted the phrase from Karl Marx who criticized "*Hegel's Philosophy of Right*" in "*Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*" in the German-French Annals (De. Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher) in February 1844, translated into English language as: "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. "It is the opium of the people"." Unfortunately, the word suffering was indirectly related with insanity or mental disorder in Latin from the German language from the German word: "verrückt" literally past participle of "verrücken" "to displace" to metaphorically describe the dysfunctional brain like a clock that is out of order (Harper, 2015b).

As the twist of fate went on Freud who migrated from Germany to the USA, so, it is not surprising for him to get influenced by Marx's writing, which is considered part of the German Philosophy that contains their ambition as a nation to achieve something greater than other European ethnic origins without revolution and war as Marx penned it (Marx, 1844). – Plus, not to forget that psychology was founded in Leipzig, Germany by Wilhelm Wundt in 1879 (Freedheim & Weiner, 2003) in understanding "the connected dots in the history" that had taken place i.e., to put the dots together, in order to see the elephant's full image – not the tail or footprints only.

But his hasty 'diagnosis' had led to "*some psychologists characterized religious beliefs as pathological, seeing religion as a malignant social force that encourages irrational thoughts, and ritualistic behaviours*" (Azar, 2010) – website). Consequently, religiosity was associated with neurotic, and psychotic disorders where the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders III (DSM-3) had a category for '*psychopathological religious and spiritual experiences*' (Verghese, 2008). This insertion into the mental illness diagnosis that stigmatizes religion is more similar to the experiences of sadness earlier, both were being associated with mental illness and psychopathology as well as insanity and craziness as a political tool to control over people - only targeted on different strata of people: sadness on the slaves and laymen who were being controlled meanwhile religion on the controlling masters. They turn the other side of the table. The classification of sadness as well as religion as integral parts of mental disorders work like Pavlov's second higher order conditioning (Lee, 2021) to purposely activate social sanction (i.e., taboo: unspoken prohibition) onto the society/people (Horwitz, 1982) to avoid them.

This strategy had worked contextually for the European region at that time. Most of the royal and religious powers had reduced significantly from interfering too much in the people's life especially personal life - until today to some degree -

compared to the extent it had transgressed before. The ones used the phrase, and their people also already saved from the threat their mind detected. But it is presently no longer relevant to everyone, or every religion globally - as it is out of context already. Psychologically, overgeneralizing their experience with the religion of Catholic Christianity being "steered" by the European rulers to maintain their power specifically to all types of religions in the world and to all rulers in the world from all eras may reflect similarity to phobia development in the memory on how the traumas overgeneralize the sensitized emotion in order to protect our survival as human beings.

But some are also unlike properly functioning cognition in warning the threat, dysfunction like those suffer the Post-Traumatic Disorder Syndrome (PTSD) where people were sub-/unconsciously overreacting towards neutral stimuli or an event with similar characteristic experienced under difference condition e.g., sound of punctured tyre overwhelmed the unconscious emotion regulation system reminded a soldier a sound of bomb explosion during his involvement in a war that swiftly controlled his behaviour but it had ended up thrown him into greater danger of drowning in the sea from the bridge instead of toward safety due to incorrect interpretation of situation in the mind (National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), 2022; Torres, 2020). Daniel Goleman termed it "emotional hijack" where the person was unable to act based on conscious rational thinking but was being paralysed to do so because the event had triggered the built-in emergency system/brake of body/self, which in a way, or the other was confused between the reality and the stored memory due to the extremity of the experience (Goleman, 1996, 2015).

Another Possible Social Impacts - Words of Languages Games across the Continents

In real life, both victimized words: "sadness and religion" are still struggling to fully recover from the baseless strikes. The influence is still lingering in our life especially in the mind of the public unless some interventions and awareness programs are made to make them realize about this reality. They are unlikely to gain their ruined dignity back [after being paired with insanity] as innocent words defining normal phenomena, they used to be used in early civilization communication.

What is funny but may really have serious consequences is the relation of the word "*insanity*" across the continents: Middle East Asia and Europe specifically. It is originated from the Italian Latin language usage since 1580s defining a "*state of being insane, seriously impaired state of mental functioning*" out of abstract noun: "*insania*" means "*unsoundness of mind, madness, or frenzy*." (Harper, 2015b). The adjective word "*insanus*" means "*mad, insane, of unsound mind*", which usage was detected in 1550s to describe "*mentally damaged*" or the modern word of psychopathology (Harper, 2015a).

Imagine the Umayyad Arabian Muslims might unescapably use the word "*insān*", which means "human" or "*insāniyyah*" [when read is same as Latin "*insania*"] means "humanity/humankind" in the Arabic language at that time on the European ground? Would that also be such accidental pairing of second higher order conditioning onto the Muslim Arabs as the mind is naturally wired to words? The Arabs were described as "*belligerent*" i.e., combatant, hostile and aggressive in the "*Brief History of Islam in the Europe*" (Berger, 2014). The word "hostile" has relation with "mad" with a tinge of anger as much as aggressive with violence because nowadays also people who could not manage their anger are considered mentally ill with anger management problem.

Nevertheless, I think it is fair to share what the main author observed that in some cultures their challenges in daily life may have permanently triggered the state of agitation due to majority of life experiences are dis-ease in the first place – a place where difficult to live where even basic needs are scarce to fulfil for them to fully be blamed for their easily grumpy nature. One would not be able to understand equally even if one experiences their lives after few years. Year to year the understanding through learning from the environment is also changing that it changes one's perspective in blaming them and their nature like due to weather factor, which is as human beings not much we can do about it because we are unable to control it like how we are vulnerable before the climate change issues. Plus, scarcity of water but the area is always dusty – how frustrating, right? It needs a lot of empathy to understand well others' situations and to justify the underlying factors of what apparently seems to get ascribed as negative values per se – not to judge in vacuum.

The same goes to the interpretation of the wars, worse, civil wars. I was shocked psychically that one day in a

peacebuilding course, someone said: "What seems grossly bloodied and evil to the outsiders in wars may mean differently to the ones involved that they are actually defending their loved ones and beloved countries where they live – where to go if they lost it?" It was a mind-blowing statement that left big impression in her own mind as she never involved directly in a war, it never occurs to her of such comprehension. Then, how can we avoid grudge or war in the first place to peacefully live together (read: co-exist) in this diverse world?

Historical Traces of Relating to Insanity in the Qur'an

Historically, relating something to insanity is not a new trend or strategy in social control of the rulers or the elites of a society against ideologies along human history. The same phenomenon had happened during the Prophet Muḥammad's time when he was striving to introduce Islam to his people when they also labelled him "crazy or insane" (Ar. *majnūn*) as Allah Revealed in the Qur'an (Q15:6; Q37:37; Q44:14; Q52:29; Q68:2&51; Q81:22). It is an old strategy of social control especially in the master-slave relationship like in The Pharaoh's time who also labelled Prophet Moses 'insane' too (Q26:23-27; Q51:38-39). Similar social sanction attempts actually happened to all the prophets (Q51:52-53) as early as Prophet Noah's time (Q54:9) who was the first Messenger (*Rasūl*). It invalidates and negates the targeted person and what he/she was/is doing psycho-sociologically. In this case in the prophethood mission of delivering the message of Allah S.W.T. in the form of Islam as the *dīn* that He is Pleased with.

Fundamentally, after the French Renaissance, the secular supremacy got strong hold over religion everywhere in the globe (Britannica Contributors, 2022; Cox, 1973; Reich, 2000). Since then, religion was considered '*superstitious*' (Whitley, 2008). Science was strictly established on a '*neutral*': value-free scientific approach including Psychology – if not they will consider it *pseudo*-science like popular psychology, which is not based on "scientific evidence" according to their definition and terms. Until now the traces are noticeable, and all is forced to accept this standard (Rahmatullah Khan, 2015), or being labelled "Islamist", which is decoded as a "threat" warning to the West due to the phobia of religion, especially anything they labelled as "orthodox" or "ultra-orthodox" – again, the game of words had been activated (Sedgwick, 2020). It has value in it that we knew it is against the current Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) framework (Akbar & Parker, 2021) that the USA is championing nowadays especially in research write-up guidelines (Richards et al., 2021).

Therefore, among sheer key solutions to our '*dilemmatic*' predicaments, Muslims must unite and play an active role in the Islamized EDI framework legal enforcements and its implementation advocacy as well as to include "Exclusion" into EDI (eEDI) to defend ourselves smartly like is culturally internalized in the Arab region especially Jordan. '*Exclusion*' is termed as appropriate "exclusionary behaviour" accordingly by Tiffany Jana (2020), founder, and CEO of TMI Consulting and co-author of *Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions*. For example, due to diversity; some practices are exclusive to specific context, i.e., justifying contextually is more scientific, credible, and valid as guided by Margaret Roller in (M. Roller, 2021) - for example like being applied in (Knutson & Ellis, 2021). In the case with rejection of religious epistemology, let it deal with which specific religion or region (e.g., Christianity and Europe) involved with the problem with religion only. Another example is for specific religion like *ḥudūd* is exclusively for Muslims only, so, others no need to be scared about the practice being implemented onto them; or culture, language, history, or region due to weather only. Be objective. It is calming to avoid panic attack, which will give in to emotional hack to unconsciously controlling us like what had happened to others. Whoever interferes in others' life (e.g., West interferes East) must understand according to the worldview of the ones they are trying to help/interfere like the intersubjective practice of "member checking" in qualitative study. This ensures one is aware of his/her bias (occidental/oriental biases) and can differentiate between interpretation toward others, and what others really think of the matter or really are in identity and characters. These deliberately scientific steps of verifying first can avoid unnecessary misperceptions that might end up with unnecessary harms like wars out of baseless assumptions as guided on social life guidelines in the *Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt*. So, the bias is justly under scrutiny [bracketed] to avoid injustice (Nur Afifah binti Abas & Mohd Nizam Sahad, 2021) – intersubjective is simply put, mutual understanding.

Adapting "*member checking*", one who is not familiar with the worldview in question must ask the opinion of those

affiliated to [members of] the worldview to get accurate understanding of a concept, idea, or thought that is related to a worldview metacognitively as being practiced in the Religious Education in the UK presently with regards to responding to diverse worldviews (Benoit et al., 2020; Commission on Religious Education, 2018; Shirley et al., 2019). While checking whether "an understanding" is accurate and credible, one must be cautious about the struggle of power dynamic between the two sides involved in the process (Candela, 2019).

Ideally, one must be concerned about the potential emotional harm or burden inflicted on the other side that being understood (M. Roller, 2021; M. R. Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This will make sure everyone's human's rights are protected too. For example, in reductionistically categorising Islamic variants as orthodox or ultraconservative should be noted with caution according to whose worldview bias. It is not to be globalized as true as it is not necessarily perceived so in the perception of Muslims who are being labelled so. This has social impact of microaggression too as if it is for other religion or race when it interferes with others' sensitivities that must be respected as global residents to maintain peace. Microaggression means "*a small act or remark that makes someone feels insulted or treated badly because of their race, sex, (includes religion) etc., even though the insult, etc. may not have been intended, and that can combine with other similar acts or remarks over time to cause emotional harm*" (The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, 2023 - website). It may be expressed in these three ways: microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation (Sue et al., 2007). Alternatively, "microinequities" is used in business field to describe the pattern of being overlooked, under-respected, and devalued because of one's race or gender, etc. (Sue et al., 2007) including due to religious and cultural beliefs or practices.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Muslims need to actively explain about their religious sensitivities that need to be understood and respected through what we perceive as a sign of respect, not from distorted misperception through external worldviews that impress negatively nowadays. For instance, on how we rely on religion in daily life, and it is constantly identifying our identity expression as Muslims, which is different from their experience with their religion (Women in Engineering, 2023). It is not restricted to religious rituals in place like church only in being religious, but we must constantly be Islamic not only in the mosques but everywhere at any time. Thus, we cannot practice secular epistemology, systems, or worldview as it is paradox to be secular Muslims even at definition semantically. It causes us cognitive dissonance because we are unable to make partitions, or segregate ourselves from Islam especially cognitively, emotionally, or metacognitively – it functions as a systemic identity "wholistically".

Actually, Muslims are distinct with regards to science as we never experience awkward problem between science and religion that is not compatible with science in our history. In contrary, our sciences were/are generated from the religion of Islam main source: the Qur'an and Sunnah from day one, more obviously proven from the first revealed word: Read! Any problem, we refer to the divine sources from beginning and synthesize it accordingly. Everyone is respected with the results they got from the learning processes of solving the problem "scientifically" from their chosen methodology and perspective as long as nobody is harmed. No harm is the main principle in the Islamic jurisprudence. That means this understanding is missing in the misperceived allegations. Also, the discrepancies between religion and what the followers are translating it as well as the cultural religious beliefs they hold need to be compared back to the scriptural religious belief (Cinnirella & Loewenthal, 1999) to judge as "religion" before '*the religion*' is again being punished in the history unjustified. Then only these understandings will be valid and do not violate the humans' rights of any party.

Methodologically, as Islam began with qualitative methodology in developing its Islamic Epistemology. However, the qualitative research and other-than-positivistic (i.e., quantitative) approach of research still at the early stage of acceptance in the stream of secular training (Dein, 2018; Pargament et al., 2014) although about 30 years after the WHO enacted the acceptance of religion and spirituality in the health field. The progress is too slow, the challenges are countless (Badri, 2016) but not impossible. Yet, it is still being not fully free from the secular grip, especially from its shallow reductionistic approach (Collicutt, 2022) in integrating religion into life, especially health. *Rabbana Yassir wa lā tu'assir. Āmīn.*

However, social scientists/psychologists did admit that their experiments living without religion is still, in the end,

reaching the same wisdom that religion offers previously (David DeSteno, 2021; DeSteno, 2021) – which it gained through a short cut via Divine Revelation. But the audience of revelation did not appreciate it; instead, being rebellious against it, and above all, were exploiting it from both ends in the society: the rulers and the ones being ruled – *Nastaghfirullah al-Adzīm. Allah Yaḥdīnā*. Also, science is superficial in this regard – it cannot dive deeper into the core of religion like Islam applying the principles of Qur'anic Interpretation, Islamic Jurisprudence, or at the core of creedal beliefs due to discrepancy of Islamic knowledge among the majority of researchers who are not trained for both fields equally. As Beth Azar (Azar, 2010) wrote in the American Psychological Association (APA) platform that it took longer time to *scientifically* discover what human beings need for better life by comparing with what religion used to offer especially as a society *to avoid the oppression and exploitation of religion* like what had happened in the past. However, in the ideal life or thinking, an abstract idea or word like "religion" should not *be punished* as a crime but the ones who purposely exploiting or manipulating the religion abusively to gain power unjustly, e.g., via coercion and violence are *the real "criminals"*.

Consequently, the hope irradiates brighter with the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) revised definition of health where religion and spirituality were included as mentioned earlier. Lately, the significant role of religion for health is escalating. There are colossal studies that provided its positive correlation between religio-spiritual practice with physical and mental health, plus, overall well-being as promoted by the famous evidence-based practice standards (Abdel-Khalek, 2019; Alcorta, 2011; Daher-Nashif et al., 2021; Dein, 2020; Grafman et al., 2020; H. G. Koenig, H. G. (2018). et al., 2012; H. G. Koenig, H. G. (2018)., 2020; H. G. Koenig, H. G. (2018). & Larson, 2001 ; Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006 ; Paloutzian et al., 2021 ; K. I. Pargament et al., 2004 ; Vitorino et al., 2018 ; Zuraida Ahmad Sabki et al., 2019). Thanks to the awareness of human social cognition metacognitively (DeSteno 2021).

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