

The Contributions and Impact of Malik Badri: Father of Modern Islamic Psychology

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Introduction

We live in a time where ideas and principles are questioned, dissected, and contested at a dizzying rate. It can be difficult to decipher reason and proof from conjecture and avowal. Disjointed ideas and information are widely available without a necessary chain of transmission or reliable connection to sources of knowledge. In this confusing contemporary context, almost anyone can become a leader in thought, guiding naïve followers down unknown paths with unclear destinations. Yet, true thought leadership is that which is connected to the past and charts a clear, well-lit path forward toward an illumined future. Throughout time, there has been a legacy of truly brilliant thinkers whose genius is in communicating timeless wisdom in a powerful manner that speaks to the zeitgeist of their time. This ability allows them to make a significant impact on the hearts and minds of the people. The world lost one of these giants in thought leadership this past year.

Professor Malik Babiker Badri was a man who not only innovated and developed novel ideas within his own area of expertise, but whose ideas had ripple effects well beyond the boundaries of his field of knowledge. Known to the academic and professional world as the “father of modern Islamic Psychology,” he also played a part in shaping massive cultural transformations that changed the world. These include the Black American experience, the epidemic of alcoholism, and the global AIDS crisis. Professor Badri brought to the world a cultural and spiritual revolution in the way many view their relationships to themselves, their societies, and their spirituality. Although several of his works have become seminal reads in the field of Islamic Psychology, and Islamic thought more generally, much of his great work remains unrecognized—perhaps because of his humility and lack of self-promotion. The time has come for the recognition of the significance of this man’s contributions which position him among the great thinkers of human history. This article charts the chronological and thematic development of Badri’s contributions over the course of his life and paints a picture of the significance of his work and its impact on the world.

While Professor Badri’s writing and thought spanned several different areas, the majority of his work fell into two major categories: 1) The

indigenization of psychology (making psychology culturally relevant to Arabs and beyond); and 2) The Islamization of psychology. Within these categories, further distinctions can be made within Badri's lifetime of academic and professional contributions. These are: 1a) the globalization of indigenous psychology and 2a) indigenous Islamic Psychology.

Background

Malik Badri was born in 1932 in Rufaa, a small village on the Nile in the north of Sudan, 90 miles south of Khartoum. He was the son of Babiker Badri, a respected figure who championed girls' education in Sudan and started the first female university in Khartoum, called Ahfad University. It was in this environment of education and academia, during the height of Sudan's cultural and intellectual development, that Badri grew to become a young aspirational scholar. The value of education that was instilled in him from his father led him to pursue a college degree. This pursuit began his travels outside of Sudan in his quest for knowledge. In 1956, Badri graduated with a degree in General Science from the American University of Beirut, from which he also received his Masters in Psychology and Education in 1958.

After returning to Sudan as a young budding scholar with a developing propensity for revolutionary thinking, Badri met Malcolm X who was on his first trip to the continent of Africa, at the height of his controversial fame in America. Malik and Malcolm became instant companions, as Badri introduced X to his first experience of a society of all black people with their culture, history, and self-worth intact. This auspicious encounter went on to develop into a sustained friendship that would become the impetus for Malcolm X embracing traditional Islam, transforming into Hajj Malik Shabazz, and ultimately transforming a nation of black Americans and the world at large.

Badri continued both his pursuit of higher education and world travels and received his doctorate from the University of Leicester in 1961. It was during this time that Badri began to develop his academic focus on the indigenization of Western psychology. In 1963, he wrote his first paper on the impact of cultural deprivation in the results of IQ test with

non-Western populations.¹ While going back and forth to Sudan, he managed to continue his studies in England and received a postdoctoral degree from the Department of Psychiatry of the Middlesex Hospital Medical School at University College London in 1966. This marked the beginning of his ingenuity and innovation as he developed into an active contributor to the development of psychological understanding. In 1966 he published a paper which presented “a new, more flexible technique for systematic desensitization at the imaginary level, in which the patient takes a more active role in the therapeutic process.”²

Badri not only innovated culturally informed, alternative approaches but he was also an active social scientist who strove to enhance the developments of the mainstream field. Throughout his career, Badri was strict to ensure that his work was grounded in scientific knowledge, even when he integrated psychology with religion and spirituality. He subscribed to every peer-reviewed, scientific journal in psychology and his home was always overflowing with journals and papers from all over the world, some in Arabic, but mostly in English. He was a man who would make use of every single minute of his life, never wasting time. Badri was committed to conveying the knowledge he received from participating in the global development of the field of psychology and making it beneficial to the Arab world. From the late 1960s onward, Badri’s work began to take shape and initiated the arc of his major contributions to the field of psychology.

Table 1 – Chronological List of Badri’s Publications

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
“The influence of cultural deprivation on the Goodenough Quotients of Sudanese children”	Article	1963	J. of Psychology, USA
“Human-figure drawings in relation to modernization in Sudan”	Article	1964	J. of Psychology, USA

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
"Drawing a man in the Sudan"	Article	1964	Middle East Forum, Vol. XI, No. 5
"Influence of modernization on the Goodenough Quotients of Sudanese children"	Article	1965	-
"The use of finger drawing in measuring the Goodenough Quotients of culturally derived Sudanese children"	Article	1965	J. of Psychology, USA
"A new technique in systematic desensitization of pervasive anxiety and phobic reactions"	Article	1966	J. of Psychology, USA.
<i>The Psychology of Arab Children's Drawings</i>	Book	1966	Al-Fath Publishers, Beirut. (Published in Arabic. Reprinted in 1998 by a grant from the University of Zarqa, Jordan)
<i>The Development of Girls Education in Sudan</i>	Book	1968	al-Fath Publishers, Beirut. (Published in Arabic)
"Vivid imagination and its relation to the speed and outcome of systematic desensitization therapy"	Article	1971	Sudan Medical Journal
"Customs, traditions and psychopathology"	Article	1972	Sudan Medical Journal, Vol. 10, No. 3.
<i>Educational Psychology</i>	Book	1974	University of Riyadh Press, Riyadh (Published in Arabic)
<i>General Psychology</i>	Book	1975	University of Riyadh Press, Riyadh (Published in Arabic)

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
<i>Islam and Alcoholism</i>	Book	1976	American Trust Publications, Washington
“Muslim psychologists in the lizard’s hole”	Article	1978	Journal of Muslim Social Scientists, USA
<i>The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists</i>	Book	1979	MWH, London
“The essentials of mental health for the Muslim child”	Article	1982	Published in <i>Ri’ayat attufoolah fil Islam</i> (Journal of Child rearing in Islam) by the University of Emirates, UAE
“Islamic social psychology in the aid of AIDS prevention”	Article	1987	Presented in the second AIDS Conference in Kuwait, Ahfad University Journal
<i>Modern Psychology from an Islamic Perspective</i>	Book	1987	International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington
<i>Al-Tafakkur: Min al-mushāhadah ilā al-shuhūd: Dirāsah nafsiyyah al-islāmiyyah (Tafakkur from Perception to Insight)</i>	Book	1991	Khartoum University Press and International Institute of Islamic Thought, Khartoum and Amman
“Use and abuse of social sciences and the humanities in Muslim countries”	Article	1992	Intellectual Discourse, 1, Kuala Lumpur.
“Counseling and psychotherapy from an Islamic perspective”	Article	1996	AlShajarah: Journal of ISTAC, Vol. 1, No. 1&2
<i>The Wisdom of Islam in the Prohibition of Alcohol (Ḥikmat al-Islām fī taḥrīm al-khamr: dirāsah nafsiyyah ijtimā’iyyah)</i>	Book	1996	Hirindun, Firjiniyā, al-Wilāyāt al-Muttaḥidah al-Amrikīyah: al-Ma’had al-‘Ālamī lil-Fikr al-Islāmi

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
“A scientific justification for an Islamically oriented AIDS prevention campaign: Is HIV a wild tiger, a pussycat, or a pussycat transformed into a tiger?”	Article	1996	Journal of FIMA, the Federation of Islamic Medical Associations
<i>The Aids Crisis: An Islamic sociocultural perspective</i>	Book	1997	ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur
<i>The AIDS Dilemma: A Progeny of Modernity</i>	Book	1998	The Islamic Medical Association of South Africa
“Training of psychosocial and medical practitioners in fighting substance addiction in Muslim and Arab cultures”	Article	1998	The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Volume 15, No. 4
<i>Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study</i>	Book	2000	Publications of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington
<i>The AIDS crisis: A natural product of modernity's sexual revolution</i>	Book	2000	ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur
<i>The Human Rights of the Elderly</i>	Book	2001	Islamic Organization of Medical Sciences (IOMS), Kuwait
“Islamic versus Western medical ethics: a moral conflict or a clash of religiously oriented worldviews?”	Article	2002	Federation of Islamic Medical Associations
“A tribute to Mawlana Mawdudi from an autobiographical point of view”	Article	2003	The Muslim world. Vol.93.No.3&4. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Turjuman Al-Qur'an Journal (Urdu)

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
“The psycho-social problems caused by the increasing population of the elderly in modern societies: an Islamically oriented study”	Article	2005	Al-Shajarah, Vol. 10, No.1.
“The harmful aspects caused by the submissive approach of Muslim psychologists to Secular Western psychology”	Article	2008	At-Tajdid Journal, IIUM, Vol. 12, 23rd issue.
“The Islamization of psychology: Its ‘why’, its ‘what’, its ‘how’, and its ‘who’”	Article	2009	In Psychology from an Islamic Perspective, edited by Noraini Mohd Noor. IIUM Press.
“Comparative Study on the lives and contributions of Ibn Hindu and Abu Zayd l-Balkhi”	Article	2010	The Great Books of Islamic Civilization, Muhammad Bin Hamad Centre for Muslim Contributions to Civilization, Qatar.
“Why Western psychotherapy cannot be of real help to Muslim patients”	Article	2012	The Sudanese Journal of Psychiatry, The Sudanese Association of Psychiatrists, Vol. 2, Issue 2
<i>Abu Zayd al-Balkhi’s Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician</i>	Book	2013	International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), London; Washington
“Innovative treatment of a rare exaggerated obsessive-compulsive reaction to smell”	Article	2013	ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 14.
“Emotional blasting: A psychotherapeutic technique invented by early Muslim physicians”	Article	2014	The Sudanese Journal of Psychiatry, Vol. 4, No. 2.

Publication Title	Type	Year	Publisher
“Psychological reflections on Ismail Al-Farouqi’s life and contributions”	Article	2014	The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Vol. 31, No. 2.
“Cognitive systematic desensitization: An innovative therapeutic technique with special reference to Muslim patients”	Article	2014	The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Vol. 31, No. 4.
<i>Cyber-counselling for Muslim Clients</i>	Book	2015	The Other Press, Kuala Lumpur
“Some issues concerning the Islamization of university curricula in Muslim countries”	Article	2016	Attajdid Journal. Printed by the International Islamic University Press, Vol. 20, No. 39.
<i>Cultural Adaptation and Islamization of Psychology: A Book of Collected Papers</i>	Book	2017	Human Behaviour Academy, Manchester
<i>Dictionary Annafssany: Psychiatry and Psychology (Arabic, English and French Dictionary of psychiatric and psychological terms)</i>	Book	2017	The Arab Federation of Psychiatry and the Arab Foundation of Psychological Sciences
<i>The Emotional Aspects of the Lives of the Prophets</i>	Book	2021	International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington

Indigenization of Psychology

Malik Badri’s first area of focus in his contributions to the field of psychology were on topics related to the impact of culturally specific assumptions within the scientific theories and approaches originating in Western countries. He used his own experience and access to Sudan and Sudanese culture as case studies to exemplify the different ways of thinking and being in non-Western countries, demonstrating that these

factors impact assessments and outcomes. Badri's first paper, written in 1963, expressed his criticism of so-called "scientific measures," which failed to recognize the impact of Western cultural bias on results.³ He not only wrote about his criticisms of the IQ test and its use of images of exclusively Westernized people and scenarios but acted by replacing them with images with Sudanese children and by tailoring the questions to fit the environment and sentiments of the local people.

In continuation of his effort to indigenize psychology during this period, in 1966, Badri recreated the drawing test that was used to assess children in order to make it culturally relevant. This extensive and well-researched work was published in Badri's first book, entitled *The Psychology of Arab Children's Drawings*.⁴ The book began as an analysis of drawings of Sudanese children, but he later broadened it and included children from other Arab countries. In the same year, he published a book on his study of how local cultural proverbs affect the direction of society. Badri was constantly engaged in research, looking into cultural phenomena, and applying his psychological training and critical mind. For example, non-Sudanese researchers labelled the traditional Sudanese tribal practice of *al-butan* (the whipping of people in a groom's ceremony for a wedding) as sadistic and problematic.⁵ Badri argued against their judgement by demonstrating the importance of understanding the practice within its cultural context, in order to avoid misconceptions and pathologizing such practices.

As Badri engaged in publications and public discourse in the field, he was called upon throughout the Arab world and the international scene to apply and develop his unique perspective and voice outside of the Western academy. In 1971 Badri established the Psychological Clinic of the University of Riyadh and wrote a syllabus for psychology from an Islamic perspective. This syllabus was instituted as a mandatory curriculum at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (IMSIU). During this period he also worked with the World Health Organization in Ethiopia and other countries and published a book about how to organize mental health services for resource-poor countries.

Badri remained focused on his native country of Sudan and began writing about traditional folkloric psychotherapy treatments. In 1972 he

published “Customs, Traditions, and Psychopathology,” an article documenting his research on the cultural tradition of *dhar*, or traditional spiritual healing, which uses amulets, herbs, *ruqiya* (Qur’anic recitation) and other psycho-spiritual remedies.⁶ His research was largely experiential as he invested much time collecting data and making his own observations within local Sudanese communities. Badri would spend time with traditional healers, conducting experiments and interviewing patients, in order to discover if the ailments and treatments were real or cultural fictions.

While continuing his work in indigenization, in 1974, Badri’s developing thoughts reflected a shift in the focus of his writing. His focus turned to Islamic conceptualizations of psychology and psychotherapy, marking what would become the crux of his life’s work. In 1977 he became a Chartered Psychologist, Fellow of the British Psychological Society, and joined the Faculty of Education at the University of Khartoum as a professor. At the university, he initiated the first department of psychology and found his passion for teaching and inspiring students. Badri’s pedagogy was unique and powerful; his students metaphorized his lessons as an IV that delivered knowledge directly to the heart. His approach was based on integrating his students within his quest for scientific knowledge. He shared his thought processes, demonstrating critical thinking skills and the innovation of ideas. He gave them the courage to criticize psychological theories, benchmarking them against their faith and cultural values.

Professor Badri encouraged his students to read Freud’s original writing instead of merely relying on secondary sources. He devised innovative ways to allow students the experience of obtaining knowledge from original sources; he would do this by arranging visits with top scientists of psychology from Germany and the UK. These visits gave Sudanese students, many of whom did not have the opportunity to leave their country, the opportunity to learn directly from highly qualified psychologists. Professor Badri proved to be extremely loyal to his students; not only would he eagerly share his travel experiences, but he would also return with books for his students which he would pay for himself.

Professor Badri designed his curriculum to begin by presenting conventional, secular theories of psychology such as human development,

personality, and social psychology. He would then criticize these theories by demonstrating how they misaligned with indigenous and Islamic beliefs. Toward the final years of the course, the students did clinical placements; Professor Badri accompanied his students and personally taught them the methods he utilized in his own practice. In the final year, he taught a course titled “Islam and Psychology,” in which he presented an authentic, bottom-up approach to an Islamic paradigm of psychology.⁷

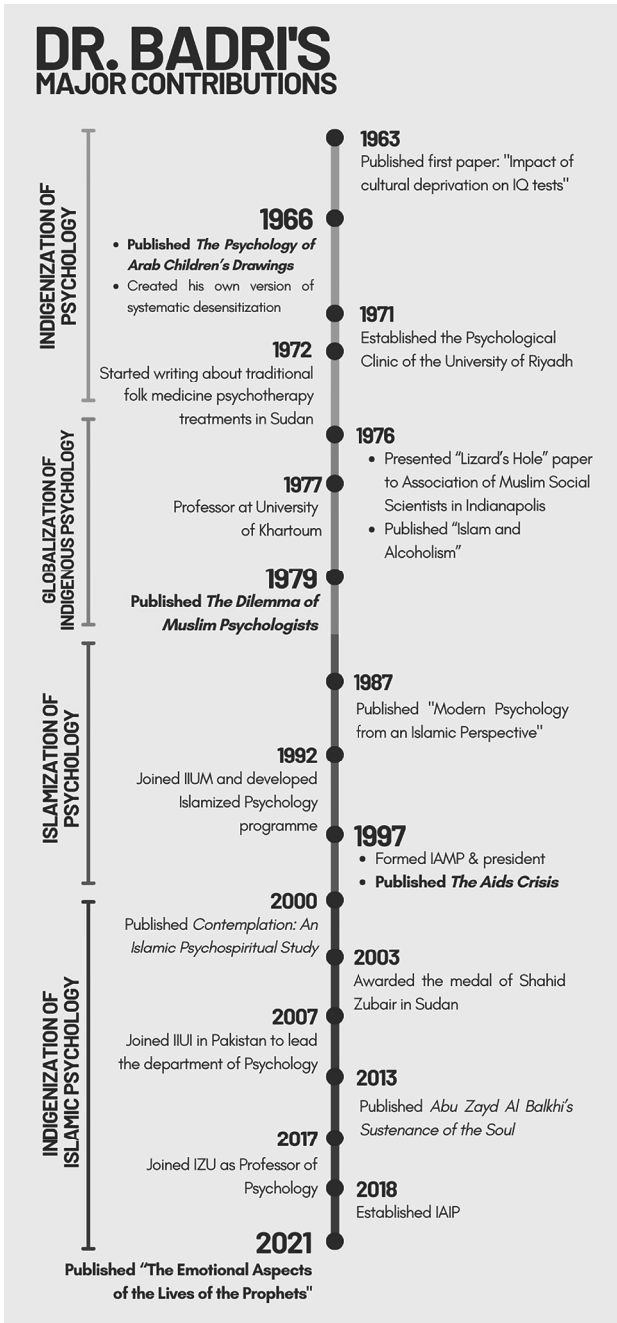
Professor Badri integrated his students into his quest to explore and develop new ideas in the field. His engaging teaching style and sincere passion for the subject was infectious. Badri’s students reflected his love for Islamic psychology and would actively share new ideas they were discovered with their peers both in the dorms and on campus. Students began teaching one another within other fields of study (such as science and social studies) about using critical thinking skills in the face of Western thought and questioning its epistemological paradigms. Badri’s students described the campus as an “electric environment” sparked by his passion and ingenuity.

The Globalization of Indigenous Psychology

Even though Badri taught clinical psychology in a major university, he never shied away from emphasizing the fact that they were in Sudan, in a completely different cultural context than the Western academy. In fact, he proved to be brilliant at indigenizing the knowledge, making it culturally relevant and acceptable. He not only presented indigenized psychology to the Sudanese people but also applied that knowledge to inform the greater field of psychology.

In 1976 Badri produced two journal articles that became highly influential internationally: the first was on the treatment of alcohol and the other on the Islamization of psychology. In his treatment of the topic of alcohol, he drew on Islamic values and focused on the impact of alcohol on societal norms and health epidemics; he later delved deeper into this topic in his AIDS book. Badri’s ideas and insights from his work were directly relevant to major issues of the time and thus proved to be beneficial to non-Muslim psychologists as well. He was especially helpful

Figure 1 – Timeline of Badri’s Major Contributions



to his Western colleagues at international conferences as he shared his knowledge of the non-Western world. During this time, researchers were beginning to explore the role of religion and spirituality in the clinical setting. Badri's views and ideas were incorporated into the development of these researchers' works as he engaged in discussions at major conferences. As a result, Badri contributed to the 12 steps approach for the treatment of alcoholism with a spiritual focus on the need for reliance on God. His views on the role of modernity and its problems, although foreign to the secular field, were well received due to his intelligent and scientifically sound approach. For this reason, Badri's approach and ideas started appearing in curricula and therapy models well beyond the Islamic world.

Islamization of Psychology

The Islamization of psychology became a growing focus of Badri's that grew with and out of his earlier work with the indigenization of psychology. For many years, he pursued both paths alongside each other; the first path focused on contextualizing psychology within culture, whereas the second reflected a vast sea of the Islamic tradition.

As a Sudanese, Arabic-speaking, practicing Muslim who had trained within the Western academy of psychology, Badri recognized the problematic dichotomy between his own faith-centered worldview and his professional career that required him to reject the underlying philosophical assumptions of his religious beliefs. At the time, in the 1960s, the field of psychology was dominated by Freudian theory, which had an inherently negative view of religion and rejected the notion of God as a legitimate factor in the reality of the human psyche. Badri began to develop his own ideas which embraced an inherently Islamic paradigm of psychology based in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Badri's Western academic training in the UK, ability to read and write in English, extensive travels and international career facilitated his work's widespread, global exposure that greatly influenced development of the field of Islamic Psychology.

In his first public lecture at the University of Jordan in 1963, Professor Badri addressed the problem of adopting a Western framework for

Muslim patients and practitioners. The Muslim psychologists attending the lecture were outraged at his assertions and argued that psychology is a pure science and has no place for religion. He continued to be met with resistance and anger from his psychologist colleagues in the Muslim world, who were threatened by what they saw. They viewed his ideas as a regression from the advances made by Muslims who were accepted as legitimate academics in the idealized Western academy. Meanwhile, developments in the field of Western psychology—with the decline of Freudian analysis and the advent of cognitive therapies—included a return to the acceptance of belief and philosophy in psychology. This paved the way for Professor Badri’s message of a unique paradigm of Islamic Psychology to be appreciated, a full decade after his first lecture in Jordan. Ironically, it was in the United States in 1976 when his ideas were first embraced; Badri delivered a lecture titled “Muslim Psychologists in the Lizard’s Hole” at the annual conference of the Association of Islamic Social Scientists in Indianapolis. The positive reception of that lecture prompted him to turn the conference paper into a published book in 1979, by the title of *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*.⁸ This was a watershed moment in the development of Islamic Psychology as a field. Professor Malik Badri was the first psychologist to receive international attention for speaking out against the blind following of the secular paradigm of psychology among Muslim academics and scientists.

In his 1979 book, Badri argued that Western psychology contained elements antagonistic to Islamic perspectives which, if not challenged, would result in a “colonization of the mind”; that, if Muslim psychologists blindly accepted un-Islamic assumptions and theories found in Western Psychology, they would become ensnared in the “lizard’s hole” (1). Badri argued that contemporary schools of psychology have either failed, or are doomed to failure, in meeting the most urgent human needs. This failure is attributed to a basic error in the fundamental approach of such schools in “blurring their boundaries with materialistic philosophical speculations and atheistic arm-chair theories” (23) that foster a distorted image of humans. Badri asserted that detaching psychology from its spiritual aspect would amount to depriving humans from an utmost basic need in life. Furthermore, there is a crucial religious and

spiritual component to life, without which our entire existence becomes shallow and futile. Spirituality must be integrated into our total welfare and is not to be looked upon as fragmentary. He suggested that once we realize this salient fact, we will enjoy “a holistic entity—an intact inner and outer world created by the Supreme Sustainer.” Throughout *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, Badri repeatedly emphasized that Muslim behavioral scientists should not be apologetic about their ideology and beliefs. He identified three phases that Muslim psychologists may experience “in the process of getting in and out of the lizard’s hole” (103): 1) infatuation (accepting the secular approach to psychology and taking pride in their work as a ‘legitimate science’, removed from religion and theology; 2) reconciliation (attempting to bridge their cognitive dissonance by compromising between Islam and psychological theory); and 3) emancipation (coming to the realization that Islam and modern psychology are fundamentally different, and embracing a unique Islamic paradigm of psychology).⁹

Badri believed that Muslim psychologists can develop and reach the final phase of emancipation if they remain motivated and devoted to Islam and seek experiences that cultivate such an understanding. *The Dilemma* hit a proverbial nerve for a generation of Muslims who felt similarly but had not yet fully articulated their beliefs. It popularized the critical analysis of Western psychological theory in light of Islamic beliefs and encouraged younger Muslim psychologists to point out the obvious: that modern Western psychology had lost its soul. Through *The Dilemma*, Badri sparked a new movement to revive Islamic psychology in modern times.

In 1992 Professor Badri joined the International Islamic University in Malaysia (IIUM) and began developing and teaching courses on Islamic Psychology. This marked the beginning of the final phase of evolution in Badri’s thought and contributions toward a spiritual and religiously grounded approach to psychology and psychotherapy. The foundation of Islamic sciences and the cultural positioning of Islam in Malaysian society provided fertile ground for Badri’s ideas to take root. At a conference held at IIUM in 1997, there was an increased enthusiasm for the integration of Islam within the discipline of psychology. These advancements

in Malaysia arose out of a growing movement in the Islamization of knowledge. Thus, while much progress was seen in the Muslim world in its adoption and acceptance of religion within psychology, these advancements were primarily in the integration of Islamic principles within an otherwise secular paradigm of psychology. This method was unfortunately not the overtly Islamic paradigm which Badri had been calling for. During this time, the International Association of Muslim Psychologists (IAMP) was formed, with Professor Badri as its first president. Through IAMP, several conferences were held around the Muslim world in countries such as Sudan, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

1997 also marked a turning point for a shift in Badri's writing and influence. With the publication of his book, *The AIDS Crisis*, Badri found that his voice in advocating for reason and rational thought pertaining to what indigenous and moreover Islamic frameworks and principles have to offer the otherwise secular world of global health.¹⁰ This is where his impact was really acknowledged on a global scale, even outside of the field of psychology, as the secular public health community paid attention to what he had presented. They considered his ideas a viable cause and solution to the ravaging AIDS epidemic at the time. He made a strong argument that the conservative, non-permissive approach toward sexuality practiced in Muslim countries helped decrease the rate of sexual encounters out of wedlock that, in turn, helped bring down the infection rate. Rather than focusing on clean needles and condoms like most scientists and scholars at the time, Badri intelligently asserted that the Islamic paradigm offers a health system that is aligned with a natural order (*fiṭra*) and wisdom (*ḥikma*).

This was another watershed moment for Badri in his work, because he had previously focused on localized topics. This was the first time that he approached his work from a macro perspective by merging all his knowledge and experience in order to see matters on a societal level. *The AIDS Crisis* invited questions on how the Islamic view could serve as a solution to this problem.¹¹ While others were studying micro levels of the epidemic globally, his approach in looking at the larger sociological context was revolutionary. The book reflected Badri's depth of knowledge in health and medical sciences and psychology as well as his

knowledge and mastery of Qur'an and Hadith sciences. It not only gave him the opportunity to integrate all of his knowledge and brilliance, but it helped him unleash his bold ideas without worrying about how the secular scientific world would critique them. This led him into his own personal phase of "emancipation."¹²

Indigenous Islamic Psychology

During the early 2000s, the field of Islam and psychology gradually leaned more towards the development of an Islamic paradigm of psychology, but the distinction between Muslim psychology or Islamized psychology remained a grey area. By this point in his career, Badri began to move into a phase of emancipation with his own works, even if the larger global field was not ready to come along with him. This involved highlighting the sources of 'ilm al-nafs from early Muslim scholars as well as taking a turn toward embracing traditional Islamic spirituality.

This turn is best highlighted in Badri's book *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study*, first published in 2000 and subsequently in multiple languages.¹³ Badri differentiates Islamic contemplation from forms of meditation popularized by Western psychology. He explains that while popularized meditation is primarily derived from Eastern religions and aims at altering states of consciousness, Islamic contemplation is "derived from Qur'anic injunctions and aims to seek insightful knowledge of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe" (2). He brings to light the inability of different schools of psychology to successfully deal with the inner cognitive thoughts and feelings humans experience. Badri criticizes modern psychology's obsession with the "scientific process" that neglects the soul and ignores a human's spiritual essence, despite mounting evidence of its role in human lives. Another unique feature of this book, and one that foreshadows Badri's next major work, is pointing out to the reader how much of what modern cognitive science has achieved was already known to early Muslim scholars like al-Balkhi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, and Ibn al-Qayyim. These scholars described the steps and benefits to contemplation that helps a person reach a state of "spiritual cognition" that then magnetizes them towards God. A true

contemplator, Badri argues, will be able to see how everything in the universe completely submits to God; and it is this perception that will bring them ultimate happiness.

Perhaps one of Badri's best known works is his partial translation and commentary on a ninth-century encyclopedic Muslim scholar's work, titled *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhi's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behavior Therapy of A Ninth Century Physician*.¹⁴ In Badri's words, al-Balkhi was "centuries ahead of his time in realizing the importance of both mental, as well as physical, health for human wellbeing; al-Balkhi discusses some very modern ideas, in a rather modern, self-help style manual." Though al-Balkhi was most famous for his contributions to the field of geography, his masterpiece *Sustenance of the Body and Soul* revealed medical and psychotherapeutic information that was far ahead of his time and only discovered more than eleven centuries after his death. Badri asserts that al-Balkhi was likely the first physician to clearly differentiate between mental and psychological disorders; between neuroses and psychoses. Also, he was perhaps the first to classify psychological disorders in a strikingly modern way and to categorize them into four distinct types: fear and panic (*al-khawf wa al-faza*); anger and aggression (*al-ghadab*); sadness and depression (*al-huzn wa al-jazā*); and obsessions (*al-was-wasa*). Though Badri translated this ancient manuscript verbatim, he added significant footnotes and commentary that drew correlations between al-Balkhi's treatments for psychological illnesses and modern-day treatments used by Western psychologists.

Though Professor Badri's partial translation of al-Balkhi's manuscript was not published until 2013, Badri had discovered this work decades prior. He often spoke about how the recovery of al-Balkhi's work in the early 1990s—after lying untouched for centuries in Istanbul's Ayasofya Library—sparked his interest in searching further to discover the gems of early Muslim scholars that contributed extensively to the understanding of the human psyche. Badri's interest in this topic was infectious. Many of his students felt inspired to return to the primary texts of Muslim scholars in order to better understand psychology from an Islamic lens. Today, these works can be found in various medical journals and published by conventional publishing companies.¹⁵ A

closer look at al-Balkhi's diagnostic classifications and treatments from a modern psychiatric lens prove his precocious genius in having correctly classified and diagnosed Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Phobias nearly a millennium before modern European psychiatrists who were credited with these discoveries.¹⁶ Badri successfully inspired an entire generation of Muslim mental health clinicians to rewrite the narrative from what they were taught in their secular training that either purposely or inadvertently left out Muslim contributions to the field of psychology¹⁷. Professor Badri will always be remembered as a guiding force who encouraged Muslim mental health providers to consult classical Islamic scholarship, reject what they learned at face value, and reassess their Western training vis a vis their Islamic heritage.

The increase of interest and research within the field of Islamic Psychology resulted in the formation of the International Association of Islamic Psychology (IAIP) in 2017.

Badri founded the IAIP as the next step and final phase for Muslim psychologists—what he termed “the phase of emancipation.”¹⁸ His vision for the IAIP was that the field stand firm on an Islamic paradigm by building a comprehensive theory and practice for Islamic Psychology grounded in the ontological assumptions and lessons from the Qur'an and Sunnah. The association aims to be a platform and unifying vehicle for the global Islamic Psychology movement that galvanizes its growth into a full-fledged discipline. This includes the development of research, the dissemination of publications, and the training and certification of practitioners and institutions. IAIP is vital to the development of the field on an international scale; it stands as a regulatory body to ensure that theory and practice are grounded in the Islamic tradition and that the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) work with clinicians to provide integrated, holistic care.

Badri's final book, *The Emotional Aspects in the Lives of the Prophets*, which he managed to complete just months before his passing in 2021, embodied the integration and evolution of his thought.¹⁹ Originally intended to be focused more exclusively on the emotional life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, he decided to expand the work to include the lives of the Prophets. The book uses Qur'anic examples to explore the

emotional aspects of Prophetic stories and provides inspiration on how to approach our own emotional experiences and challenges.

In the second half of the book, Badri expands on the Prophets' resilience in the face of emotional challenges and how it prepared them for their relative missions. He explores the impact of heredity (nature) and environment (nurture) in the context of the *fitrah* and the assertion that although every human being is born pure, it is their upbringing that impacts their relative outcome. He also distils four types of emotional experiences and five types of emotions. The book explores the lessons within the Prophetic stories and infers practical wisdom.

Toward the end of his life, Professor Badri was amid designing a global strategy for the Arab world based on what he considered major pitfalls of our time. This endeavor reflected his personal experiences of spiritual openings and his deep dedication to Islamic spiritual practices. In his final years, Badri continually reminded clinicians to "bring the spiritual into your therapy" and to "look to the example of the Prophet and ask yourself, what would he do?"²⁰ Badri's life work culminated in encouraging us to: (1) explore the vast resource of knowledge in psychology that is found in the Islamic tradition, and (2) root ourselves in the spiritual reality of the human experience.

Conclusion

Professor Malik Badri was the catalyst for the global development of the field of Islamic Psychology. While his world travels enabled him to reach a wide audience, he was influential even in countries he never visited. The impact of his work has reverberated throughout the world and brought attention to the discourse on Islam and psychology as well as the general moral and spiritual perspective of humanity. His striking ability to make complex psychological concepts accessible across cultures and generations transformed the lives of many.

It is difficult to conceive where the state of discourse on Islamic Psychology and Muslim Mental Health would be without Professor Malik Badri's outstanding contributions. The strong stance he took on establishing the importance of Islamic Psychology, the significant weight he

gave to indigenous approaches to psychology, the qualities of moral and personal excellence he embodied, and his compassionate, impassioned role as an educator, therapist, and a guide will be his legacy for many generations to come. His legacy is founded on a lifetime of service. With this, Badri will be remembered as one of the 20th and 21st centuries' most influential Muslim intellectual thinkers and reformers.

Endnotes

- 1 Malik Badri, "The Influence of Cultural Deprivation on the Goodenough Quotients of Sudanese Children," *Journal of Psychology* (1963).
- 2 Malik Badri, "A New Technique in Systematic Desensitization of Pervasive Anxiety and Phobic Reactions," *Journal of Psychology* (1966): 201.
- 3 Badri, "The Influence of Cultural Deprivation."
- 4 Malik Badri, *The Psychology of Arab Children's Drawings* (Beirut: Al-Fath Publishers, 1966).
- 5 Ahmad Al-Safi, *Traditional Sudanese Medicine: A Primer for Health Care Providers, Researchers, and Students* (Khartoum: Azza House, 2007).
- 6 Malik Badri, "Customs, Traditions and Psychopathology," *Sudan Medical Journal* 37, no. 3 (1972).
- 7 Ahmed Shennan, "Developments and Characteristics of Islamic Psychology in Sudan" in *Islamic Psychology Around the Globe*, ed. Amber Haque & Abdallah Rothman (Seattle: International Association of Islamic Psychology, 2021), 258-274.
- 8 Malik Badri, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists* (London: MWH London, 1979).
- 9 *Ibid.*, 104.
- 10 Malik Badri, *The AIDS Crisis: An Islamic Sociocultural Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1997).
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 See Badri's phases of infatuation, reconciliation, and emancipation: Badri, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, 103-104.
- 13 Malik Badri, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (Washington: Publications of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000).
- 14 Abu Zayd al-Balkhi & Malik Badri, *Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician*, (London; Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013).
- 15 For example, see Amber Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective: Contributions of Early Muslim Scholars and Challenges to Contemporary Muslim Psychologists," *Journal of Religion and Health* 43, no. 4 (2004): 357-377; R. Awaad, A. Mohammad, K. Elzamzamy, S. Fereydooni, and M. Gamar, "Mental Health in the Islamic Golden Era: The Historical Roots of Modern Psychiatry," in *Islamophobia and Psychiatry: Recognition, Prevention and Treatment*, ed. H.S. Moffic, J. Peteet, A. Hankir, and R. Awaad (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2019); and R. Awaad, D. Elsayed, S. Ali, and A. Abid, "Islamic Psychology: A Portrait of Its Historical Origins and Contributions," in *Applying Islamic Principles to Clinical Mental Health Care: Introducing Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy*, ed. H. Keshavarzi, F. Khan, B. Ali, and R. Awaad (Oxford: Routledge, 2020).

- 16 Rania Awaad & Sara Ali, "A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia in al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 37 (2016): 89-93 and "Obsessional Disorders in al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 180 (2015): 185-189.
- 17 For example, see Rasjid Skinner, "Traditions, Paradigms and Basic Concepts in Islamic Psychology," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58 (2019): 1087-1094; H. Keshavarzi, F. Khan, B. Ali, and R. Awaad, *Applying Islamic Principles to Clinical Mental Health Care: Introducing Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy* (Oxford: Routledge, 2020); and Abdallah Rothman, *Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: Islamic Theology and Contemporary Understandings of Psychology* (London: Routledge, 2021).
- 18 See Badri's phases of infatuation, reconciliation, and emancipation: *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, 103-104.
- 19 Malik Badri, *The Emotional Aspects of the Lives of the Prophets* (Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2021).
- 20 Malik Badri, International Association of Islamic Psychology Certificate Course Video.