



## ***Īmān* Restoration Therapy (IRT): A New Counseling Approach and its Usefulness in Developing Personal Growth of Malay Adolescent Clients**

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### **Abstract**

Over the years, it has become a trend that those in mental health professions, especially counselors and psychologists are less religious, even atheistic due to their secular belief system. This is coupled with their diminutive efforts to link spirituality and science in most of their research works and intellectual frameworks in relation to counseling and treating psychological illnesses. However, it has been found in recent past that three quarters of counselors, even with secular and Christian belief system, reported using spirituality as an intervention tool in their research. This significant finding reflects the growing realization on the significance of religion and spirituality as an effective psychotherapeutic intervention. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine *īmān* Restoration Therapy, a new psychotherapeutic approach which is based on the study of the Qur'an, *Sunnah* and the works of early Muslim scholars, as a new counseling approach in developing personal growth of Malay adolescent clients. Through a single case study design, data was collected from interview and counseling sessions from an undergraduate student at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). With the emergence of seven themes, results revealed that maintaining ones faith in Allah SWT can bring about a positive functioning in one's cognitive, emotive, behavior and motivational components and attain spiritual intuition that fosters religious faith and meaningful living. Implications and suggestions for further studies are duly illustrated.

**Keywords:** *Īmān* Restoration Therapy, faith, psycho-spirituality, psychotherapy, human nature.

### **Abstrak**

Saban tahun, trend menunjukkan golongan yang berkhidmat dalam profesion kesihatan mental terutamanya kaunselor dan ahli psikologi kurang mementingkan nilai keagamaan malah bersikap ateis kesan daripada kepercayaan sekular. Bukan itu sahaja, mereka juga secara halus sering mengaitkan spiritual dan sains dalam kebanyakan kajian dan kerangka intelek apabila memberi kaunseling dan merawat pesakit mental. Namun begitu, akhir-akhir ini didapati tiga perempat daripada kaunselor yang terdiri daripada golongan sekular dan beragama Kristian telah menggunakan ajaran spiritual dalam penyelidikan mereka. Dapatan ini menunjukkan sudah ada kesedaran bahawa agama dan spiritual memainkan peranan penting dan efektif dalam program psikoterapi. Justeru, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti Terapi Pemulihan *iman*, satu kaedah baharu psikoterapi yang berasaskan hasil kajian Al-Qur'an, *Sunnah* dan kerja para sarjana awal Muslim, sebagai kaedah baharu kaunseling bagi mengembangkan peribadi klien remaja Melayu. Berdasarkan satu kes kajian, data dikumpulkan melalui temu duga dan sesi kaunseling pelajar-pelajar di Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia. Berasaskan tujuh tema, keputusan menunjukkan keimanan seseorang kepada Allah SWT dapat membantu mencapai fungsi kognitif, emosi, tingkah laku dan motivasi yang positif serta memperoleh intuisi spiritual yang menggalakkan kepercayaan keagamaan dan hidup bermakna. Implikasi dan cadangan untuk kajian lanjutan turut diberi.

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**Kata kunci:** Terapi Pemulihan *īmān* , iman, psikospiritual, psikoterapi, sifat semula jadi manusia.

## **Introduction**

Over the years, it has become a popular belief that those in mental health professions, especially psychiatrists and psychologists are less religious, even atheistic, due to their secular belief system. Recent findings have supported this position. For example, Foskett (1996) indicates that psychiatrists hold far fewer religious beliefs than their patients. This can be linked to the view of Badri (2001) who posits that Western psychological perspectives, either subscribing to the school of humanistic psychology, physiological or cognitive psychology, behaviourism or psychoanalysis, are all raised from a secular worldview that refutes the concept of soul. This is coupled with their meager effort to link spirituality and science in most of their researches and intellectual framework in relation to counseling and treating psychological illness. In a survey of religiosity among psychologists conducted by Bergin and Jensen (1990), it was found that psychologists showed lower rates of conventional religious affiliation and participation

However, as more questions and problems continue to remain unanswered and unsolved, there tends to emerge the considering of religion and spirituality in the field of medicine and mental health professions. This is supported by the growing interest of Western medical and helping professions like psychologists and counselors having greater consideration of religious issues and spiritual ideas that relate to their professions. In recent past, it has been found that over three quarters of counselors in their research reported using spirituality as an intervention tool, in which the participants that engaged in these researches are of Christian and secular orientation (Morrison et al. 2009).

With a link to existentialism, the exclusion and neglect of religion and spirituality by Western-oriented therapists has contributed to a client's lack of sense of meaning and purpose in life which is a major stressor that contributes to anxiety and depression. Badri (1979) views that "will to meaning" stands as a basic human characteristic of which whoever lacks it can be exposed to existential vacuum as a result of frustration as it manifests in times of anxiety and boredom.

Existential anxiety, if not managed, leads to what Frankl (1985) calls "noogenic neurosis", which manifests as a result of moral and spiritual conflict

(Badri 1979). Besides, Bourne (1975) describes this in the following:

This is a vague sense of tension, boredom, perhaps, even "quiet desperation" that arises from feeling held back, for one reason or another, from being all that you can be. You live with a feeling of incompleteness - a sense that something vital is missing - although you may not consciously recognise what it is. If someone were to ask you, "where is your life going?" or "what do you think your life is about?" you would tend to have trouble answering. Or you might think of things, which, on further reflection, don't seem "quite enough" to make your life as meaningful as you would like it to be (p. 379).

Only religion can provide reasonable, meaningful and satisfactory answers to these existential questions (Abdul Razak 2005). In Bourne's (1975) terms, man is not alone, and that we are connected to a spiritual being "a Higher Power". Our Higher Power is not an abstract Being that creates or sustains the universe; He is a Force, Power, or Presence with which you can enter into a personal relationship. Based on how in-depth this personal relationship is with our Higher Power, man can experience the fruits of guidance and support. He posits that guidance can be attained in the form of clear intuitions and insights that bring about the divine direction on how to act and conduct ourselves. On the other hand, support comes in the form of an enthusiasm that helps to raise and sustain us in depressive states and disappointments.

Recently, mental health professionals have begun examining the credible importance of religious faith and spirituality in the lives of individuals suffering from a range of acute and persistent illnesses. In a study carried out by Pardini (2009), the relationship between religious faith, spirituality and mental health outcome in 236 individuals recovering from substance abuse was investigated. It was found that patients tend to report high levels of religious faith and religious attachment and that among improving individuals, higher levels of religious faith and spirituality are correlated with a more positive life orientation, greater perceived social support, higher resilience to stress and lower levels of anxiety.

So, with all these empirical evidences supporting the contributions of religion and spiritual dimensions towards physical and psychological well-being, client's spiritual and religious intuition may be

supporting tools in the therapeutic endeavor (Frame 2003). As most studies linking the impact of religiousity and spirituality to mental health were carried out in the West among non-Muslim participants, conducting and establishing a holistic psycho-spiritual therapy for Muslims will not only be a huge contribution to knowledge, and also a step forward cross-cultural psychological research in general.

### **Islamic Counseling and Psychotherapy**

Western counseling and psychotherapy cannot attain cognitive, emotional and behavioural peace if they continue to exclude the vital role of human spiritualism. Therefore, before an attempt at appreciating and identifying the principles, methods, and processes of Islamic counseling and psychotherapy, we should take into consideration the basic concepts of human nature and potentialities according to the Islamic perspective (Haq 1997).

In the assertions by Hamzah and Maitafsir (2002), Islamic psychotherapy aims to build the understanding that human being is naturally good and has special purposes of existence in this world. It aims to foster a balanced personality in the client - from his physiological and rational to his emotional and spiritual. Furthermore, Islamic psychotherapy helps in creating consciousness of Allah's existence and the conviction in improving the client's faith. A verse reads,

*"Nay, whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good, he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve"*  
[The Qur'an 2: 112]

Shah (1997), for instance, asserts that the bedrock of Islamic psychotherapy cut across the social, moral, and religious values in the cause of any counseling and psychotherapeutic program. Ahmed (2001) opines that Islamic counseling patterns and psychotherapies provide the client with a sense of security, recognition, and self worth towards becoming a changed person, enabling the client to accept reality and strengthening the coping mechanisms.

### **Islamic Concept of Human Nature**

Man is good and he possesses all the potentials to maintain this goodness quality for good. Allah (SWT) says,

*"But God has endeared to you faith and has beautified it in your hearts and has made disbelief and lewdness and rebellion hateful to you"*

[The Qur'an 49: 7]

However, Al-Attas (1990) is of the view that despite this creation in the best of moulds, a person without true faith and good works can become worse than the lowly beast. Allah (SWT) says, "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds. Then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low. Except such as believe and do righteous deeds: For they shall have a reward unfailing" (The Qur'an 95: 4-6). Besides, the two components of human nature, that is, the spiritual (soul) and the physical (body) elements mutually constitute the bedrock of a holistic mental and spiritual functioning. As Abdul Razak (2005) puts it, "the soul is the driver of the body, and the body is fashioned to be the vehicle of the soul".

Al-Ghazali (1954) analyzes the soul as a superior entity that controls the intellect and then, the physical body. He posits that people without a balanced soul will be unable to restrain their anger and keep their instinctual drives and whims under control, which can make them susceptible to anxiety and other related psychological problems. Looking at the soul as the nucleus of man's spirituality, al-Ghazali (1997) stresses on the purification of the soul in order to empower it against these opposing drives and aggressive instincts. He also views that psychopathology is of two dimensions; the physical and spiritual dimension, and he mentioned that nearness to Allah leads to normal soul and body functioning.

So, based on this Islamic perspective of human nature, the spiritual and the physical spheres are intertwined. This is to mean that human behaviour is a reflection of the state of his soul, as these actions equally influence the spiritual soul in turn. In al-Ghazali's (1958) view, the heart is the introspective organ of the soul that is responsible for contemplating about Allah (SWT). He opines that the heart is also of two meanings. Firstly is that of the physical heart, that is, the piece of flesh in the breast of man which is the center for blood circulation. However, the heart according to Murata and Chittick (1994), also functions as the spiritual organ of the body. This is a more vital meaning of the heart which can be referred to the spiritual function of the soul. They opine that the heart receives and enlightens the

person with the knowledge of God and all in the spiritual sphere.

It is clear that in this sense, the heart differentiates man from all other non-human beings. As regard to the '*aql*' (intellect), al-Ghazali (1995) portrays intelligence as the noblest human attribute, and the key to ultimate felicity. He regards it as the privileged tool for receiving celestial illumination and grasping the inner science of exposing the heart to the experiential knowledge of God. It is based on these spiritual dimensions of man that personality develops and acquires all its covert qualities and potentials along the line of his natural model.

### **Iman Factor and Related Features**

*Iman* (faith) is the first fundamental principle among the pillars of Islam, and what makes a Muslim a true servant of Allah (SWT). It is reflected in the belief and actions of a Muslim, and fluctuates according to the dimensions of the person's state of choosing righteousness or evil doings. In the words of Al-Ghazali (1995), in his famous book, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Iman* is a phenomenon that is subject to increase and decrease. It increases by good deeds and decreases by evil deeds. Islam, being a practical religion, upholds the inseparable link between belief and actions. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says, "*When a fornicator fornicates, he ceases to be a believer at the time*". According to Abdul Razak (2005), *Iman Restoration Therapy (IRT)* has come to restore in man his true spiritual human nature and upholds the platform that human spiritualism is a major factor in man's psychological and mental problems. *Iman* (faith) in Islam is the utterance with the tongue, belief in the heart and actions of the limbs in the pillars of Islam. It increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience. The fundamental articles of faith in Islam are six. These includes; Belief in Allah (SWT), His angels, His books, His Messengers, belief in the last day, and belief in destiny. Allah (SWT) says:

*O believers! Keep faith in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has sent down upon His Messenger and the Book which has been sent down before. And who denies Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day, then certainly he strayed far way*

[The Qur'an 4: 136]

It is this belief entity that controls the various organs in human functioning. The heart, soul and mind which constitute the spiritual-cognitive entity are influenced by the status of an individual's faith and Allah's consciousness. With this development, school counselors are expected to explore the positive elements of the clients' physical, emotional, and spiritual potentials in helping them to be relieved of the psychological problems. Besides, based on the matured state of an adolescent, spirituality becomes part of his personal development, which invariably becomes an influential factor in career and vocational development (Rhea 2004). According to Piaget (1967), the motive why spiritual issues are more of a concern during adolescence than earlier in a person's life may be partly due to the development of the ability to think abstractly.

Fowler's (1981) model of spiritual development places faith as a comprehensive and genuine human experience, and a universal quality of meaning building. Fowler postulates that people in late adolescence and young adults bring forward the stage of Individuative-Reflective Faith. This is where clarity of faith is gained through the process of analyzing meanings and translating them into abstract formulations. Paloutzian (1996) asserts that this is the stage where adolescents possess an ironic disposition of being more religious. He further postulates that their inner meanings and beliefs with external relationships like religious doctrines, a Supreme Being, natural signs, are united by spirituality.

Looking at human nature from a divine angle, man's psychological well-being and mental functioning is a role of the interplay between its spiritual and physical forces. Haq (1997) asserts that this interaction of soul with the physical body has provided man with tremendous promises as well as extraordinary regards for his personality development. Al-Ghazali (1954) mentions that this spiritual entity is of two dimensions: the upward and downward spheres. The upward, which is the uppermost level of human psyche, connects the spiritual realm, and the downward sphere is related to the sensory organs which are connected to the body. Shah (2005) adds that human nature according to Islam is based on these innate goodness and divine guidance in man called *fitrah*.

Badri (2000) further explained that, "An enriched heart with *Iman* and Allah's consciousness can easily detect the evil thought that passes through it,

confines it, and diffuses its effects, just as a sound immune system in the body detects the intrusion of germs and antigens, besieges it, and destroys it with specialized antibodies” (p. 14). This is in line with Allah’s words:

*“Those who fear God when an evil thought from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to mind, and lo! They see clearly”*

[The Qur’an 7: 201]

It is based on this platform a well-encompassing and comprehensive psycho-spiritual framework be established in the realm of modern-day psychotherapy. Based on this platform, we could deduce that it is only psycho-spiritual oriented therapies like IRT that can best resolve human mental, spiritual, and psychological problems. Besides, the lack of *Iman* (faith) which is linked to psychopathology as illustrated above calls for an approach which can meaningfully and effectively restore it in the human psycho-spiritual system.

### **Adolescent’s Spiritual and Psychological Development**

Adolescent health in the Western world has become a growing concern among professionals since it has been shown that the majority of deaths and disabilities that occur within this age range are largely due to behavioural problems. A total of 75% of adolescent deaths can be accounted for by preventable injuries, including accidental drug overdose and gunshot wounds, suicide and homicide (Sells & Blum, 1996). Adolescence is a stage where young people tend to display various forms of maladaptive behaviours as a result of psychological, social, and spiritual malfunctioning. It was evident when during the 8th United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, experts and delegates from the entire globe presented various reports as regards to youth crimes and the dilemma of juvenile delinquents (United Nations, 1990).

As reports reflected prevalence in Western countries, Eastern countries and Asian/Pacific region reported high youth crimes in connection to drug-related and violent crimes in urban areas (Reichel, 1999). Specifically, research reports revealed that Malaysian youths suffer a huge number of behavioural problems as a result of emotional breakdown. When compared to Western adolescent

problems, the prevalence of mental health problems somehow differs. In a study of 307 Malaysian students, some differences were observed in the prevalence of mental health problems between primary and secondary school students. Results revealed that those in secondary school reported higher rates of depression, while primary school children reported higher rates of social problems (Teoh & Peng, 2001).

In addition, Liao, et al. (2003) examined the influence of emotional intelligence on problem behaviours in Malaysian secondary school students. 203 participants were selected from four secondary schools in urban areas in Malaysia where the students completed a pencil-and-paper survey in the classroom. Results of the study reveal that lower levels of emotional literacy were linked to higher levels of internalizing behavior crises such as stress, depression, somatic complaints, and with higher levels of externalizing behavioral problems, such as aggression and delinquency. It was also reported that high levels of such behaviour outcomes in childhood and adolescence were associated with psychological maladjustment in adolescence and adulthood.

In solving these psychological problems of Malay adolescents and contributing to the spiritual, cognitive and behavioral developments, the IRT approach seeks to develop, through a comprehensive faith-based approach, the spiritual and psychological well-being of young men and women by uplifting basic coping skills, stress management, psychological adjustment, leadership skills, awareness of mental health, and creating the awareness on the importance of the quality of life. These are essential factors that help young adults to manage their daily personal and situational issues. More so, this new counseling approach may contribute to aspects of students' self development like decision making, problem solving, and interpersonal skills.

### **IRT’s Framework as a Counseling and Psychotherapeutic Approach**

Islam as holistic system takes into account all facets of man, be it spiritual, cognitive, emotional, or behavioural. Based on Al-Ghazali’s (1995) cognitive restructuring, Abdul Razak (2005) postulates three main dimensional therapeutic frameworks for an effective treatment of psycho-spiritual problems. These include knowledge instilment, inner struggle,

and discipline. This framework is illustrated in the Figure 2 below.

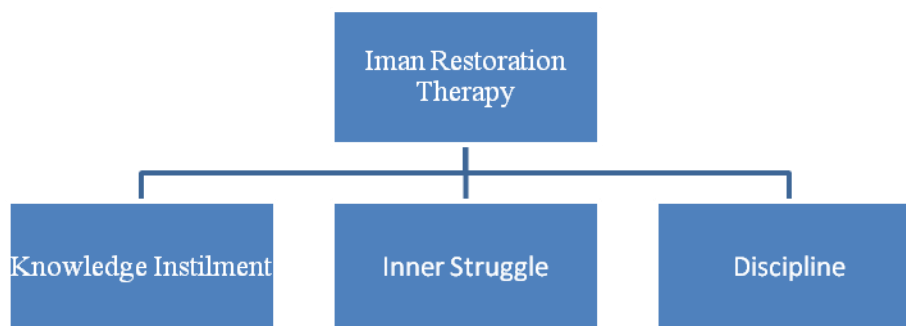


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of IRT

This framework portrays a comprehensive approach that cuts across the components of human psycho-spiritual functioning. Knowledge instilment can be categorized as the bedrock of an accurate and efficient means towards moulding a person's cognitive functioning in respect to thinking, belief and reasoning. Based on the comprehensiveness of this knowledge, inner struggle according to the framework, reflects the striving force between good and evil, reason and passion which can be linked to human spiritual and emotional functioning, while discipline has to do with the effort and actions a person adopts towards actualising the accumulated knowledge platform and the outcome from the inner struggle as externalized behavior through bodily organs. Below is a theoretical analysis of the IRT framework.

### **Knowledge instilment.**

Knowledge instilment centres on seeking various kinds of knowledge that are embedded in our beliefs and cognitive processes. According to Abdul Razak (2005), it is this true and convinced knowledge that will therefore engender true and certain beliefs. Consequently, these beliefs will help a person develop spiritual motives to fight against unreasonable and harmful thoughts which are later, if not isolated, transform into negative behaviours. In addition, he asserts that a person needs to take specific drugs or good nourishment to gain sound antibodies in order to strengthen the immunity of the body system. For the heart, the best immunization is by instilling true and certain knowledge in building a sound cognitive ability.

This comprises of four basic knowledge that involve the divine and human existence, namely the knowledge about (a) the true nature of God; (b) the true nature of man; (c) the nature of this world; (d) the nature of the next world (*al-Akhirah*). A true and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of these four basic aspects can strengthen an individual's belief and cognitive ability to differentiate between good from evil; humility from arrogance; generosity from greed; and certainty from doubt. However, every

person's actions can be linked to the outcome of the individual's inner struggle and discipline.

### **Inner struggle (*Mujahadah*).**

Though used interchangeably with discipline, inner struggle, in the psycho-spiritual sense, means an individual striving against his animalistic soul to avert himself from falling into Islamically forbidden practices (Abdul Razak 1999). It is in this sense that the corrupted heart can become cleaned and refined by struggling against the traits of the lower soul. If man follows the dictates of anger and desire, the control of *shaytan* appears in him through idle passions and his heart becomes the nesting-place and an abode for *shaytan* who feeds on his passionate life. If he does fight his passions and does not let them dominate his soul, he thus decides to emulate the character of the angels, at that time his heart becomes the resting-place of angels and they alight upon it. So, whoever is able to strive and gain victory over evil and the negative side of his soul in this psycho-spiritual war can said to have attained a life free of any form of cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioural problems.

### **Discipline (*Riyadah*)**

This is one of the phases of human psycho-spiritual therapeutic process which implies the procedure by which the inner soul of man is gradually trained to ward-off abnormal traits and replace them with good behaviors (Abdul Razak 2005). *Riyadah* (discipline) is derived from the Arabic work *rawada* which means to train one's inner soul and detaching it from its negative habits in the course of replacing them with uprightness. The meaning of discipline according to At-Tirmidhi can be categorized into refining one's character, avoiding frivolous activities, and bearing of pain. These are the elements of purifying one's soul from evil traits, enhancing good character, and solemnly undertaking actions in facing hardship and unpleasantness while one's desire is opposed (as cited in Abdul Razak 2005).

### **Research Methodology**

The research design for this study is a single-case study of a new counselling approach for the psychological and spiritual growth of Malay adolescent clients. This approach is chosen because it is necessary to explore the psycho-spiritual position of the client regarding how faith fosters positive psychological and spiritual functioning. According to Creswell (2003), "a case study is appropriate when a researcher wishes to explore a program, event, activity, or process thoroughly" (p. 73). Besides, it allows the researcher to explore individuals through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes (Yin, 2003). This approach is valuable for health science research to develop theory, assess programmes, and develop interventions because of its flexibility and dogmatism (Baxter & Jack 2008).

Based on the concept, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) define case studies as having three components. First, while case studies can focus on an individual person, more often than not, case studies focus on a phenomenon. This study focuses on the impact of faith on adolescents' psycho-spiritual functioning. The environment in which this study was carried out is the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The interview sessions took place during a period of 4-7 weeks, which took place at the counseling room in the Department of Psychology. Lastly, the case study was deeply rooted in the source of information gathered from the study which involved face-to-face interviews, natural observation and field notes.

Moreover, the counselling sessions were conducted in Bahasa Melayu as a means of

communicating in the best language the participants understand. It is believed that in qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument through which the data are collected (Creswell 2003). This research is conducted by a team of psychologists and counsellors in IIUM. The principal researcher is Assistant Professor Abdul Latif Abdul Razak, the current Head of General Studies Department, IIUM. Other members of the research team includes Dr. Mardiana Mohamed (Department of Psychology, IIUM), Dr. Alizi Alias (Department of Psychology, IIUM), Kalsom Wan Adam (Counseling Unit, IIUM), and Nordinah Mohd Kasim (Counseling Unit, IIUM).

### **Analysis of Results**

The objective of this study is to examine and establish a new counseling approach and its usefulness in developing personal growth of Malay adolescent clients. From the thematic analysis of the counseling sessions verbatim, it was discovered that Akila, a voluntary client who had undergone *iman* Restoration Therapy (IRT), had experienced observable constructive changes. The constructive changes refer to initial positive changes mentioned by her in the counseling sessions. The constructive changes are the themes that emerged from the transcribed verbatim of the participant. The themes include positive changes in emotion, positive changes in motivation, positive changes in behavior, realization on the significance of prayer, realization on the responsibility of a servant, positive changes in cognition, spiritual insight and personal changes.

#### **Theme One**

This theme indicates the positive emotional changes the participant experienced as a result of the psycho-spiritual therapy she underwent. She experienced some signs of relief, reduced sadness and anger as a result of some religious acts of worship and spiritual counseling. It could be deduced that the negative feelings she had towards self and her parents can be said to have been reduced when her negative state of mind was alternated. This can be linked to Mathews, Larson and Barry's (1993) position that faith is involved with reduced depression and anxiety.

#### **Theme Two**

Based on the emerging themes, a positive change in motivation is another psychological improvement the participant experienced. It was noticed that the

holistic nature of IRT did not only encourage the participant towards her spiritual activities, but also her academic studies which can be linked to Frame (2003) who said that psycho-spiritual factors like a client's spiritual and religious intuitions may be a supporting tools in the therapeutic endeavour.

### **Theme Three**

This is a theme that reflects the two dimensions of human nature, the soul and body, in action. The participant's emotional aggression towards her father was first modified with an intention to act before being able to actualize the action. Thus, the sub-theme of behavioural intention which is an attempt to change her negative behaviour to a more positive behaviour was followed with a complete modification of the former. Here, the effect of IRT can be linked to that of Cognitive Behavior Therapy; however, the difference is that as the former incorporates the entire spiritual, cognitive and physical human components, the latter focuses on body and thought. In *Surat al-Rum*, verse 30, the Qur'an explains how the inherent nature that human beings incline towards naturally reflects their inclination to goodness.

### **Theme Four**

This theme along with the first three indicates Akila's positive improvement in her attitude towards psycho-social functioning. Normal cognitive functioning can be altered by internal and external factors, and Akila's emotional pain and behavioural concerns tend to affect her focus on academic pursuits. However, as she narrated, it was quite clear that an intervention approach like IRT did help her through her inner struggle, to restore an individual's normal emotional and cognitive functioning. Haq (1997) also mentions that the lowest level of the impelling self, which is dominated by brute passions, has a devastating effect on higher cognitive processes of the heart, and the transformed reproaching self which is filled with constant awareness, engages in an incessant strive to get rid of whimsical desires through constant assessment in the light of reasoning.

### **Theme Five**

This theme is the spiritual sense a Muslim adolescent possesses which in most cases is uplifted through the practice of religious duties like prayer and fasting. Here, Akila recognized the impact of prayer in her effort to maintain well-being. IRT being a psycho-spiritual therapy upholds that prayer is a religious

ritual that is properly designed to ensure maintenance of human physical, psychological and spiritual well-being. Hence, the combination of religious practice and spiritual intuition produces the desired results for Akila as she confirmed a very positive change in her behaviours, becoming motivated to pray and then starting to experience the impacts of prayer. This can be linked to the findings of Pardini (2009) who found that higher levels of religious faith and spirituality are correlated with a more positive life orientation among improving individuals.

### **Theme Six**

This is a theme that can be related to some earlier quoted verses of the Holy Qur'an where it is indicated that submitting to God's will makes one realize his ultimate meaning and purpose in life. IRT, just like logotherapy, posits that most human problems do occur when a person disregards the meaning and purpose of his existence. Besides, Islam mentions that this purpose largely centres on submitting to God's will through worship. As in the case of Akila, she realized not being a true servant of God was as a result of her poor relationship with Allah (SWT) and with her parents. This is due to her failure to attain spiritual connection with Allah (SWT) through her prayers, coupled with the emotional anger for her father. However, after some sessions with the counselor, the realization that a person is merely a servant of Allah (SWT) illuminated her heart. She started acknowledging her connection to God and became sensitive to basic articles of faith in Allah and destiny in which she started feeling that everything that happened whether in accordance with her will or not was the product of God's wisdom. This outcome can be related to Bourne (1995) who posits that humans are connected to a Spiritual Being (a Higher Power) with which we can enter into a personal relationship that can lead to the benefit of experiencing the fruits of guidance and support. This, in addition, is supported by the Qur'an in *Surat al-Ra'd*, verse 28.

### **Theme Seven**

One of IRT's objectives is to instill in the clients the necessary knowledge that facilitates their personal growth. This knowledge helps clients in triggering their spiritual insights which are the keys towards happiness and tranquility. A person experiencing psychological or emotional strains can be said to be void of this, however, possessing the psycho-spiritual



understanding and discipline helps in attaining a balanced psychological and spiritual functioning. It can be deduced from Akila's expressions that she experienced some spiritual insights at certain times in the course of the therapeutic intervention. These situations includes when the counselor inspired her with the mercy and compassion of Allah (SWT) against wrongdoings, eventual experience in links to Allah's (SWT) destiny for her life, and the guidance factor that emanated from the counselor-client relationship. This can also be correlated with Bourne's (1995) assertions that an individual that has a relationship with God attains guidance (intuitions and insights that bring about the divine direction on how to act and conduct himself/herself), and support (that comes in the form of an enthusiasm that helps to raise and sustain one in depressive states and disappointments).

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this research on the new psycho-spiritual therapeutic approach for the personal growth of Malay adolescent clients are an addition to the development of knowledge with regard to the connection between psychotherapy and spirituality. This research found that adolescent's mental health is a function of cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioural wellness on one hand, and attainment of spiritual intuition and religiosity on the other. It is of note that *Iman* Restoration Therapy (IRT) incorporates the essence of knowledge as it applies to physical and spiritual realms of human existence, inner struggle that facilitates the effective functioning of the basic components of human nature, and lastly supports the behavioural approach that helps humans in living a meaningful life, illustrating the essence why Muslim psychologists and counselors need to incorporate the holistic psycho-spiritual techniques into research and practice.

In addition, there is a need for training programmes related to psycho-spiritual therapy like IRT for counselors and psychologists. This is because clients that are spiritual and religious in nature may need to undergo intervention and treatment sessions that will help in restoring and fostering their spiritual strength in order to attain normal psychological functioning. More so, awareness of spiritual content and developing a theory that incorporates the body and soul variables of human functioning remain a target for both religious and secular counselors and psychologists. As most Western therapists and

counselors adopt a one-sided approach, there is urgent need for non-Western counselors to adopt a holistic approach to treatment like IRT in their research and practice. There is urgent need for this due to the fact that even spiritually oriented research studies carried out by Western counselors were conducted among participants that are of Christian and secular orientations (Morrison et. al., 2009). The current study involved five Muslim psychologists and counselors with a Muslim participant; the discovery further highlights the importance of psycho-spiritual understanding in the process of accessing client psycho-social and spiritual functioning.

Furthermore, providing formal training during graduate courses, postgraduate supervision, seminars and workshops should be undertaken to assist in the development of more viable techniques that address clients' psycho-spiritual resources and more research variable options. However, issues related to spirituality can be very elusive; there is great need for therapists and counselors to identify and understand the connection of their spiritual concepts with that of the clients'. Besides, it is important that counselors adopt and utilize the spiritual concepts of the clients they offer sessions to as this may include using the spiritual or religious phrases used by the clients, and honoring their beliefs. This will better foster the smooth relationship and rapport between the clients and the counselor, as Keeling et al. (2010) reveal cases on spiritual issues between clients and therapists show that similarity and differences of spiritual concepts in the therapeutic process play an important role in the counseling relationship.

The limitations of the method used in this qualitative study include the inability to provide generalizability, small sample size and snowball sample participant issues. Boss, Doherty, and LaRossa (2008) argue that the large amount of time and effort required completing an in-depth interview, the mastery required to gather and code information, and the manner in which the researcher interprets the material can be limitations to any qualitative study which includes in-depth interviews.

This study may have opened possibilities for future study. One area of study could be the investigation of people's perceptions of psycho-spiritual components like the mind, soul, etc., in relation to their psychological well-being. Another study could involve a quantitative research that seeks to develop theories and variables that need to be examined. This research would provide information

on how variables can be investigated in relation to correlating psycho-spiritual variables and personality factors. In relation to the current study, new themes could be discovered when an experimental research is conducted to know the cause and effect of an approach like IRT and discover the influence of other extraneous religious factors on such research. Besides, this would utilize a larger sample and may assist with generalizability. This research may also serve to affirm the themes that are discovered throughout this study

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