

## **Islamic Approach to Personality Assessment**

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### **Introduction**

One of the reasons for the complexity of personality is that personality psychologists seek to answer basic questions about human nature. For example, what it means to be a human? Do we consciously direct the cause of our actions or do other forces govern us? Are we the masters of our fates or victims of past experience? Are we influenced by heredity or by our environment? Is personality fixed by early life or affected by experience in adulthood? etc.

McCrae and Costa (1996) argued that the given answers to these questions shape economic systems, legal and religious codes of conduct, and methods of childbearing and education. However, due to various answers to these questions, theories and approaches were proposed to assess personality and each approach seems to identify and examine only one important aspect of human personality and the door is still open for someone to add new information and refine the current one. Based on this argument, an alternative approach that reflects Islamic approach to personality assessment is required.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Due to the backwardness of many Muslim countries, several questions have been raised regarding the credibility of Muslims in facing the challenges in the new millennium. Haidar (1990) argued that it would be impossible to understand the current scientific, economic, educational, cultural, and social backwardness of many Muslim countries without taking in account factors that causes alienation of Islamic values and principles. Therefore, it is

necessary to investigate the components of Muslim personality and compare them with universal scientific laws so that one can conclude whether Muslims today are unable to face the challenge or not.

Although there are many western personality scales, they are unable to assess personality from Islamic perspective because of the differences in the philosophical background and there is no a personality scale that is based on Islam. Therefore, the objective of the study is to develop a scale that attempts to assess Muslim personality.

### **Justification of the Study**

The following are some reasons behind the study.

- 1) The inadequacy of the western approaches and scales in testing and assessing Muslim personalities .
- 2) The political, economic, educational, social, scientific and cultural backwardness and disintegration that Muslim societies face today, despite the availability of resources, have generated a strong need to reevaluate Muslim personality based on Islamic heritages.
- 3) The lack of adequate scale that assesses Muslim personality based on the principles of Islamic teaching.
- 4) The necessity to evaluate scientifically Muslim personality from the two major sources of Islam.

### **Theories of Personality**

Western theories of personality can be summed up into psychoanalysis, trait, behaviorism and social learning, and cognitive approach.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) the first personality theorist believed that unconscious mind is the most important factor in personality. For him, personality develops into three levels Id, Ego, and Superego and the interaction between these levels creates conflicts and tensions and ego has to use defense mechanisms in

order to channel the tensions (Burger, 1989). One important defense mechanism that reflects two projective tests: Rorschach Inkblot and Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is projection. Freud's view of human nature is full of conflicts, tensions, and anxieties (Schultz and Schultz 2001).

### **Neo-Freudian Psychoanalysts**

Freud's emphasis on sexuality was not completely endorsed even by members of his own psychoanalytic school. Carl Jung (18-1961) and Alfred Adler (1870-1937) rejected the notion of the primary importance of unconscious sexual urges.

Personality, according to Jung, consists of ego, personal consciousness, and collective unconsciousness. Jung proposed four functions of the psyche sensing, intuiting, thinking, and feeling. Interaction of two attitudes and four functions produces eight types of personality (Schultz & Schultz, 2001).

Adler proposed that striving for superiority is the primary human motivation that shapes adult personality and failure to achieve superiority might create inferiority complex that prevents personal growth (Burger, 1990).

### **Trait Theory**

Trait theorists assumed that traits or inherited predispositions are the best sources to explain personality. They proposed that all people possess certain traits, but each individual possesses a trait to a given degree that can be quantified.

Gordon Allport (1897-1967) proposed three types of traits: cardinal, central, and secondary (Schultz & Schultz, 2001).

Raymond B. Cattell (1905-1996) classified traits in common traits and unique traits, ability, temperament, and dynamic traits, and surface traits versus source traits (Cattell, 1970).

## **Humanistic Theory of Personality**

Humanistic psychologists emphasized on (1) personal responsibility; (2) here and now; (3) personal growth; and (4) focus on the phenomenology of the individual.

Rogers (1902-1987) believed that people have actualizing tendency, so they tend to grow and develop and problems arise only when there is a conflict between people's actual experiences and their self-concepts (Schultz & Schultz, 2001).

Maslow (1908-1970) conceived people as free willing individuals and seeking to satisfy their innate needs. He arranges needs in a hierarchy and a person must partially satisfy lower needs before higher needs in order to achieve self-actualization (Burger, 1990).

## **Behaviorism and Social Learning Theory**

Watson and Skinner (1975) defined personality as the sum total of learning habit system but Bandura and Rotter reject this view of behaviorism.

Bandura (1977) differs from traditional view of behaviorism in two ways. He assumed that people play an active role in determining their own actions and emphasized on the importance of cognitive processes in determining personality (Lahey, 2001).

Rotter (1982) argued that in order to predict what people would do in a given situation, cognitive variables like perception, expectancies, and values should be taken in account. Potential behavior is the key in predicting what a person will do in a given situation. Expectancy and reinforcement values are the two variables that determine the strength of behavior potential. He introduced the concept of locus of control in order to deal with ambiguous situations (Burger, 1990).

### **Cognitive Approach to Personality**

The cognitive approach explains personality as differences in the ways people process information.

Kelly (1955) defined the cognitive structures people use to interpret and predict events as “personal constructs” and believed that not two people use identical personal constructs or organize stimuli in an identical manner.

Mischel (1930) argued people are highly sensitive to the particular settings in which they find themselves and they do also have theories about themselves and the world that affect their interaction with it. Mischel proposes that people examine cognitions other people use to interpret their world and to calculate their plans of action (Burger, 1990).

### **Evaluation of Different Approaches to Personality**

Starting from psychoanalytic approach led by Freud and neo-Freudian theorists who focused primarily on the dark side of human nature that is full of conflicts and tensions. The medical and academic communities have rejected psychoanalytic approach at the day because the ideas did not have groundbreaking and cross-cultural studies did not support Freud’s view of personality development (Feldman, 2001). Smith, Glass, and Miller (1996) point out that there is no a single experimental study that qualifies as an outcome evaluation of orthodox psychoanalysis because of its diversity of standards for judging outcomes.

Bachrach, Galatzer, Skolnikoff, and Waldron (1996) argue that a wide variety of psychoanalytic criteria are used to judge outcomes, therefore, there is a significant doubt about the validity of Freud’s theory from a scientific viewpoint.

Trait approach has a more scientific sound basis. It relied on observations of behavior, and collection of mass data on each subject. However, various trait theorists have quite different conclusions about number of traits and the primaries (Burger, 1990).

The humanistic approach has been criticized due to the difficulty in verifying scientifically the basic assumptions of the approach and many key concepts are poorly defined, such as unconditional positive regard, self actualization, fully functioning, etc. (Burger, 1990).

Learning theorists in general have been criticized of oversimplifying personality so that the concept becomes meaningless. Learning approach reduced personality to series of stimuli and responses and excluded thoughts and feelings (Burger 1990; Feldman, 2001).

The cognitive approach has overcome many shortcomings of different theories of personality, yet emotional and spiritual aspects of human beings are ignored.

Islam as a complete way of life for mankind is different in postulating personality. It has given a more comprehensive and complete concept of personality.

### **Islamic Approach to Personality Assessment**

Islamic Approach to personality is defined as the conceptualization of human nature and personality from the major sources of Islam the Qur-an, Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the writings of Muslim scholars. The Qur-an as a book of guidance from Allah to mankind has described the process of man's creation, which shows the importance and the origin of human nature.

#### **The Origin of Human Being**

Adam (peace be upon him) was the first man created by Allah (S. W). The process of his creation clarifies that

1. The existence of human being is a possible but not a necessary existence.

2. The creation was a perfect and complete act from Allah (S. W). The Qur-an described it as "*fitrah*", the real nature of human being.
3. Man's components came from various substances of the earth with a divine element 'ruh' spirit, which was introduced into man by Allah (S. W).
4. Death terminates man's life on the earth, therefore, men play a role of vicegerent "khalifah of Allah (S. W)" within life period.
5. The creation of men was to serve a purpose that is called "al-amanah"- the trust.

### **The Qur-anic Concepts of Human Psyche**

Rather than using a single word to speak about human nature, the Qur-an uses a number of words like ruh, nafs, sadr, galb, fuad, aql, and lubb, which are roughly translated as spirit, self, chest, heart, fuad- center of the heart, mind, and lubb- center of the mind respectively (Habanakah, 1996). From the Qur-anic connotations, it appears that each of these entities contributes to general functions of al-nafs but each entity also has its individual functions. Therefore, whenever the Qur-an and al-Sunnah addresses al-nafs, it may refer to one of the following meanings:

- 1) the general entity of al-nafs that includes all other entities,
- 2) the entity of the chest,
- 3) the entity of the heart,
- 4) al-fuad (center of the heart),
- 5) the entity of the mind,
- 6) the center of the mind (Habanakah, 1996).

## Functions of al-nafs, Chest, Heart and Mind from the Qur-an

According to Habanakah (1996), general functions of the entity of al-nafs are

- One) Consciousness and awareness experiences, such as sleep, wakefulness, comprehension, ability to know good and bad, ability to acquire knowledge, learn skill, etc.
- Two) Both positive and negative emotions and sentiments, such as love, joy, anger, sadness, fear, feeling of difficulties, patience, pressure, etc., stem from the entity of al-nafs.

The heart, in the Qur-an, is defined as the center of revealed knowledge, beliefs and awareness of one's principles, God's consciousness, compassion, love, forgiveness, willpower that generates intentions, goals and objectives, and motivations of a person. It is the source of emotions and feelings that conceal a person's beliefs. The entity of the heart and its center- al-fuad is the meeting point for rational thoughts that stem from the entity of the mind and rational feelings that stem from the entity of the heart and support rational thoughts of the mind. Therefore, the heart, according to the Qur-an and Sunnah, determines the ultimate characteristics of human behavior and personality and it is considered the center of beliefs or disbelief (Habanakah, 1996).

*Al-'aql*- the mind, according to the Qur-an, is the center for rationality and logical arguments. The center of al-aql- the mind is called *al-lubb* that contains the essence of scientific knowledge and its real meanings.

The decision-making process for rational and conscious behaviors of a person, according to the Qur-an, is a two-way process between the rational thoughts and the emotions that obscure the rational thoughts. However, not all heart's decision are rational, therefore, if al-aql- the mind does not watch up heart' decisions the resulting behavior may be unethical and irrational. On the other hand, mind's decision only may mislead a person, if the decisions



of the heart that control and restrain a person from following his/her own whims and desires are absent (Habonakah, 1995).

This two-way process shows the importance of the heart in determining human conscious behavior and personality.

### **Relationship between Religion and Personality**

Western concept of religion is loaded with a negative connotation because of the dogmatic and authoritarian approach that was adapted by the Catholic Church to solve the public affairs (al-Faruqui (1982).

Islam, on the other hand, declares itself as a solution to the social, political, economic, judicial, and spiritual problems of modern man. It is a system of life that provides a sense of morality and justice into the political system, equality and mercy into the social system, equity and fairness into the economic system, progress and development into the scientific advancement, and tranquillity and balance into human psychological functioning.

### **Dimensions of Muslim Personality**

Man has a natural tendency to believe in God but this innate tendency is subdued to corruption because of man's freedom to select among the options. In order to monitor and maintain the proper innate belief, Allah revealed religions from time to time in order to show the right belief. Islam as the last religion in the chain of religions offers a system to guide human beings to discover the innate forces that Allah bestowed into human hearts.

Iman is the foundation to be a Muslim, however, the principles of Iman manifest themselves under two general concepts that are rationality and emotions. This means that man's faith is a mixture of intellect and emotions.

Al-aql al-iradyy or Rationality, the concept of al-aql, which means intellect or reason, appears in the Qur-an with different meanings.

1. In some verses, al-aql has the meaning of comprehension, understanding, memory, remembrance, thinking processes, ability to distinguish right and wrong, truth and false, good and evil, etc.
2. In other verses, al-aql has the meaning of self-restriction and self-discipline that prevent a person from indulging into unlawful acts or lower demands of al-nafs which are prohibited in Islam (Habannakah, 1982).

Based on these two meanings of al-aql from the Qur-an, many Muslim scholars had proposed two types of al-aql.

- 1) Al-aql al-ilmyy, which stems solely from the entity of the mind and stands as a mere intellectual reasoning and
- 2) Al-aql iradyy, which stems from the heart's decisions that are based on rational thoughts from the thinking processes. This type of al-aql is called in this study as Rational Mind (Habannakah, 1982).

The components of al-aql al-iraddy- rational mind appear to be a combination of rationality and self-discipline, in other words, a combination of thoughts, ethics, and values. Such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, self-discipline, courteousness, generosity, etc.

Emotions or Emotional Mind, Islamic faith- Iman is a conviction and obedience guided by intellect, sentiments, and emotions. These sentiments and emotions stem from the heart to support the rational thoughts. Since these emotions are based upon rational decisions from the mind, they are named in this study as Emotional Mind.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

**Personality:** means a mixture of emotions and intellect that determine behavior and cognitive processes and which persist over time and situations.

**Personality Dimensions:** refer to a set of two general principles, which define characteristics and behaviors of a Muslim personality from Islamic Perspective.

**Rational Mind:** is a byproduct of rational decisions that stem from the mental processes and accepted by the heart. This in return motivate a believer to obey Allah's commands and restrain from disobedience. It consists of truthfulness, trustworthy, obedience, justice, responsibility, respectfulness, gratefulness, self-discipline, determination, sincerity, etc. (Habannakah, 1996).

**Emotional Mind:** refers to feelings that a person experiences and expresses when a positive or negative event or meaning according to Islam is perceived. It consists of love for the sake of Allah, Affection, fearfulness of Allah, patience, forgiveness, to be ambitious, etc. (Habannakah, 1996).

## **Method**

### *Sample*

A sample of 1000 Muslim students will be randomly selected from various Malaysian institutions of higher learning: University Malaya (UM), University Putera Malaysia (UPM), University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). A proportion of 200 will be randomly selected from each university.

### *Instruments*

A proposed scale named Islamic Personality Inventory (IPI) will be constructed and used in the study. The scale will consist of two major dimensions: Rational Mind and Emotional Mind. The proposed components for Rational Mind are Truthfulness, Trustworthy, Obedience, Justice, Responsibility, Respectfulness, Gratefulness, Self-Discipline, Determination, and Sincerity.

The proposed components for Emotional Mind are Love for the sake of Allah, Affection, and Fearfulness to Allah, Patience, Forgiveness, and to have high Ambitions.

### ***Demographic Questionnaire***

This questionnaire will include information about respondents' religious affiliation, gender, age, education, ethnicity, and nationality.

### **Data Analyses**

To analyze the test a number of statistical techniques will be computed some of which are:

- 1st) Item Analysis, in order to have a proper item selection, item analysis will be computed using.
  1. Item reliability and validity indices. In the analysis, the estimated reliability and validity for  $K$ -item test will be selected (Allen & Yen, 1979).
  2. Item-Characteristic Curves (ICC). ICC is a graphical display of the relationship between the probability of passing a particular item and the examinee's position on the underlying trait that is measured by the test (Allen & Yen, 1979).
- 2nd) Internal consistency/ reliability. In order to compute the reliability of the test, the following methods will be used:
  1. Standard Error of Measurement. This method is important in measurement because it describes the expected score fluctuation due to error. To compute the SEM, confidence interval for the true scores will be constructed (Allen & Yen, 1979).
  2. Cronbach Alpha, coefficient  $\alpha$  will be computed in order to test the reliability (Allen & Yen, 1979).
- 3rd) Validity, validity of the test will be assessed using the following types:
  1. Content validity, this type of validity is established through a rational analysis of the content of the test,

- and it is based on individual subjective judgments (Allen & yen, 1979).
2. Construct validity. This type of validity refers to the degree to which the test measures the theoretical construct or trait is designed to measure. Confirmatory factor analysis will be computed (Allen & yen, 1979).
  - 4th) In order to develop norms that help to compare various groups in the test, the coming methods will be used:
    1. Percentiles rank or percentile score of a trait value is defined as the percentage of people in the norm group who have trait values less than or equal to that particular trait value.
  - 5th) Factor Analysis is used to test the dimensionality of the test and factorial validity, i. e., to determine groupings of the variables and how strongly they belong to groups, and how many dimensions are needed to explain the relations among the variables.
  - 6th) MANOVA helps to test group differences and similarities in the test.

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