

POTENTIAL INTEGRATION OF NAQLI AND AQLI KNOWLEDGE IN COUNSELING BY UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF WELLNESS

DINI FARHANA BAHARUDIN

Corresponding Author

Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

E-mail : dini@usim.edu.my

ZURIA MAHMUD

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail : zuria@ukm.edu.my

SALLEH AMAT

Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Bandar Baru Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

E-mail : sallehba@ukm.edu.my

MOHD RUSHDAN MOHD JAILANI

Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

E-mail : rushdan@usim.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Counseling is a profession that is concerned with all aspects of development for the individual client and this is synonymous with the philosophy of wellness. Even though the wellness emphasis is not well understood and is not systematically taught or applied due to ongoing debates among Western scholars about this concept and despite confusion with the usage of various terms to refer to wellness, the concept of wellness has the potential to be integrated with the naqli and aqli knowledge in counseling. In Islam, this concept has long been discussed. It is hoped that by comparing the Islamic concept of wellness to the Western perspective would help increase the understanding of this concept and highlight its application in counseling as an example of the integration of revealed knowledge and rational science. This paper will discuss briefly the concept of wellness from the perspective of Islam and the West, as well as looking at some common grounds and differences between the two views. Both views agree that wellness is a lifelong process that is holistic, comprising of multiple dimensions. However, the Islamic view of this concept is broader and complements the existing view on wellness. The implication of this study to the field of counseling includes refocusing counseling to the developmental aspect of an individual that comprised of not only remediation but also prevention.

Keywords: *counseling, wellness, comparative, Islamic perspective, Western perspective*

ABSTRAK

Kesejahteraan merupakan tunjang kepada bidang kaunseling. Kaunseling adalah suatu profesion yang menekankan keseluruhan aspek perkembangan dan pertumbuhan diri seseorang individu klien, dan ini adalah sinonim dengan falsafah kesejahteraan. Walaupun penekanan terhadap kesejahteraan tidak difahami dengan jelas malah tidak diajar mahupun diaplikasikan secara sistematik disebabkan oleh perdebatan yang masih berterusan dalam kalangan sarjana Barat dan kekeliruan hasil penggunaan istilah yang pelbagai yang merujuk kepada kesejahteraan, namun kesejahteraan merupakan suatu konsep yang berpotensi dalam pengintegrasian ilmu naqli dan aqli dalam kaunseling. Memandangkan dalam Islam konsep kesejahteraan ini telah banyak dibincangkan, perbandingannya dengan perspektif Barat diharap dapat memperjelaskan lagi kefahaman tentang konsep ini, seterusnya memudahkan pengaplikasiannya dalam kaunseling sebagai suatu contoh bagi mengintegrasikan ilmu naqli dan aqli. Justeru, kertas kerja ini akan mengupas serba ringkas tentang konsep kesejahteraan daripada perspektif Islam dan Barat, di samping melihat kepada beberapa titik persamaan dan perbezaan antara kedua-dua pandangan. Kedua-dua perspektif bersetuju bahawa kesejahteraan adalah suatu proses sepanjang hayat yang menyeluruh merangkumi pelbagai dimensi. Walau bagaimanapun, pandangan Islam terhadap konsep melengkapkan lagi konsep ini daripada perspektif Barat dengan menyetengahkannya sebagai suatu konsep yang lebih luas. Implikasi kepada kaunseling termasuk memfokuskan semula kaunseling kepada aspek perkembangan diri individu yang melibatkan bukan hanya rawatan tetapi juga pencegahan.

Kata kunci: *kaunseling, kesejahteraan, perbandingan, perspektif Islam, perspektif Barat*

Introduction

Counseling is a profession that is concerned with all aspects of development for the individual client and this is synonymous with the philosophy of wellness. The concept of ‘wellness’ was first introduced in the field of medical sciences around 1950s and even later in the field of psychology and counseling. The concept of wellness has the potential in integration of *naqli* and *aqli* knowledge in counseling. This is because from the perspective of Islam, the concept of wellness is not something new but has already been discussed long before the re-emergence of this concept in the West. Therefore, understanding the concept of wellness is important if both knowledge of *naqli* and *aqli* is to be integrated into counseling training and practices. The discussion of this concept comparatively from the Western and Islamic perspective can help the understanding of this concept more clearly. This is also in line with the internationalization and indigenization of counseling whereby counselors are encouraged to consider different traditions and local practices in cultures different from the West. Thus, in order to provide effective services, one need to first understand the concept of wellness. Besides being the root of the counseling profession (Myers 1991, 1992), to be well and having a good life is also a universal human desire. Therefore, this paper will discuss the concept of wellness from the perspective of Islam and the West to identify similarities and differences between the two.

Wellness from the Western Perspective

The term 'wellness' emerges as part of the transformation of health definitions that are bio-medicine in the West. It refers to a more positive and comprehensive perspective, combining psycho-social aspects (Westgate, 1996). This can be seen through the explanation of this concept by the World Health Organization in 1947 that well-being does not focus on the disease alone but includes physical, mental, and social aspects (Moore & Keyes, 2003).

According to Sarason (2000), wellness is something that is difficult to define. However, beginning around 1980s, even though the concept or definition of wellness is discussed in more detail (Kernes & Kinnier, 2005), it was complicated by the use of different terms that all refer to wellness (Wass, 2000). Snyder & Lopez (2007) stated that although there is no consensus among scholars on the concept of wellness, several synonyms have been used in previous studies to explain it such as happiness, pleasure, self-actualization, satisfaction of life, economic prosperity, success, quality of life, and well-being (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011).

Most contemporary literature often refers to Dunn (1977), Ardell (1985), and Hettler (1980); scholars who are regarded as the founders of the re-emergence of this concept in the West. However in psychology and counseling, in addition to bio-medical models influences are from psychological and humanistic theories. From previous literature, wellness can be divided into two: subjective well-being and psychological well-being (Tiberius & Hall, 2010; Waterman, 2008). Subjective well-being involves feelings of pleasure experienced by individuals in their lives (Forest & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 2008). Efforts to seek for pleasure is obtained through stimulation that can increase positive emotion (Lundqvist, 2011). Three components determine subjective well-being, namely life satisfaction, the presence of positive

emotions, and the absence of negative emotions (Diener, 2009; Plagnol, 2010; Waterman, 2008). Underlying subjective well-being is the hedonism theory (Tiberius & Hall, 2010; Waterman, 2008). On the other hand, psychological well-being is based on eudaimonic philosophy that considers well-being as a level to develop one's potential in line with their values and their participation in life (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that includes six elements: self-acceptance, self-development, goals in life, good relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy (Bauer & McAdams, 2010; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff, 1989; Waterman, 2008).

However, recent studies have found the need for a more comprehensive view of wellness (Dambrun and Ricard, 2011; Forest & Ryan, 2010; Kjell, 2011; Ryan et al., 2010). Some of the more comprehensive models include the Wheel of Wellness Model (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) followed by the Indivisible Self Model (Myers & Sweeney, 2008) which describes wellness as a way of life that is oriented towards optimum health and wellness that involves the integration of body, mind, and spirit by an individual to achieve meaningful life with nature and other human beings. Ideally, it is the optimal conditions in which individuals can achieve (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). These models are affected by the theoretical concepts of Maslow (1968) and Adler (1956), which emphasizes holism and enhancement of self.

In addition, based on the literature review conducted on the description and definition of well-being, some elements which can help to understand wellness from the Western perspective have been identified. The majority of authors define wellness as an integrated concept that attempts to combine various aspects of human life (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). Ten

key dimensions were synthesized through analysis of previous writings on the concept of well-being which includes the physical, psychological, career, social, spiritual, economic / financial, intellectual, climate, culture, and environment (Miller & Foster, 2010, Roscoe 2009). These dimensions also interact with each other (Adams, Bezner, & Steinhart, 1997; Crose et al., 1992). This interaction shows the interconnections between one dimension with another and if one dimension is compromised, it will interfere with other dimensions (Adams, Bezner, & Steinhart, 1997; Sarason, 2000). Associated with the interaction between the various dimensions is the dynamic nature of wellness based on the changes that one experienced throughout life (Adams, Bezner, & Steinhart, 1997; Plagnol, 2010; Sarason, 2000). Wellness will vary due to individual and environmental factors (Plagnol, 2010). For example, if a person is laid-off, their well-being in terms of occupation is affected and may also affect other dimensions such as financial, social, and psychological. Next, the West view wellness as a process that emphasizes active individual participation. They argue that wellness is the responsibility of the individual (Patrick et al., 2007; Ryan, 2009). Therefore, if a person wants to achieve wellness, he must put some effort into it. This can be seen from the emphasis placed on personal development, self-acceptance to achieve self-potential, and autonomy (Ryan et al., 2010). In conclusion, wellness from the Western perspective can be defined as an active and dynamic lifelong process that encompasses of holistic multi-dimensional aspects which interact with each other.

Wellness from the Islamic Perspective

Wellness from the Islamic perspective has been explained abundantly in the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. A number of terminologies from the Arabic language that refers to wellness include 'sa'adah' (long term

continuous happiness), 'ladzah' or 'farah' (short term pleasure), and 'qana'ah' (ability to accept and show gratitude towards gifts from Allah) (Musa, 2008). Ibn Sina for example, uses the term *al-lazzah* and *as-saadah*. Ibn Sina defines *al-lazzah* as a perception (*idrak*) and attainment (*nayl*); that to the person making the perception is perfect and good (*kamal, khayr*). He further provides an example that pain and suffering are relative from the perception of different individuals. According to Ibn Sina, wellness can be divided into three: *al-lazzah al-hissiyyah*, sensual pleasure such as food and sex, (2) *al-lazzah al bataniah*, inward pleasure such as honor and dignity, and *al-lazzah al-aqliyah*, intellectual pleasure. He gives more focus on *al-lazzah al-aqliyah* as he sees it as the highest level of wellness that can be achieved (Zakaria, 2010).

Besides the concept of wellness from Ibn Sina, Omar (2003) relates wellness with the concept of *taqwa* characterized by wellness in the existing world and the Hereafter. Therefore, according to this view, wellness is holistic and continuous. In the Al-Quran, general wellness refers to the characteristics of human development since they were born (Obeid 1990). Al-Attas (1977:48) explained wellness and happiness as referring to one's beliefs of Allah's rights, practices that are based upon faith in one's heart that feels peace and knowledge that comprised of iman and justice. According to him, the meaning and experience of wellness in Islam involves three important elements in one's life which are the soul (*ruh*), physical and environment, all of which are interconnected (Al-Attas 1995). These three elements were also stated by Ibn Sina and he further highlights the importance of knowledge in the pursuit of wellness (Zakaria, 2010). Other concept of wellness focuses on the word *sa'adah* which can be defined as 'happiness' or 'success'. *Sa'id* refers to a happy or successful person. The opposite of the word *sa'adah* is *syaqawah*

which means 'frustration' or 'sadness' (Rakhmat, 2008).

Man's spirituality and his role as the '*khalifah of Allah fil ard*' have the responsibility to ensure the wellness of the living earth and its creatures. Thus, wellness from the Islamic perspective should be pursued with vision of *tawhid* for the realization of human dignity. Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali relate the concept of wellness with the theory of Maqasid al-Shari'ah. The essential interests of the Maqasid al-Shari'ah are five, namely the protection of faith, life, lineage, intellect and property (Al-Qusyairi, 2003). In this respect, wellness from the Islamic perspective can be summarized as the growth of a community of people who stand for equity and justice for right against wrong (*amar makruf nahyi mungkar*), who work for the creation and maintenance of such social conditions as would enable the greatest possible number of human beings to live, morally as well as physically in accordance with the natural law of God.

Similarities and Differences between Islamic and Western Perspective on Wellness

Similarities and differences between Islamic and Western perspectives on wellness were identified. The comparative analysis of Islam and the West will be discussed in the following sub-themes:

i. Wellness as a holistic multi-dimensional concept

Both the Islamic and Western perspectives agreed that wellness is a holistic multi-dimensional concept. Wellness as a holistic concept that tries to combine the various aspects of human life that complements one another was stated by both the Western and Islamic scholars. Previous studies synthesized by the West found ten key dimensions that make up wellness which are physical, psychological, career, social, spiritual, economic/financial, intellectual, climate, culture, and environment (Miller

& Foster, 2010; Briscoe, 2009), whereas Islam put forward three main elements: the spiritual, physical, and environmental (Al-Attas, in 1995; Zakaria, 2010). However, when examined, there are similarities between the dimensions under discussion. For example, both Muslim and Western perspectives talk about the physical or tangible aspects that include the physical health, work, economic/financial, which in other words refers to the basic necessities in life. Both perspectives also stressed that the various dimensions are integrated as interference to one dimension will affect the other dimensions (Al-Attas, 1995; Miller & Foster, 2010; Roscoe, 2009).

Additionally, Islam emphasizes the importance of knowledge by seeing it as a bridge that connects the individual to seek eternal wellness (Al-Attas, in 1995; Zakaria, 2010). The importance of knowledge was clearly demonstrated through the revelation of *Iqra*' the first verse in the Quran, which was laid out in surah al-'Alaq. This first five verses revealed very clearly connects the creation of man with knowledge and reading. The word '*ilm*' was repeated 854 times in the Quran in various forms (Shihab, 2007). Only with knowledge, especially from revelation, weak human reasoning received help and guidance to the perfect enlightenment (Zakaria, 2010). This contrasts with the Western view that classifies intellect as one part of the dimensions for wellness (Miller & Foster, 2010). Therefore, even though both Western and Islamic perspectives put forward various integrated and inter-related dimensions of wellness, Islam emphasizes knowledge as an important mean to obtain wellness.

ii. Wellness as a life-long process

Wellness is a process that involves the whole life of a person, which often in an individual's life includes positive and negative experiences. In terms of physical well-being for example, at one time a person may be healthy, but at other times

he may be sick. Therefore, due to the constantly changing experiences in life, individual wellness is also not static. Thus, to achieve wellness involves a prolonged process. This is in line with the teachings of Islam in Surah Al-Mulk (67: 2) that talks about tests by Allah throughout life, “Who has created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed”. This was again stated in another verse in Surah Al-A’raf (7:168), “And We tried them with good (blessings) and evil (calamities) in order that they might turn (to Allah’s Obedience)”. Similarly, the Hadith of the Prophet stated that everyone will be tested to determine the level of faith (Bukhari). In line with this view, the Western perspective also acknowledged that wellness is a process that involves the whole life. For example, eight phases in the Theory of Psychosocial Development (Erikson, 1950) comprises of developmental tasks which have been determined in accordance with each phase. There are also other humanistic theories related to self-actualization which also involves a lifelong process.

However, Islam and the West have differed over the meaning of ‘whole life’. ‘Whole life’ as specified in the Western perspective refers to human life as long as he live. For example, developmental phases under the Theory of Psychosocial Development (Erikson, 1950) include from baby until the age of 65 years and above. On the other hand, from the perspective of Islam, the phase of human life are divided into seven which are: the spirit phase (al-A’raf, 7:172), the uterus phase (al-Hajj, 22:5) (al-Muminun, 23:12-14), the natural world (al-Ghassiyah:21-26), in the grave (an-An’am: 93), the Day of Resurrection (al-Zumar, 39:68), the Day of Reckoning (al-Naba’, 78:38), and finally the day of Retribution (al-Ra’d, 13:18). Ibn Sina (1968) also explains the apparent link between the earth and the heavenly world as one of the criteria to be taken into account in obtaining wellness. It is clear that wellness as discussed in Islam involves a far more futuristic perspective that is not

only wellness during one’s stay in the world but includes also wellness in the afterlife.

iii. Wellness is the responsibility of the individual

The explanation of the West on wellness also emphasized the responsibility of an individual to participate actively in determining his wellness (Patrick et al., 2007; Ryan, 2009). An individual’s personal responsibility to achieve this welfare is supported by the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan, 2009), which states that access to optimal well-being is through the development of autonomy and making own choices to fulfill needs (Patrick et al., 2007; Ryan, 2009; Ryan et al., 2010). This explanation appears to be inadequate in comparison with the Islamic perspective. While Islam agrees that every individual has the right to seek and strive to achieve wellness (Ibn Sina, in 1968; Zakaria, 2010), however, efforts should be coupled with *tawakkal*. This highlights the nature of man as a slave where his reliance is on God. This is consistent with what Allah says: “And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him” (Al-Thalaq; 65:3). Additionally, in Surah Al-Maidah (5:23), “And put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed”. However, it should be understood here that *tawakkal* does not mean that one do not make any effort (a fatalist) who only trust in God alone (Quzwain, 1985; Al-Qusyari 2003). This view reinforces the concept of *qada’* and *qadar* in which the question of whether or not the individual will obtain wellness involves the provision of Allah (Hassan, 1983). Therefore, it is clear that wellness is associated with an individual’s personal relationship with the Almighty Creator.

iv. Man as vicegerent of Allah

The contrast between Islamic view and the West is the link of the concept of wellness with the concept of human nature as God’s vicegerent. As caliph entrusted by God on this earth, people need to ensure

the wellness of all; not only themselves but also the wellness of the society as a whole and including nature (Yahya, 2004). A person who is well would be able to provide benefits to his surroundings in which he actively functions, particularly in matters regarding *amar makruf nahyi mungkar* (Hassan, 1983). This was shown by the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a mercy to the world (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) and other prophets who form the moral (*akhlak*) of their community based on religious laws for them to obtain wellness (Zakaria, 2010). Although the West explained about the social aspect which involves the relationship of an individual with community and environmental aspects associated with environmental care (Miller & Foster, 2010; Roscoe, 2009), it is not the same as Islam. This is because the dimensions are still set in the individualistic Western culture. This means that the wellness pursued is only for one's own sake and does not involve other people. Hence, it can be concluded that wellness not only involve human relationship with God but also relationship with their surroundings.

v. Narrow vs broad and Eternal vs temporary

The nature of wellness as described by Western researchers seem to be narrow and temporary. This is illustrated by the ongoing debate on the definition of wellness among their scholars. In fact, Western researchers themselves have expressed the need for continued research to obtain a more comprehensive concept of wellness. This means they are still not satisfied with the existing concept. This is different from the concept of wellness in Islam where the discussions are clear eventhough multiple terminologies were used. These terminologies are not confusing but aim to provide a more in-depth explanation of the concept (Hassan, 1983).

Similarly, the temporary nature of wellness from the Western perspective can be exemplified by the concept of subjective

well-being (Forest & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 2008) which emphasizes life satisfaction, the presence of positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotions that some Western researchers questioned about. Although some further studies and attempts to come up with a more comprehensive concept, but results are still impermanent. This may be because their understanding of the concept of wellness is limited to life as long as one lives and the lack of relevance with the concept of God. This gap does not exist in Islam. The Islamic concept of wellness involves the ultimate goal of every Muslim which is to achieve eternal wellness in life and the Hereafter (Yahya, 2004). Although there are varying levels of wellness that can be achieved by an individual but according to Ibn Sina (1968), eternal wellness can be obtained with pure soul cleansing practices (*tazkiyyah an-nafs*), which serves as a means. The level of wellness that vary also occur due to differences in the level of knowledge as mentioned above (Zakaria, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper has discussed both the Western and Islamic perspectives on wellness. It began with an explanation of the concept in the eyes of the West, followed by Islam. From the comparison made, it can be concluded that Islam and the West: (1) agree that wellness involves multiple holistic dimensions that complement each other but Islam emphasizes on knowledge to achieve eternal wellness; (2) agree that wellness is a lifelong process but Islam considers the wellness with futuristic vision and mission; not only wellness in worldly life but also in the Hereafter; (3) differ in their views about responsibility of the individual in which Islam stresses not only the efforts and endeavors on the part of individuals to prosper but also taking into account the provisions of Allah; (4) differ in the view in respect of wellness aims and goals in which Islam focuses

on human nature as Allah's vicegerent on earth to ensure wellness for all; and (5) different properties in terms of wellness which in Islam, the concept is broader and more permanent than the Western perspective. The comparison shows that scientific knowledge (aqli) may lack in its ability to look at the comprehensive view of wellness due to its dualistic perspective and positivist paradigm in scientific method. The traditional or Eastern methods inclusive of mystical elements are previously alleged as not scientific. In the definition of counseling, wellness is stated as one of the important goals. Understanding the concept of wellness is important if both knowledge

of *naqli* and *aqli* is to be integrated in counseling training and practices. By making comparison on the concept of wellness from the scientific and revealed knowledge shows the need for integration of both knowledge which complements each other. Evidence-based studies in scientific knowledge strengthened what has already been stated in revealed knowledge based on the Quran and Sunnah. Thus with integration of knowledge, the concept of wellness can be understood in a more comprehensive way and it is hoped that the explanation would enhance the application of this concept in counseling.

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