

SUICIDE, CAUSATIVE FACTORS AND ITS PREVENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY: A LITERATURE FROM QURAN AND SUNNAH

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Abstract

This study encircles the suicide related literature from Quran and Sunnah. The aim of this paper is to discuss suicide, causative factors of suicide, preventative factors of suicide while referring Quran and Sunnah. Suicide has become epidemic globally. In Pakistan the ratio is also increasing day to day specially the young individuals are prone to these practices. The paper is written to gather suicide related information and the preventive factors in the context of Islam and Islamic Psychology. These factors are gathered from Quran, Hadith and different Islamic Psychology research papers and books. The factors include Ruqya, Ritual Prayers, Supplication, Recitation of the Holy Quran, Fasting, Repentance, Reliance upon Almighty Allah, Contemplation and Reflection.

Key Words: Suicide, Islamic Psychology, Ruqya, Repentance, Suicide in Islam.

Introduction

According to one of the recent surveys over the word Islam has become the fastest spreading religion in the world. Actually, our religion Islam is concerned to establish a relationship with almighty Allah. The spread of Islam is a complex historical process that occurred over many centuries and across various regions. Islam, founded by the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century CE in what is now Saudi Arabia, rapidly expanded (Spencer, 2003). This connection must be kept in mind while doing activities in the worldly life, and the most significant mistake all the human being is doing is the separation of worldly life from our religious life. Quran says

And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

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believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided. (Quran 2: 186)

Life is sacred and a gift of God. The authority of creating and taking life is to almighty Allah only. No one is authorized to end their life on worldly problems. This world is full of problems and hardships but it must be kept in mind that these problems are all solvable and immortal.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ
رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٩﴾

“And don’t kill yourselves. Surely, God is most Merciful to you”. (Quran 4: 29)

“And do not throw yourselves in destruction”. (Quran 2: 195)

Quran make it clear that human life is sacred of God don’t destroy it on the problems you faced in this world. Just like negative and positive polls the world has also two polls ease and hardship. Every human being is facing these ease and hardships but some are gifted by God with another quality of patience. Hardships are considered as a divine test, patience in difficult times and most importantly reliance on God is necessary among humanity to prevent suicide, suicidal attempts and ideation. Quran says

“So Verily, with hardship, there is ease”. (Quran 94: 5)

Prophet Muhammad said in this regard, "No misfortune or disease befalls a Muslim, no worry or

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾

grief or harm or distress - not even a thorn that pricks him - but God will expiate for some of his sins because of that." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari).

Melancholy and happiness both are going parallel in human life. But every human being has the capacity to control these situations of sadness and gladness. It creates problems and become harmful when we loss control over them. This uncontrollable situation leads to despair. In this condition an individual become completely hopeless (Aisha, 2011).

Suicide in Islam

Suicide has become a global epidemic. Suicide means self-killing voluntarily. It is strictly forbidden (Haraam) in Islam. Suicide is discussed in books of other religions like Hinduism and Christianity etc. According to Psychological literature there are three types of behaviors which are responsible for suicide these are the suicidal ideation, suicidal planning and suicidal attempts. Among these all, suicidal ideation is the most important because it is the foundation for the other two (American Psychiatric Press, 2013). Islam completely prohibits such type of acts. It is the killing of life but it is the killing of pain the person is feeling (Verrocchio, et al, 2016). Quran Says

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبْشُرُوا بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمُكُمْ فَتَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاُ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ، فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

“O people who believe! Do not unjustly devour the property of each other, except through trade by mutual agreement; and do not kill yourself; indeed, Allah is Most Merciful upon you. And Whoever does that through injustice and oppression, we shall soon put him in the fire; and this is easy for Allah” (Quran, 5: 29-30).

“And spend your wealth in Allah’s cause, and do not fall into ruin with your own hands; and be

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٥﴾

virtuous; undoubtedly the righteous are the beloved of Allah” (Quran, 2: 195).

In the above verses it is completely obvious and clears that not only self-destruction is prohibited but those acts having high risks are also prohibited. The Islamic scholars elaborated it in the form of like going to Jihad without weapons, use of intoxicants drugs and use of poisonous things etc.

Causative factors of Suicide

1. Ishq Majazi

In the contemporary era it has become a great temptation. Lack of parental guidance, social media, internet lack of drape and coeducation in educational institutions, easy availability of porn materials are all equally contributing. Being Muslim, it is necessary to love Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). if we truly love Allah and Muhammad there will be no space for ishq majazi in our heart. We are studying in newspapers on daily basis that a girl or boy commits suicide while their parents refused to marry their beloved. It is also prevalent that a boy started heroin after failure in love. In such cases this is the responsibility of parents to train and instruct their children about the mentioned factors. Islam protects us from Ishq Majazi by adopting drape practices.

2. Unemployment

Burden of debts, poverty, hunger, unavailability of basic needs like food, water, clothes and house are also the important factors leading to suicide. Life style plays important role to control suicide among people due to poverty. Zakat the fourth pillar of Islam is for this to help the needy community. Lack of basic Islamic knowledge has created a worse situation and divided the community into upper and lower level. The upper-level individuals are spending

happy life with cars, luxury houses while the lower level individuals are in search of food to nourish their hunger. Non availability of basic needs sometimes leads to suicidal behavior.

3. Family related issues

This is another major factor which may include the above two issues also. At present we have completely changed our family life style from the fully Islamic life to totally western style. Satan has played a vital role and made a bridge between father and son, mother and daughter etc. we are completely under the influence of Nafs Amara. When we are under the influence of Nafs Amara we will travel away from God and towards the Satan. In this issue we can consult Quran and Sunnah about the rights of Family members.

4. Psychological Disorders

Psychological disorders especially depression and psychotic disorders are the leading causes of suicide. The causes of suicidal behavior are complex and multifaceted. When we lose reliance upon Allah the state of disappointment created which further led to psychological disorder (Conejero, et al, 2018). Suicide and psychological disorders can be closely linked in some cases. Individuals who suffer from certain mental health conditions are at a higher risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. When we are in touch with Allah through five times prayers means, we are coming to present ourselves in front of God, and our other action like fasting, Zakat, Pilgrimage, patience, reliance upon Allah, fear of Allah and Day of judgment and helping behaviors will push us towards God at this stage there will be no time to think irrelevant and act against Islamic principles (Hooley, Franklin & Nock, 2014).

The same if a person is involved in falsehoods, arrogance, gambling, adultery and using intoxicants will travel towards Shaytan and they will feel pleasure while acting according to daemonic wills. In such type of stage, the individual may feel distressed and psychologically and mentally ill because he is under the influence of Nafs Amara (Id). It is necessary for everyone that if someone feeling in distress, they must ask yourself about the relationship with Allah almighty. Is my relationship with Allah is good or intact? If the relationship with Allah is weak it is obvious that how can I fight against the distress. The individuals will slip more and more towards distress because the individual is far away from reality. Actually, this world is a testing ground for all Muslims. We are here to prepare our self for the upcoming examination to be held in Roz-e- Makhshar.

The above mentioned all factors are like a test for us. If we are renewing our relationship with Allah five times a day with full enthusiasm nothing could make us unhappy or in distress (Abu-Raiya, 2015; Rothman & Coyle, 2018). Islamic psychology underscores the profound connection between an individual's physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being. Although there isn't a universally applicable explanation for suicidal behavior, Islamic perspectives offer various factors that can shed light on why someone might experience such thoughts and actions. It is crucial to emphasize that these factors should be comprehended within a comprehensive framework, devoid of stigmatization or judgment of individuals grappling with suicidal thoughts.

According to Muslim scholars' suicide is a nuanced and delicate matter, and Islamic scholars generally concur that it is haram (prohibited) and a severe transgression within the Islamic framework. Islamic doctrine underscores the inherent sanctity of life, emphasizing that it is a divine gift from Allah (God) that must be safeguarded and cherished. The consensus among scholars is rooted in the belief that taking one's own life contradicts this fundamental principle, and it is thus considered a grave sin in Islam. However, scholars also acknowledge the importance of considering individual circumstances, particularly when mental health issues or extreme distress may be contributing factors, promoting compassion and understanding in these complex cases.

Counseling and guidance in Islamic Psychology

Counseling and guidance within the framework of Islamic psychology are deeply grounded in the foundational principles and teachings of Islam. Central to this approach is the recognition of the holistic nature of human well-being, acknowledging that it encompasses not only the physical but also the spiritual, emotional, and psychological dimensions. These principles are intricately woven into the fabric of Islamic philosophy, theology, and the rich tapestry of Quranic scriptures and Hadith traditions. Islamic psychology serves as a guide, drawing from the wellspring of Islamic wisdom, to facilitate a profound understanding of and response to various psychological issues and challenges that individuals may encounter. It places significant emphasis on the interconnectedness of spirituality and psychology, offering insights into how these facets of human existence intersect and influence each other. Through the lens of Islamic psychology, individuals are encouraged to explore the depths of self-reflection, cultivating a deeper awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Ultimately, this approach seeks to foster inner harmony, drawing strength from the timeless teachings of Islam to navigate the complexities of the human psyche.

There are clear instructions and importance of guidance in the Quran. Dawat e Tableegh is the biggest example of guidance in the cotemporary Islamic world which emphasizing the importance of personal spiritual development and the propagation of Islamic values. It mobilizes millions of Muslims globally to engage in outreach efforts, encouraging greater adherence to religious practices and fostering a sense of community and unity among believers. We can also trace examples of individuals and group therapy sessions from the life of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and other prominent Muslim scholars like Ashraf Ali Thanvi etc (Khattak & Mustafa, 2022). selection of the therapy technique was on the symptoms, complaints and problems of the client. Quran says about guidance

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

“Whoever is guided is only guided for (the benefit Of) his soul, and whoever errs only errs against it. No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another, and never would We punish until we sent a messenger”. (Quran, 17: 15).

The above mentioned verse from the Holy Quran underscores the individual nature of guidance and accountability in Islam. It emphasizes that guidance ultimately benefits one's own soul, while errors and sins harm the individual themselves. The principle of no one bearing the burden of another signifies individual responsibility, and it assures that divine punishment is only administered after clear guidance has been conveyed through messengers, highlighting the importance of God's justice and the role of prophets in delivering His message.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾

“Indeed, we sent down to you the book for the people of truth. So whoever is guided - it is for (the benefit of) his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment”. (Quran, 39: 41).

The whole life of the holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught and guided the Muslims to spend their life according to God's instructions. Those who accepted the advice and started life according to the teaching of Muhammad are successful and happy while those who denied are struggling but it is fact that they will fail to achieve. Fortunately, all the human beings have the ability to change but sometimes they need serious guidance. This guidance built a positive behavior and healthy personalities. The change in behavior is in the form to control and overcome all unwanted and weaknesses in their attitude and behavior. Sometimes the negativity is due to some biological causes in such cases it needs medications while environmental factors can also play a role (Ali, 2007). Here one thing which is more necessary is the acceptance, motivation and readiness of the client. If the client is motivated to change the abnormal and unwanted behavior, it becomes very easy for the client to change their behavior. This is the outmost responsibility of client. Quran says in this regard

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

“That is because Allah would not change a favor which he had bestowed upon a people until they change what is within themselves. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing”. (Quran, 8: 53).

Techniques for the Prevention of Suicide

1. Repentance

Mistakes are tied with human being. Mistakes are expected from every human being. Baba Adam has also mistakenly eaten fruits of a prohibited tree due to he was expelled by God from paradise (Jannah) therefore Allah forgives everyone if they repent from the core of the heart and avoid repetition of the sin. Allah says

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾
٥٣

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ
٥٤

“O my servants who have transgressed against themselves (by sinning), do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the forgiving, the merciful. And return (in repentance) to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you; then you will not be helped” (Quran 39, 53-54).

﴿وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾
١٣٣

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden (paradise) as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous” (Quran 3: 133).

Repentance (Tawba) means to return. When an individual is away from the right path of Muhammad means he is involved in sins but after repentance in real the individual come again towards the right path. Dr Aisha Utz writes in her book “Psychology from Islamic perspective” that there are five conditions for a valid repentance:

- i. Immediate cessation of the sin,
- ii. Seeking forgiveness from Allah (alone),
- iii. Feeling regret and distress for having sinned,
- iv. Determination not to return to the sin and
- v. Restitution of other people’s rights (if appropriate).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said “when a believer commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. If he repents, desists, and asks forgiveness, his heart is polished clean. But if he does more sins, the spots increase (Tirmidhi).

كَلَّا بَلْ سَاءَ مَا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

Allah says “by no means! But rust has covered their hearts from the (sins) they do” (Quran 83: 14)

Repentance is like worship which creates state of peace and having soothing effects on human being. Mistakes (sin), realization of mistakes, desire of seeking Allah forgiveness and sincere repentance leads towards spiritual growth and soul purification (philips, 1990).

2. Ruqya

It refers to the Islamic treatment method through recitation and repetition of Quranic verses. Before start treatment through this method etiology of the disease must be known because every disorder is treated through different Quranic verses. Ruqya can be possible by the patient themselves but it needs strict belief while it may be practiced from an experienced religious persons. Greater the piety level the better result is expected.

3. Supplication

Supplication means personal prayers. Supplication can be made by everyone and anytime. Supplication is beneficial for healing and as well as protection. Supplication turns the believer to Allah. In prayers an individual supplicate from Allah regarding some needs, Allah says

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ
فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“ and when my slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning me, then (answer them): I am indeed nearer. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on me. So let them respond to me (by obedience) and believe in me that they may be (rightly) guided (Quran 2: 186).

We can found several supplications from the life of the Holly Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Ibn Abbas narrated from the Holly Prophet that it the time of distress Muhammad (PBUH) used to say “ there is no God but almighty Allah, the forbearing; there is no God but Allah, Lord of mighty throne; there is no God but Allah, Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth, and Lord of the noble throne” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Anas narrated from the Holly Prophet that Muhammad says “ O Allah I seek refuge with you from distress and sorrow, from helplessness and laziness, from miserliness and cowardice, from being heavily in debt and from being overcome by men (Bukhari).

4. Remembering of Allah

It is necessary for everyone to present our self in front of God five times daily. Instead of five ritual prayers we must remember Allah and fear of Allah and Day of Judgment in our heart to keep our self continuously connected with Allah. Allah says

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى
وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O humankind there has come to you instruction from your lord and healing for what is in the breasts, and guidance and mercy for the believers” (Quran, 10:57).

“The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when his verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely” (Quran 8: 2).

True believers enjoy remembering Allah by supplication and recitation of Quran etc. they feel soothing effects on soul, mind and body. They are feeling distress free, hopeful and enjoy no worry and no anxiety. Recitation of the Holly Quran is beneficial for psychological and emotional issues (Aisha, 2011).

5. Fasting

The human being must be in contact with Allah by believing Allah presence everywhere and fear of Allah all the time, this is called Taqwa. The mentioned individuals cant disobey Allah. Fasting refrain us from lawful food and some other directives like prohibition of sexual relation with spouses etc for the sake of Allah it reduces our desires to commit sins. Allah says

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous (develop Taqwa), (Quran, 2: 183).

6. Patience and Reliance Upon Allah

True believers will always and in every walk of life will rely upon Allah. Incase they are suffering from any hardships or they are facing some shortcomings in their life, they completely rely upon Allah and the show patience. They never complain and never cry. Allah says

وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَلِغُ أَمْرِهِ
قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

“And whoever relies upon Allah- Then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish his purpose. Allah has already set for everything a (decreed) extent” (Quran, 65:3).
In Surat-Al-Imran Allah says


“And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely (upon him)”, (Quran 3: 159).

7. Others techniques

Regularity in Salah including ritual prayers and supererogatory (Nafal) and contemplation are also the techniques which saves us from all abnormal behaviors including suicidal ideation and suicidal attempts.

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