PSYCHOLOGY FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A GUIDE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ISLAM AND PSYCHOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

Psychology is an academic/applied discipline involving the scientific study of mental processes and behaviour. It is a Western secularised discipline that grew out of the need to understand the individual person so that this knowledge can be applied to assist him in his everyday living, including, but not limited to the treatment of mental health problems. The current theoretical perspectives in psychology include behavioural, psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive, biological and evolutionary. Research in these areas has contributed immensely to our understanding of man, but its emphasis on mind and matter alone is at odds with the Islamic conception of man. Indeed, theories of man in psychology reject a metaphysical order of reality and ignore the transcendental dimension of the human constitution. In addition, these theories are imbued with Western values, though their proponents may argue otherwise.

While Western secular ideas and ideologies intruded into the Muslim world soon after the Qur'ān was revealed, the most destructive effect occurred during the colonial era (from about 1860 to 1970). The moral and intellectual weaknesses of Muslims facilitated the propagation and acceptance of Western ideas and thoughts, especially in education and politics. In education for example, schools and universities were set up based on the Western models, instilled with Western values. While the traditional Islamic schools remained, the curriculum was taught from a purely religious perspective and do