

Beyond Secular Emotional Intelligence: An Islamic Model of Self-Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Self-awareness is considered as an important aspect for the study of Emotional Intelligence (EI); but the dominant models of EI are mostly based on secular cognitive and behavioral approach that fails to explain the moral and spiritual aspect of self in Islamic context. Although there is a lack of research on emotions in the context of Muslim education. This study aims at tackling the shortcoming of the existing EI models in explaining self-awareness in Muslim context as a phenomenon which is also tied to the concepts of accountability, purification, and ethical self-regulation. Using a qualitative conceptual methodology based on the *Qur'an*, *Sunnah*, and relevant Islamic psychological concepts, the study proposes the *Fiqh al-Nafs* Self-Awareness Model. The model conceptualizes self-awareness through four core faculties; *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, and *rūḥ* and five interrelated processes; *muhāsabah*, *shu'ūr*, *ma'rifat al-nafs*, *tazkiyah*, and *mujāhadah*. Unlike conventional EI frameworks that emphasize emotional recognition and regulation for personal or social effectiveness, this model frames self-awareness as a process of moral evaluation, spiritual accountability, and inner reform. In addition to offering an Islamic grounded theoretical framework, the study provides a conceptual basis for the future development and empirical validation of assessment tools for self-awareness-related EI among Muslim undergraduate students.

Keywords: Self-Awareness, Emotional Intelligence, Islamic Psychology, *Fiqh al-Nafs*, *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*, *Qalb*, *Nafs*, Islamic Education.

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Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) generally refers to the ability to perceive, understand, use, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. In the ability-based model, EI includes four major emotional capacities: perceiving emotions, using emotions to support thinking, understanding emotions, and managing emotions effectively. Applied models, such as Goleman's, further emphasize self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills as central emotional competencies. Islamic Psychology may be understood as the study of human nature, behavior, and inner experience through an Islamic worldview, drawing upon the Qur'an, Sunnah, classical Islamic scholarship, and contemporary psychological inquiry. Scholars such as Amber Haque¹, and Abdallah Rothman² have emphasized that psychological models used in Muslim contexts should be critically examined in light of Islamic anthropology, moral accountability, and the spiritual dimensions of the human person. Modern psychology has often approached the human being through cognitive, biological, and behavioral categories. While such approaches provide valuable insights into emotional functioning, they may be considered limited within a purely materialist ontology when applied to Islamic understandings of the self. In Islamic beliefs, human beings are not only possessors of cognition or behaviors but they also have responsibility and orientation to spirituality in their moral view. The self is related to the various faculties, such as the *nafs*, the *qalb*, the *'aql* and the *rūḥ* that influence desire, moral awareness, thought and spirit. Western conceptions of Emotional Intelligence, such as those of Salovey, Mayer and Goleman, provide valuable models in the detection and control of emotions. But, in Psycho-Islamic context, these models need to be further contextualize as they don't capture the moral and spiritual dimension of self-awareness. This article aims to discuss the concept of self-awareness based on the concept of *fiqh al-naḥs* which is defined in this article as a conscious knowledge of self in the context of emotional awareness, moral assessment and self-purification.

This article proposes that an Islamic understanding of self-awareness can help build on current EI perspectives, and connect emotional awareness to moral responsibility and spiritual development. Viewed from the Islamic perspective, the study of emotions does not only raise the question of how

1 Haque, Amber. "Psychology from Islamic perspective: Contributions of early Muslim scholars and challenges to contemporary Muslim psychologists." *Journal of religion and health* 43, no. 4 (2004), p: 357-377.

2 Rothman, Abdallah, and Adrian Coyle. "Toward a framework for Islamic psychology and psychotherapy: An Islamic model of the soul." *Journal of religion and health* 57, no. 5 (2018), p: 1731-1744.

to handle its regulation for personal, academic and social purposes, but how to understand, evaluate and refine for tazkiyah al-nafs and good moral behavior.

Literature review

The literature on Emotional Intelligence has generally conceptualized self-awareness as the ability to recognize one's internal emotional states and understand their influence on thought and behavior. Mayer and Salovey describe EI as a set of emotion-related abilities involving perception, understanding, facilitation, and regulation of emotions³. Goleman's model further popularized self-awareness as a core competency of EI, linking it with self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.⁴ However, Islamic psychology scholars argue that psychological constructs used in Muslim contexts require engagement with Islamic concepts of the self, morality, and spiritual accountability. Therefore, this review places modern EI literature in conversation with classical Islamic scholarship, particularly the works of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim, to develop a more contextually grounded understanding of self-awareness.

Scope and Limitations

The present paper: Only conceptually and textually analyzes Emotional Intelligence among undergraduates and it does not measure it empirically. As such, the suggested model can be interpreted as a theoretical base and not as a psychological instrument and validated. Future studies can be done on this model by creating measurement instruments and testing an empirical model for the Muslim undergraduate student population that may also examine the relationship between Islamic self-awareness and variables such as emotional regulation, academic behavior, ethical decision-making, and psychological well-being.

Objectives

To understand and explore the notion of self-awareness from an Islamic point of view (*Qur'an and Sunnah*). To study the Islamic approach to the self as a whole, focusing on several important aspects of Islamic self-awareness, such as self-reflection (*muḥāsabah*), emotional awareness, self-knowledge and personal growth. To delineate the functions of *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql* and *rūḥ* regarding the perception of emotions and moral judgment and

3 Mayer, John D., and Peter Salovey. "What is emotional intelligence?" *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* 3, no. 31 (1997), p: 1-16.

4 Goleman, Daniel. "An EI-based theory of performance." *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations* 1, no. 1 (2001), p: 27-44.

spiritual responsibility. To offer a theoretical grounding as a guideline in measuring self-awareness in terms of Emotional Intelligence among the Muslim undergraduate students.

Research Methodology

This research is a conceptual research in a qualitative approach to build an understanding of self-awareness as a fundamental part in building Emotional Intelligence (EI) with an Islamic perspective. The aim of the study is theoretical, meaning that surveys, interviews, experiments or statistical analyses will not be used. Instead, the study is done by way of textual interpretation and conceptual analysis to explore the notions of selves' structure, regulation and moral orientation from Islamic sources and the selected psychological theories.

Research Design

The study has been conducted by using conceptual analysis method. The appropriateness of this design is because the research is aimed at clarifying the key concepts, critically comparison of the theories, and building an Islamic model of people's self-awareness. As not only a description of Islamic concepts, it is an analytical study looking at the relationships of the Islamic concepts with current discussion of Emotional Intelligence and self-regulation. This article combines three related streams of literature, namely classical Islamic literature, current Islamic psychological literature and modern Emotional Intelligence theory. The strength of this interdisciplinary approach is that it may be able to pinpoint areas of commonality as well as conceptual differences within the secular EI frameworks and the Islamic concepts of the self.

Sources of Data

A total of three types of textual sources are used in the study. In the first place, the primary Islamic sources such as some authentic Qur'anic verses and Hadiths are explored to gain fundamental concepts on self-awareness and accountability, emotional management, moral awareness, and purification of self. Secondly, major psychology and spirituality concepts like *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, *rūh*, *muḥāsabah*, and *tazkiyah* are explained using classical Islamic works, especially the works of *Al-Ghazali* and *Ibn Qayyim*. When it makes sense, these classical discussions are illustrated with comparison to the general Islamic intellectual tradition to prevent the unwashed presentation of any one tradition of interpretation. Thirdly, the literature of the modern academic world about Emotional Intelligence and Islamic psychology is analyzed to show how the Islamic concept of self-awareness relates to the known psychological theories such as the EI theory of Goleman and Freud's structure of personality. While the theories are not considered equal with Islamic concepts, they are used as comparative

theories for the purpose of drawing the similarities, limitations and distinguishing concepts.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was done in 3 phases.

In stage one the concepts related to the emotional sense, moral responsibility, self-reflection, inner struggle and spiritual purification were gathered from the selected textual sources which are relevant to the main concepts of this work.

In the second stage, these concepts were categorized in terms of themes such as self-reflection (*muḥāsabah*), emotional awareness (*shu'ur*), self-knowledge (*ma'rifat al-nafs*), self-purification (*tazkiyah*), and self-struggle (*mujāhadah*). Then the researchers explored the themes together to understand them as a whole and form an Islamic concept of self-awareness as a result.

In the third stage, the identified themes were critically compared to some of the theories selected on Emotional Intelligence and personality psychology. This comparative analysis was planned in order to figure out differences between Islamic self-awareness and conventional EI models with respect to the moral responsibility, spiritual awareness and combining the ethical self-regulation with emotional functioning.

Theoretical Integration

The study was an analysis of the entire preceding analysis which resulted in the formulation of the *Fiqh al-Nafs*, Self-Awareness Model. The model comprises of four basic factions of the self (*nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql* and *rūḥ*) and five processes of self-awareness that are intertwined: *muḥāsabah*, *shu'ur*, *ma'rifat al-nafs*, *tazkiyah*, and *the mujāhadah*.

This integration is not aimed at replacing the present theories of emotional intelligence but adding moral responsibility, spiritual direction and purification of the self as crucial emotional intelligence aspects in the Muslim context. Therefore, contained in this model is the idea of self-awareness as not only the recognition of emotions, but the process of inner reform guided by ethical principles and informed by a spiritual perspective.

The Metaphysics of the Self: Qalb, Ruh, Nafs, and Aql

Islamic psychology (*Ilm al-Nafs*) identifies four distinct yet interconnected spiritual organs that govern human emotion and behavior: the *Qalb* (Heart), *Ruh* (Spirit), *Nafs* (Self/Ego), and *Aql* (Intellect).

This four-part structure has strong roots in classical Islamic thought. Al-Ghazali discusses the human self through the interrelated concepts of *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *nafs*, and *'aql*, presenting them not as isolated parts but as

dimensions of moral and spiritual functionings⁵. Contemporary Islamic psychology has also returned to these categories as a basis for developing models of the soul and Islamic psychotherapy. This makes the Islamic model different from purely behavioral or cognitive approaches because it connects emotional life with intention, moral struggle, and spiritual development.

The *Qalb* (Heart): The Seat of Consciousness

In the physiology of secularism the heart, first and foremost, is a biological organ which has a function of circulation. However, in the Islamic metaphysics the *Qalb* is the seat of consciousness, moral perception and orientation of emotion. It is referred to as the seat of faith (*Iman*), ethics and the receptivity to Divine guidance. The Islamic tradition, in contrast to modern materialistic views that restrict the scope of cognition to the brain, sees the heart as a place of integrated understanding which is a combination of cognition, morality and spirituality.

The Qur'an explicitly associates understanding with the heart:

”أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونُ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا“⁶

“Have they not traveled through the land so that they may have hearts by which to understand?

In the concept of *Aql al-Qalb* (Intellect of the Heart) the phrase قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا "*qulubun ya 'qiluna biha*" (hearts by which they understand) is key. Do not mistake this idea for irrational emotionalism or subjective intuition that is not based on reason. Instead, it's a way of seeing the world that is informed by moral understanding and spiritual integrity. In this context, the heart does not supplant cognitive intellectuality but rather directs and regulates the same in an ethical way. As a result, spiritual intuition is different from cognitive bias in that it is subject to revelation, moral discipline, self-responsibility and purification of the self (*tazkiyah*). When the heart is corrupted, whether by the reason of arrogance (*kibr*), or envy (*hasad*), or lustful desires (*hawa*) it takes its judgment away from the truth and rationalizes unethical behavior.

The Emotional Intelligence view suggests that there is no real distinction between emotional awareness/more control and moral and spiritual development. On the other hand, the *Ruh* is the Essence of life and the Divine breath that was given to Adam (AS). Within the Islamic

5 Shah, Lubna, Karim Dad, and Faisal Mehmood. "Introduction to" *Ihya Ulum al-Din*" and an Academic Review of the Methodology and style of the Author: مقدمة حول *Al-Marjān* (المرجان) 3, no. 2 (2025), p: 75-87.

6 Al-Hajj:46

understanding of the self, it signifies the human capacity for transcendence, awe, spiritual awareness, and pure love. Whereas the *Nafs* inclines the individual toward worldly desires and impulsive tendencies, the *Ruh* directs the person toward higher moral and spiritual realities through connection with the Divine. Emotional conflict, therefore, emerges from the tension between these opposing inclinations.

Allah states regarding the origin of the *Ruh*:

”فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ”⁷

“So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down before him in prostration.”

The *Nafs* (Self/Ego):

The Locus of Desire the *Nafs* is the self that experiences biological drives and ego-centric emotions. It is often the source of impulsive behavior, anger, greed, and lust. In comparative psychological terms, the *nafs al-ammārah* may be cautiously compared with *Freud's concept of the id*, as both refer to impulsive drives and desire-based tendencies⁸; however, the Islamic concept of *nafs* is broader because it is morally accountable, spiritually reform able, and capable of movement through different states of refinement. The Quran describes the default state of the unrefined ego as ”أَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ” *Ammarah bi-su'* (Commanding Evil).

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ⁹

"And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil..."

The regulation of the *Nafs* is the primary objective of Islamic Emotional Intelligence. Unlike modern psychology, which often encourages "self-expression" or "self-acceptance" unconditionally, Islam mandates *Jihad al-Nafs* (Struggle against the Ego) to bring it into submission.

The *Aql* (Intellect):

The Restraining Force Linguistically, the word *Aql* comes from the root ‘*Iqal*, meaning "to tie" or "to restrain" (like tying a camel). In Islamic psychology, the Intellect is the faculty that restrains the impulses of the *Nafs*. It teaches the emotions, with logic and revelation. High EI in Islam is when a person's *Aql* rules over his *Nafs*; thus he is able to check his emotion before it gets out of control.

7 Al-Hijr:29

8 Pfaus, James G. "Revisiting the concept of sexual motivation." *Annual review of sex research* 10, no. 1 (1999), p: 120-156.

9 Yusuf: 53.

This also helps to offer a helpful comparison to Freud's model of personality as having three parts. Freud's id, ego, and superego describe internal conflict between instinctive desire, rational mediation, and moral control. Similarly, Islamic psychology recognizes inner conflict between desire, reasoning, and moral consciousness. However, the Islamic model differs by grounding this conflict in spiritual accountability and the possibility of purification. The aim is not only psychological balance, but the reform of the self through *tazkiyah*, *muhāsabah*, and disciplined moral agency.

The Purpose of Emotion: *Ayat* and *Bala*

A fundamental divergence between Western and Islamic EI lies in the purpose of emotion. Why do we feel grief, fear, or anger?

Emotions as *Ayat* (Signs)

Islam teaches that emotions are *Ayat* (Signs) of Allah's Lordship. Positive emotions like love and affection are reflections of Allah's attributes (*Al-Wadud*, The Loving). The bond between spouses, for instance, is described as a Divine Sign designed to produce tranquility (*Sakinah*).

”وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً”¹⁰

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy."

The emotional stability of Islam as depicted in the following verse, is closely related with the conviction and certitude of the soul. In the context of Emotional Intelligence, *Sakinah* can be viewed as a type of emotionally-grounded spiritual regulation which is the ability to act with patience, balance and psychological resilience in the face of stress, fear and difficulties.

Emotions as *Bala* (Tests)

Emphasis has been placed on the frame of negative emotions as *Bala* (Tribulations/Tests). In western psychology, depression (or chronic sadness or anxiety) is seen only as a disease that needs to be cured. These are considered in Islam as the tests of faith which are necessary. They do not represent “mistakes” in the human program, they are “features” that aid in spiritual development. The Quran sets the Muslim up for emotional afflictions:

”وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ”¹¹

10 Ar-Rum:21

11 Al-Baqarah:155

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give good tidings to the patient."

Labeling fear (*Khawf*) as a test from Allah endows the believer with the power to control it as opposed to despairing. It is this reframing that is the crux of Islamic emotional resilience. Most importantly, however, it is the recognition of emotions as spiritual tests that is a first step towards Islamic self-awareness. After emotions are no longer viewed solely as a psychological response, the person reflects on the state of self, the purpose of the emotional response and how it relates to Allah. Thus, emotional experience can be an avenue for self-reflection, self-accountability and inner change.

Self-Awareness (Intrapersonal Intelligence)

In the classification of Emotional Intelligence (EI), the competency of Self-Awareness is seen as the fundamental competency. Daniel Goleman defines it as "understanding one's own feelings, desires, interests, and moods, as well as one's own capabilities and personality. In the secular approach to psychology, however, this awareness is often regarded as being chiefly cognitive, as the recognition of emotion. From an Islamic viewpoint, this is developed into a moral and spiritual engagement, called *Fiqh al-Nafs* (Jurisprudence of the Self) or *Basirah* (Inner Insight). *Basirah* means insight into oneself, spiritual perception and seeing the truth beyond appearances. *Basirah* is different from ordinary sensory perception (*basar*), it is deeper perception that is guided by one's faith, moral awareness and spiritual consciousness. From an Islamic perspective it is closely related to the purification of the heart and that there is ability to clearly distinguish right from wrong with wisdom.

”قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي“¹²

“Say, ‘this is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me.’”

Then in another part of the Qur’ān it is stressed that not being able to see is not being blind but being blind in perception:

”فَإِنَّمَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ“¹³

“Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts within the chests that are blind.”

Basirah, as part of Islamic self-awareness, is the ability to critically look at one's intentions, emotions and actions from the perspective of moral and spiritual truth. It thus acts as a more sophisticated level of self-

12 Yusuf:108

13 Al-Hajj:46

awareness which encompasses cognition, ethical awareness and spiritual sensitivity. In Goleman's EI model, self-awareness refers to knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions.¹⁴ This is useful for understanding emotional functioning, particularly in educational and professional contexts. However, from an Islamic psychology perspective, self-awareness also includes recognition of intention, moral direction, and the condition of the heart. Badri, Haque, and Rothman argue that Islamic approaches to psychology should not merely import Western models, but critically adapt them through Islamic assumptions about the person, the soul, and human purpose. Therefore, Islamic self-awareness is not only emotional recognition, but also moral and spiritual self-examination. Islamic Self-Awareness is not just a question of "I am stressed" (as is the answer given at the undergraduate level), but rather, what is the metaphysics and the moral of such stress and how does it affect the relationship with the Creator? It is a change from thinking 'How do I feel?' to thinking 'what is the condition of my soul?'. Islamic Self-Awareness is broken down into five key steps, which are self-reflection (*Muhasabah*), emotional awareness (*Shu'ur*), self-knowledge (*Ma'rifat al-Nafs*), personal growth (*Tazkiyah*) and self-regulation (*Mujahadah*).

Self-Reflection (*Muhasabah*)

One of the aspects of Islamic Self-Awareness that is functioning is *Muhasabah* which is translated literally as 'self-audit' or 'self-accounting'. Although modern psychology speaks of self-reflection in the context of being mindful, cognizant about, and monitoring one's emotions, *Muhasabah* adds an explicitly moral and spiritual aspect to the process of engaging with self-reflection by focusing on what one intends to do, how one acts, and what one feels in light of accountability to Allah.

The Quranic Mandate

This reflective journey lies in the basics laid down in the Holy Qur'an which teaches believers to examine themselves in preparation for the most stringent accountability:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ¹⁵

"O you who believe, fear Allah and let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow (the Hereafter); and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do."

14 Klussman, Kristine, Nicola Curtin, Julia Langer, and Austin Lee Nichols. "The importance of awareness, acceptance, and alignment with the self: A framework for understanding self-connection." *Europe's journal of psychology* 18, no. 1 (2022), p: 120.

15 Al-Hashr:18.

The expression وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ (let every soul examine itself) implies a deliberate and critical form of self-examination rather than passive reflection. Asks a person to look beyond their initial emotional reactions to consider what is being done through ethical and spiritual consciousness.

Classical Muslim scholars viewed *Muhasabah* as a central mechanism of moral development. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Madarij al-Salikin*, describes it as an essential stage in spiritual discipline, arguing that self-accountability in this life prepares the believer for ultimate accountability in the Hereafter.¹⁶ Contemporary Islamic psychology also interprets *Muhasabah* as a process of conscious emotional regulation in which individuals critically assess their motives, emotional reactions, and behavioral patterns according to Islamic ethical principles.

Within the framework of Emotional Intelligence, *Muhasabah* is not an emotional exercise which is temporary, but rather it is a conscientious way of knowing oneself and managing one's emotions. The person recognizes an emotional reaction, understands its motive, assesses its moral dimension and refocuses his/her behavior. That makes the Islamic reflections on self, different from other reflections which are purely therapeutic and secular, focusing on awareness without transcendental accountability or moral transformation.

Application in Emotional Intelligence

Muhasabah is a preventive emotional mechanism for the student in the University. It can be broken down into two phases:

***Muhasabah* before Action:**

Pausing before expressing an emotion (e.g., anger at a professor) to ask: "Is this emotion driven by truth (*Haqq*) or by my ego (*Hawa*)?"

***Muhasabah* after Action:**

Acknowledge mistakes and readjust oneself to see if there were any emotional breakdowns in the day. This practice creates a feedback loop which develops a high Intrapersonal Intelligence. But the student who practices *Muhasabah* does not suppress his emotions, instead, he checks them with a Divine measure and makes sure that he is in the same situation internally that he needs to be.

Emotional Awareness (*Shu'ur*) and the Levels of the *Nafs*

Emotional awareness in modern psychology means to be able to identify the emotions (e.g. sad vs depressed). The teaching of Islam offers

16 Azhari, Amri Azhari, Didin Saepudin, Adian Husaini, and Budi Handrianto. "The Concept of moral education according to ibn qayyim al-jawziyyah and its relevance to the national education objectives." *Ta'dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 15, no. 2 (2026), p: 205-222.

a much more powerful diagnostic tool, recognizing that the "Self" (*Nafs*) can be classified into three different phases. The stages assist a person to not only recognize the emotion they are feeling but also what they are feeling.

The Impulsive Self (*Nafs al-Ammarah*)

This is the most primitive level of emotional life, raging and uncontrolled instincts. It is the cause of hasty wrath, lechery and avarice.

وَمَا أُبْرِئُ نَفْسِي ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي¹⁷

"And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon whom my Lord has mercy."

A student who has a tendency to procrastinate, or who cheats on an exam because he/she is afraid of failure, or who breaks out into physical aggression while in the midst of an argument is in the grip of the *Nafs al-Ammarah*. When this condition is realized, "This impulse is not 'me' it is my lower self," and a person cries for help to Allah, to get away from it, that is high Islamic EI.

The Conscious Self (*Nafs al-Lawwamah*)

During this phase, a person's conscience awakens. It is related to the psychological notion of the "Superego" or moral compass.

وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ¹⁸

"And I swear by the reproaching soul."

The word *Lawwamah* is derived from the word *Lawm* which is to blame/reproach. This self is guilty when it sins, or when it erupts in some emotional outburst. Chronic guilt in the western psychology is looked on negatively. So in Islam (not like other faiths) constructive guiltiness is an indicator of spiritual life. Means that heart responds to Right and Wrong. At this level a pupil is able to regret and make up for what he has just done, for instance, if a pupil realizes that he has spent too much time on a task, or sickened someone else, then he feels regrets, and he strives to improve.

The Contented Self (*Nafs al-Mutmainnah*)

This is "the highest level of emotional awareness and regulation. It is a state of tranquility (*Sakinah*), in which the soul is no longer tossed about by the waves of the material world.

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً¹⁹

"O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]."

17 Yusuf:53

18 Al-Qiyamah:2

19 Al-Fajr:27-28

A student at this level has the highest level of EI. They do not have an exemption from pain or stress but it does not disturb or destabilize them. They know and feel it because they have the presence of God in them, so they are calm on finals, patient in fights and optimistic when things go wrong.

Self-Knowledge (Ma'rifat al-Nafs)

Self-Knowledge in Islam is not limited just to the personality level (as introvert/extrovert type). Theological imperative. The maxim of the classical scholars is "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ²⁰

"He who knows himself knows his Lord.

This means that when one introspects he will realize his dependency (Faqr) and the All-Sufficiency of the Divine (Ghani). If a student is aware of his or her own fragility, the fact that he/she gets angry easily, or becomes anxious easily, he/she knows he/she needs a Sustainer. On the other hand, the Quran counsels that the disassociation of spirit is caused by the lack of connection with the Divine, and is a process of losing one's self-identity.

”وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ“²¹

"And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient."

This verse is an example of low EI which results in "alienation of the soul. It is possible that they have high IQs, but aren't attuned to their inner reality. They are unable to respond with answers to the questions "Why am I feeling this way?" or "What is my purpose? This abstracted lack of *Ma'rifat al-Nafs* results in an identity crisis as is common among young people today who seek validation of others and yet are strangers to themselves.

Personal Growth (Tazkiyah)

Secular models of EI focus on achieving 'Self-Actualization' which is the exercise of human potential to the fullest to become successful in the world. The purpose of Islam is *Tazkiyah* (Purification). The meaning of *Tazkiyah* is two-fold "cleaning", as in the removal of weeds and "growth", as in nurturing the plant. It is an ongoing practice of removing, pruning the bad attributes or vices of the mind and developing good attributes or virtue of the mind.

20 دعائی، سید محمد حسین رستمی، محمد حسن، نقی زاده، "حدیث «من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه»، در بوته اعتبار سنجی. " مطالعات فهم حدیث (2022) Issue 16 no.6 جلد 6، شماره 16، (2022)، ص: 223-243

21 Al-Hashr:19

Allah only associates success with this way of emotional and spiritual development:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا²²

"And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it."

This brings the undergraduate learning experience into a new perspective for the undergraduate student. The university is no longer just a place of training of the mind (*Tarbiyah*), but also for the *Nafs*. *Tazkiyah* occurs on all the academic difficulties. Life's duty is difficult, difficult life is an opportunity to purify the soul from laziness; group work is an opportunity to purify the soul from arrogance. The ability of the student to transform everyday life problems into purification of the soul is considered as high EI.

Self-Regulation (*Mujahadah*)

Although sometimes Self-Regulation is considered as a behavior (which we will be tackling in Section 2.3), the foundation of it is inner jihad (the inner fight). Firstly we have to control our *Nafs* (intent) before we can control our limbs (behavior).

Mujahadah is when one's will is exercised against the *Nafs al-Ammarah* to overcome it. It's the "Jihad" inside, the "Jihad" of the heart in accordance with the "Jihad" of convictions.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ²³

"And those who strive for us- We will surely guide them to our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good."

The active struggle of Islamic EI is being pointed out in this component. It accepts the inevitability of the emergence of negative emotions (envy, rage and despair), but it requires the "Intellect of the Heart" (*Aql*) play a regulating role. For instance, a student may experience a lot of envy (*Hasad*) toward another student that got better grades. *Nafs* desires to put down the peer. But the one who is endowed with high *Mujahadah* knows this feeling, fights against it and at the same time makes *Dua* for the other student, fulfilling his responsibility to the fellow student through the power of spiritual intellect in lieu of the ego.

Synthesis of Intrapersonal Intelligence

In summary, the literature suggests that Islamic self-awareness can be positioned as an extension of existing EI frameworks rather than a

22 Ash-Shams:7-9

23 Al-Ankabut:69

rejection of them. Mayer and Salovey emphasize emotional perception and regulation, while Goleman highlights self-awareness as a core emotional competency²⁴. However, classical Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim, along with contemporary Islamic psychology researchers, frame the self as morally accountable and spiritually reform able. Therefore, the proposed Islamic model of self-awareness adds three dimensions that are less explicit in conventional EI models: moral evaluation, spiritual accountability, and purification of the self.

Conclusions

This study used a qualitative and conceptual approach to examine self-awareness as a foundational component of Emotional Intelligence from an Islamic perspective. The study employed thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis as its main methods of analysis. Through this process, recurring themes such as *nafs*, *qalb*, *'aql*, *rūḥ*, *muḥāsabah*, *shu'ūr*, *ma'rifat al-nafs*, *tazkiyah*, and *mujāhadah* were identified, organized, and integrated into an analytical framework. The result of the research is that the Islamic self-awareness is not merely emotional awareness but also spiritual awareness and moral responsibility and moral self-regulation. Self-awareness can be understood in two aspects: emotional aspect and moral aspect based in Islamic Emotional Intelligence. The study is based on an analytical framework which is called the Proposed *Fiqh al-Nafs* Self-Awareness Model. It combines four fundamental faculties '*nafs*', '*qalb*', '*'aql*' and '*rūḥ*' and five processes of self-awareness: '*muḥāsabah*', '*shu'ūr*', '*ma'rifat al-nafs*', '*tazkiyah*' and '*mujāhadah*'. The model is unique in that it surmounts the conventional ideas of Emotional Intelligence which concentrate on managing emotions to achieve effectiveness and personal or social goals, to a focus on the emotional refinement through the moral evaluation of the emotions, the spiritual responsibility of their conduct and the self-purification of the emotions. The study, thus, provides a theoretical framework for further empirical studies and also for developing Islam based instruments to measure the Emotional Intelligence with respect to self-awareness of the Muslim undergraduate students.

Recommendations

Finding and objectives of this study suggests the following recommendations:

24 Salovey, Peter, Alison Woolery, and John D. Mayer. "Emotional intelligence: Conceptualization and measurement." *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Interpersonal processes* (2001): 279-307.

Curriculum Development

Islamic concepts of being self-aware such as the concepts of *muḥāsabah*, *tazkiyah*, *mujāhadah* and awareness of the *nafs*, *qalb*, *‘aql*, and *rūḥ* should be taught in undergraduate study courses in psychology, education, Islamic study and character development. This would aid students to learn the concept of Emotional Intelligence both from psychological and Islamic ethical viewpoints.

Psychological Assessment

The next researchers need to create and measure the assessment tools of Islamic self-awareness of undergraduate Muslim students. These indicators can be linked to recognition of emotions, moral responsibility, checking of intentions, regulation of oneself, and the development of *tazkiyah*.

Student Development Programs

Higher Education institutions could develop and design their students' development programs based on the *Fiqh al-Nafs* Self-Awareness Model in emotional, academic stress control, interpersonal behavior, and moral decision making.

Teacher and Counselor Training

It is necessary to train university educators, counselors, and student mentors in Islamic ways of Emotional Intelligence and teach patients how to create awareness of themselves, and make their emotions ethical, humble and responsible.

Empirical Research

The suggested conceptual model should be tested in the future with Muslim undergraduate students. Research can be conducted to explore the correlation between Islamic self-awareness and student achievement, emotional resilience, interpersonal behavior, and making ethical decisions in the future.

Theoretical Development

Islamic Psychology scholars need to further elaborate the association of classical Islamic teachings and the modern Emotional Intelligence theories. These can be used to create a more accurate, scientifically based and culturally sensitive conceptual model for the study of emotional development in Muslim settings.

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