

ISLAMIC COUNSELLING FOR PATIENTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Professor Akbar Husain

Department of Psychology

Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Dr. Fauzia Nazam

Assistant Professor (Contractual)

(Psychology Section)

Women's College, A.M.U., Aligarh.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

“None of you should act without consulting.”

“Nothing is easy but what you make easy.”

“God has not sent down any disease without any medical cure.”

Imam Ali said: “Consult before deciding and think before acting.”

“No one is needless of guidance.”

“One, who does not work to heal one's self, will find that his malady will grow, the treatment will be more of a struggle and he will find no cure.

Imam Hasan said: “Only those who have sought counsel have found their path.”

This year we are exposed to coronavirus or covid-19 which has been declared as a world pandemic. Thousands of people get infected and tested. We are suggesting to patients of covid-19 for seeking Islamic counselling. The role of Islamic counselling has been recognised in the discipline of counselling. Islamic Counselling is integrated with the source of knowledge (i.e. Divine revelation-the Qur'an) and Practice (i.e. Sunnah). The main focus of Islamic counselling is to develop positive mental health through submission to God; integration of material and spiritual life; regards spiritual aspects of human beings; development of Islamic values, God consciousness; promotes the purpose and meaning in life by involving the process of mutual responsibility/accountability and healthy altruism.

The response associated with COVID-19 is in the form of physical and psychological symptoms. Islamic counseling involves religious/spiritual interventions such as reading the Qur'an, forgiveness, repentance, prayer, Islamic meditation and contemplation, for establishing the body-mind-soul/spirit interaction. Spiritual and psychosocial development is the ultimate goal of Islamic counseling (Husain, Nazam, & Khatoon, 2018).

The main components of Islamic teachings which are contained in Islamic counselling are: *aqidah*, *ibadah* and *akhlaq*.

Iman (Faith): Islam is based on very clear beliefs given in the *aqaid* (belief system). All of us know what the *aqaid* of *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamaah* are according to Islam. In this connection, the most important point is maintaining spiritual discipline.

Hazrat Ali has said that *Iman* is based on four pillars. They are: certainty, patience, justice and *jihad* (ceaseless efforts). Patience is to *Iman* what head is to body. Patience is the passport to the seekers of truth (*salikeen*).

We have also been told in the *hadith*:

“... [with] genuine *iman* and by constant examination of what we are doing.”

It is emphasized in the Qur'an and *hadith* that *iman* means that a person must fulfill his promise regardless of the consequence. We have been told: “*fulfill the pledge.*”

Aqidah or *iman* is essential in man's life because it has positive effects on the well-being of the psyche which is the source of all goodness and is the depiction of the noblest or highest component of Islam (al-Ghazali 2000). The basis of *iman* is belief in Allah.

Iman is important in counseling because it provides the positive direction in a counselee's life. It guides counselee to the straight path that will lead to self-satisfaction. It is the foundation upon which counseling or therapy is built. When *iman* is established in the heart of counselee, then counselor give counseling through the words.

The aim of Islamic counsellor is to establish *iman* in the covid-19 patients. *Iman* provides the individual with the strength and ability to perform the essential duties in life and to improve his well-being. I consider *iman* as one of the essential elements of Islamic counseling. Strengthening *iman* of covid-19 patients is of paramount importance. The counselor is required to encourage a patient to develop a positive attitude towards his life and perception about the external environment; his internal environment, and his quest for spiritual perfection and struggle.

The Counselor should realize the importance of faith to the client in counseling sessions because faith lays down the guidelines on which matters are permissible for counselee. Faith needs to be emphasized in counseling because it helps to raise awareness in the client. Faith is the foundation in exploring meaning in life. If faith is strong, searching the solutions of life becomes easier even if one is facing severe problems. Counselor should apprise to the client that a problem is a test from Allah and the solution of every problem is with Allah. Counselors should apply the element of faith in counseling because faith makes a person consider a problem as coming from Allah's sign of love for him. Faith can be strong through worshipping God. Faith and prayer prevents a person from committing vices and educates the soul to realize that every problem has its solution.

Ibadah (Worshipping God): The followers of Islam should spend his entire life in performing prayer. The counselor should explain the relevance of *Ibadah* to the counselee: "To worship God is to know Him, to love Him, to live one's life according to His commandments, to enforce His guidance in every aspect of life, to serve His cause by doing right and shunning evil and to be just to Him, to ourselves, to our fellow human beings and to all other creatures in the universe."

According to al-Ghazali (2000), *Ibadah* in Islam is divided into two, general and specific. General *ibadah* encompasses every action done to achieve God's pleasure such as virtuous conduct, respect for Islam. Specific *ibadah* means certain practices which a slave is responsible to do as training practice to prove his proper compliance such as the five tenets of Islam: declaration of faith, prayers, *zakah* (alms), fasting and *hajj*. It also encompasses the well known religious obligations such as charity, *umrah* and *tilawah al-Quran* (the Qur'an recitation).

In the context of covid-19 patients, the counsellor may focus on specific *ibadah* such as individual prayers, charity tax, fasting, *tilawah al-Quran*, *zikir*, *doa* after seeking medical treatment. The real purpose of prayer is to become conscious of Allah and to examine our actions. True prayer involves a change from within, if this does not take place, we have not really prayed. The positive elements associated with prayer are: “purification of the soul and heart, remembrance of Allah, alms, yearning, eternal consciousness, and recovery.” Counselor may ask the counselee that the prayer should be practised until he observes that prayer brings change in his life and behavior.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says: Islam is a religion of *Naseeha* (sincerity). If the counselee’s carnal soul does not obey the advice of counselor, then they should observe obedience. Then they will say, “O soul! Dost thou now understand that what thou dost is not becoming of God?” Islamic Counseling is a process in which covid-19 patients should learn how to formulate new ways of behaving, feeling, and thinking.

A good Islamic counsellor should also be a *Murabbi*, a nurturer of souls and developer of the behaviour and character of the counselee. A counsellor can develop this quality through meditation and wisdom then his action will give him good results.

All these practicing aspects of Islamic counselling have to be dealt via ethical considerations. Muslim believes that God does not hold any person responsible until He has shown him or her the Right Way. The covid-19 patients must build their *iman* and perform *ibadah* for spiritual growth.

Al-Ghazali uses Islamic counseling techniques such as wisdom, good advice and discussions, mindfulness to Allah, repentance (*taubah*), contemplation (*tafakur*), prayers (*doas*) and formal worship (*solat*). The authors of this article view that strengthening of *taqwa* is also important in the development of faith among counselees.

Strengthening *Taqwa* (Piety): *Taqwa* is a symbol of virtuous character of humankind in Islam. It denotes “*Waqa*” as a human instinct to guard against harmful. It is cardinal virtue of faith, fear

of almighty and the love for Almighty, and God consciousness. *Taqwa* is a higher state which brings spiritual closeness to God.

The verse mentioned in the Holy Qur'an has clearly depicted Piety in the following words:

Which then is best? He that layeth his foundation on piety to Allah and His good pleasure? Or he that layeth his foundation on an undermined sand-cliff ready to crumble to pieces? And it doth crumble to pieces with him, into fire of hell. And Allah guideth not People that do wrong. (9:190, 110)

Faith in God is feeling the presence of Allah everywhere; experience Allah's manifestation within one's soul, and to make every choice in life for the sake of Allah's, and able to deeply connect with Allah.

O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and his Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and Last day: that is best and most suitable for final determination. (4:59)

Love for Allah refers to the belief that love for Allah is the core of human existence, worshiping Allah because of boundless love and to attain eternal life, believing that true love to Allah makes fearless and emancipate one from all unimportant doubts.

Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men- for Allah loves those who do good. (109:4-6)

Fear of God is God-consciousness and feels the fear of Allah while doing *Haram* or any sinful act.

It is only the Evil One that suggests to you the fear of his votaries: be ye not afraid of them, but fear me, if ye have faith. (3:175)

O ye who believe! If ye fear Allah He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong), remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you, and forgive you: Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded. (8:29)

Be just what us next to piety and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that you do.

(Al-Maidah, 5:8)

So fear Allah, for what it is Allah that teaches you. And Allah is well acquainted with all things.

(Al-Baqarah, 2:282)

And for those who fear Allah, he (ever) prepares a way out and he provides for him from (sources), he never could expected...And those who fear Allah, he will make things easy for them.

(Al-Talaq 65:2-4)

If the people of the town had but believed and fear Allah, we should indeed have opened out to turn (all kind of) blessings from heaven and earth, but they rejected (the truth) and we brought them to book for their misdeed.

(Al-Araf 7:96)

Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men- for Allah loves those who do good...

(104:4-6)

O mankind! Do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father. Verily, the promise of Allah is true: let not then this present life deceive you, nor the chief deceiver deceive you about Allah. (39:53)

Counsellor should possess the traits associated with *taqwa* (piety). *Taqwa* may be helpful in facilitating the processes of counselling. Muslim counselor should make an effort to strengthen the concept of *taqwa* among Muslim COVID-19 patients during the process of counseling. *Taqwa* develops attachment to God. Moreover, strengthening *taqwa* may be helpful in developing spiritual strength and coping with stress and anxiety among covid-19 patients.

Conclusion and Advice: The counselor may give advice to Muslim counselee or patients to read the verses of the Holy Qur'an such as Surah al-Rahman, Surah Yusuf, Surah Al-Qiyamah, Surah Al-Fatiha, Surah Al-Fajr, Surah Yaseen, Surah al-Baqara, Sura Al-Hashr, Surah Al-Isra, Surah Al-Mulk, Surah Al-Ikhlās, Surah Al-Falaq, Surah Al-Nas Surah Al-Quraish and imbibe these in their heart and mind.

The counsellors may also advice to the counselee for practising Islamic contemplation and *Tasbih* meditation.

Health: “The best gift from Allah is good health. Everyone should try to attain it by preserving it for now and the future.”

Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

In Sunnan, Aboo Dawood and Musnad Imaam Ahmad say:

O Allah, grant my bodily health.

O Allah, grant my hearing health.

O Allah, grant my sight health.

No one has the right to be worshipped, except you. **(Three times)**

References

Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad (2000). *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. Kaherah: Dar al-Taqwa li al-Turath

Husain, A., Nazam, F., & Khatoon, Z. (2018). *Manual Islamic Counselling*. New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House.