

## GUIDING ASPECTS OF ISLAMIC EXISTENTIAL-COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY FOR EXISTENTIAL DEPRESSION

<sup>1\*</sup> NUR AFIFAH ABAS

<sup>1</sup> MOHD NIZAM SAHAD

<sup>1</sup> School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

\*Corresponding Author: [afifabas@student.usm.my](mailto:afifabas@student.usm.my)

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### **Abstract**

*The CoVid-19 pandemic had again activated the neuronal circuit on our existential crisis as human beings asking basic existential questions: Where were we from, who are we, why are we here, how we supposedly should live here and where are we going? - Instinctively it appears evidently in the soul while facing threats that may lead to death like the pandemic exposes us to. This study critically explores and analyses through content analysis method on available published 'Islamic' documents, which are purposively sampled based on relevancy to the existence. We shared what we found related to existential psychotherapy using cognitive behavior therapy for depressed Muslim clients in supporting the current call for integrating Islamic teachings and practice. Mainly, being intersubjective is very crucial for therapists' competency because Muslim clients are from diverse Islamic backgrounds.*

**Keywords:** *Existential Questions, Existential Crisis and Existential Threats, Existential Ideology, Islamic Existential-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Human's mental faculty naturally created to think. Over time, accumulated ideas became ideology. Ideology is an "established system of ideas and ideals that comprises a set of beliefs characterizes a social group or individual who believe/s in it and practicing it in their actions" (Oxfords University, 2019). Usually, it was specifically organised and structured according to methodologies fit respective ontology and epistemology of a superior belief system that governs it like religion or/and philosophy or a combination of both.

Intuitively, humankind had been thinking about their existence since the beginning of our history although it diverges into many versions of existential belief that is a closer subject to religion. Historical evidence from archaeological excavation demonstrated ample findings e.g., the ancient Egyptian site of the *Abydos* boats. More than 5,000 years ago, they decorated the wall of the tombs with drawings of their understanding across the life towards the afterlife existence (DHWTY, 2015; New York University, 2000).

Another historical evidence was recorded from the ancient Greek founded by the first Greek school of thoughts that faced this enigmatic enquiry known as '*Elia*' or nowadays known as the metaphysics in 540-460 BC. They already recognized that there was suffering in the inferior existents' life. After this school, the query developed ahead until the time of the renowned Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle where 'the Existence' became the primary basis or departure of any philosophical discussion especially where metaphysics was the concern.

They had established a dichotomy of existence between:

1. The Superior Existent: The God
2. The Inferior Existents: the realm of things that could be sensed and felt

According to them, there are two (2) types of existence: either constant or changing. It was considered a very fundamental understanding to be established first, before anything else whether in religions, philosophies and thoughts as it touches the understanding of every soul about itself (Ghallūsh, 1985, 12-14).

### **The Concept of Existence**

The word 'existence' was originated from late Middle English usage, which is taken from either Old French, or late Latin '*existentia*' – while in Latin '*existere*' means 'come into being', which is a combination of *ex*: out + '*sistere*': take a stand.

The word '*existence*' is in a noun form that literally means:

1. The fact or state of living or having objective reality.
2. Continued survival.
3. A way of living.
4. (in certain beliefs) any of a person's successive earthly lives.
5. All that exists (Oxford University, 2019).

So, in combination – existential ideology – in relation with Islam, it is offering an established objective reality of existential ideas and ideals that descriptively and characteristically suits Islamic ontology and epistemology.

### **Relevancy of Religious Existential Psychology during Covid-19 Pandemic**

The literature of mental health swiftly reported on existential threats theme emerged during the pandemic (MacKenzie et al., 2021; Vandekerckhove, 2020). It may lead to existential anxiety

or/and depression, in experiencing unusually overwhelming situation during the plague as: “Ceasing to exist is an overwhelmingly terrifying thought and it is one which has plagued individuals for centuries. This ancient stressor has been addressed over time by a number of different religious explanations and affirmations. Arguably, this capacity to provide answers for fundamental questions is what defines religion.” (Little, 2016)

Specifically, when one is struggling when contracted by it or as partially aftermath side effects of the recovery from the illness (Taquet et al., 2021). The scarcity of Islamically adapted psycho-educational reference for psychotherapists has long been complained in the literature (Abu Raiya & Pargament, 2010; American Counselling Association, 2011; Dein et al., 2020). Thus, we intend to support the shortage by doing our part from the Islamic Studies field on tackling the issue of existential ideas in psychotherapy for Muslim clients in the resurgence of religion era (Haynes, 1997).

In the same vein, Shah (2005) already long highlighted the incompatibility of axiological, ontological and epistemological by-product of Western methodology for Muslims mainly due to the conflict of interest at the Islamic Creed level. Islamic profession (*shahādah*) will be invalidated if interfered with atheistic humanistic features.

### **Why is the Western Existentialism incompatible for Muslims?**

Historically, Muslims did not struggle over their existential crisis in the presence of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. when he was still alive. The reality, ethics and knowledge are truth as being revealed by Allah SWT to the prophet or informed by the prophet in prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) with confidence. It was simple (Shalabi, 1993), moreover, the prophet was destined an illiterate as an inimitable sign that the religion was impossible being produced by him - the proofs are many, especially in the Qur’anic verses related to current scientific discoveries.

However, to Allah SWT, it is not even ‘science’ in the sense of what we are amused to and excited of being ‘scientific’, ‘mystic’, or ‘philosophical’, then only scholarly, or greatly ‘eureka’. It is like different level of knowledge between a toddler who fancy discovery and of a matured adult who got used to things that exist around with a more comprehensive coverage of knowledge. He Keeps His Instruction straightforward after Commanded human to descend the Earth: “who follow His Guidance, so, no fear or worry befalls him/her and will not be in constant sadness” (Q2: 38) especially towards crossing into the future eternal Afterlife phase. So, the companions of the prophet had naturally trusted Him as well as His Messenger like a child trusts his/her parents.

Such crisis emerged only after the expansion of the early Muslims’ territory into the Persian, Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Indian, and Egyptian lands through cultural contact that exposed them to their literature and knowledge. The influence of foreign ideas permeated, conflicted, and complicated the simplicity that was being understood among the simple people around the prophet. Yet, the generation of his companions (*Ṣaḥābī*) did impressively elevate their status and accomplish a lot despite the very short duration to underestimate their simplicity as Iqbal termed: ‘dry intellectual’ (Iqbal, 1908) - probably because they did not process the Qur’an or the hadith through philosophy...

Regretfully, lax blend of philosophy and Islam receded the trust they used to enjoy; thus, suspicion intruded the mind like those learned Rationalist Muslims (*Mu’tazilite*) who were

considered deviant by the mainstream Sunni. There was even darker phase when the Muslims were suffering at political level during the trying time of the inquisition “is the Holy Qur’an a creature?” – It happened during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma’mūn. He ordered to punish and imprison Muslim Sunni mainstream scholars who was against him like the renowned Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the leader of an Islamic Judicial School (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Instead of victory, it marked towards deterioration of the caliphate, even though the expansion was wider then.

Similar path construed for development of ‘Islamic’ Sufism (Iqbal, 1908), it was a synthesis from its various earlier versions regionally like the Persian famous idea of ‘The Perfect Human’ (Badawi, 1976). But some produced deviant integrations due to contaminated ingredients blended into the pure form of Islam (al-Sharqawī, 2017). Until today, there are many deviant thoughts due to problem of filtering foreign ideas, for instance, Western existentialism (Ghallūsh, 1985).

These phenomena are explained by social comparison (Festinger, 1954) where when people from different societies inter-influenced, struggled to digest ideas from each other, and innovated new synthesized ideas from various combinations of ideas being supported, rejected, or adjusted. But some ideas were sparked from the reaction explained by cognitive dissonance theory, being dissonant to be accepted by existing knowledge in certain society (Festinger, 1957), either culturally or religiously.

Accordingly, the Islamic scholars of the al-Azhar University in Egypt rejected and disseminated their warning about the incompatibility of the Western existential ideas (Al-Fayyūmī, 1984; Ghallūsh, 1985). It was originated in their history of distrusting trauma towards their religion (Eaton, 1994), i.e., Roman Catholicism (Knowles et al., 2020). Likewise, ‘Ali Al-‘Abeedi also specifically mentioned that their dissonant ontology, axiology, and epistemology are based on that historical reason, which is unjust to equate it with Islam ideally and disagreed with what Iqbal termed the Rationalist era was ‘Muslims’ Enlightenment’ (Iqbal, 1908).

Essentially, it is universal in the human history for people to react collectively towards oppression, regardless of race, faith, or location (Kar, 2019). Comparably, the West had reacted towards dissatisfactions they endured for centuries (Eaton, 1994). However, their focus was obsessed to blame the religion, also overgeneralized to all religions, which is unscientifically biased. Probably it was due to the unhealed trauma or being phobic, which is understandable due to the intensity of their endurance that it was metaphorically stated as ‘darkness’ instead of the frank truth - usually due to the threat of life from those in power towards incalcitrant subjects. Contrary to the ideal Islam, which is at war with oppression in any form and promotes justice for each and every single creature even for non-living things (Q16: 90) like the environment or basic resources e.g., water, food, fire, air, etc. Ironically, their Enlightenment movement was stirred by the Islamic ideas in the Andalusian Spain in the first place (Eaton, 1994).

It took them about two centuries of processing the Islamic sciences to have courage and the urge to again react strongly towards the stigma of being unscientific or philosophical to launch expression of phenomenological existential thinking and feeling (Crowell, 2015). Feelings and emotions were taboo to be studied at that time (Damásio, 2005), only hard sciences were recognized socially. However, its status quo persists until today regardless of the rise of neuro-existentialism: the third wave of existential ideology where the existential threats are

stemmed from the science and technology - they revered itself (Livni, 2019).

Ironically, it was religious individuals who pioneered the existential literature. The second phase, though, was more vibrantly noticed e.g., from Sartre's fictional works of 'Nausea' and 'No Exit' before turning it into a more purely philosophical writing like 'Being and Nothingness' and 'Critique of Dialectical Reason', which was actually after being influenced Martin Heidegger who wrote 'Being and Time' in 1927. It was about an analysis into the "being that we ourselves are" (i.e. existence in German: 'Dasein'), i.e., departing from 'the meaning of being' by questioning: 'what it means to be X'?

Briefly, the World Wars had amplified existential struggle through self-reflecting on miserable post-world wars life. After the segregation of state, science, and religion; some existentialists gave in to their urge to write from their soul although against the stigma of being unintellectual at philosophically assessed writing. Their rebellion reached at being 'authentic self', again, due to being under pressure of society's social sanctions especially culturally felt as immigrants (Sanderson, 2003). Thus, they vented the overwhelmed distress by daringly published their experiential expression in analysing being existent like on themes of anxiety, sadness, absurdity, death, emptiness, pessimism, and even suicidal ideation, which were also taboo in the traditional societies then (Crowell, 2015).

So, in relating such experience among Muslims who were exposed to those existential ideas; primarily, the distrust towards religion that had shifted towards the science and technology supposedly irrelevant. Ideally, Islam is not conflicting with gaining knowledge at all, even, encourage and promote acquisition of knowledge (Shalabi, 1993). As a proof, the first Qur'anic revealed word was: "Read! (*Iqra*!)"'. Also, it is compulsory for every Muslim to acquire knowledge in Islam (Sunan Ibnu Mājah, Book: Introduction, Chapter: The privileges of scholars and the encouragement to acquire knowledge, hadith no.: 224) (Dorar, 2020). Hence, it is not prohibited, provided, compliant with the Islamic teaching e.g., generally scholars prohibited to learn sorcery due to its harm (Q2: 102) see (Pew Research Center, 2012)

## METHODOLOGY

In lieu to the current need of psychotherapists for reference on Islamic Existential meaning to treat Muslim clients especially during and post CoVid-19 pandemic, we support its culturally Islamic adapted psycho-education development. This paper applies content analysis method that latently analyses (Latent analysis: "of a deep structure" (Bengtsson, 2016) available selected written documents of contemporary Muslim scholars purposively sampled (Elo et al., 2014) based on the word: "existence" in the title or associated to it as the unit of analysis ("The "unit of analysis" refers to the portion of content that will be the basis for decisions made during the development of codes. For example, in textual content analyses, the unit of analysis may be at the level of a word, a sentence (Milne & Adler, 1999), a paragraph, an article or chapter, an entire edition or volume, a complete response to an interview question, entire diaries from research participants, or some other level of text. The unit of analysis may not be defined by the content per se but rather by a characteristic of the content originator (e.g., person's age), or the unit of analysis might be at the individual level with, for example, each participant in an in-depth interview (IDI) study treated as a case" (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).):

1. Abdul Rahman Badawi
2. Abu al-A'la Al-Mawdudi
3. Ayatullah Murtada Muttahari
4. Charles Le Gai Eaton a. k. a. Hassan Abdul Hakeem
5. Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas
6. Abdenmour Bidar
7. Haron Din
8. Abd al-Wadūd Shalabī

Maybe we can learn from them by understanding their work from their point of views with each unique background, experience, and struggle. In what way it can be considered to support Islamically integrated psychotherapy with regards to being competent therapists?

### **Content Analysis**

Content analysis allows a methodical descriptive approach of both in coding the data and interpreting analysis (Downe - Wamboldt, 1992). Initially, it was designed to keep a research objective, systematic and quantitative in describing the content of the research material e.g., document (Berelson, 1952) in (Seuring & Gold, 2012). It is a flexible and creative way to reflect and re-produce different synthesis from a raw data with different combination, and relationships in answering certain research question. It pragmatically analyses exploratory studies on human experience analysing textual data interpretation in understanding it. Seuring & Gold also outlined four main steps in applying qualitative content analysis mainly based on Mayring (2008) (cf. Kassarian, 1977; Krippendorff, 1980; Mayring, 2000):

1. the collected material for analysis has to be delimited and the unit of analysis is defined;
2. formal characteristics of the material are assessed; providing the background for subsequent content analysis (descriptive analysis);
3. structural dimensions and related analytic categories are selected, which are to be applied to the collected material, and;
4. the material is analysed according to the analytic dimensions.

It allows the creativity to flow during familiarizing and processing reading of the data until it gathered in the mind as a whole although it is inarguably complex due to its diverse planes of thoughts. The meaning units gave meaning to coding system and codes help us to theme up to bigger picture of the data. The bracketing was there until the intersubjectivity of their ideas appeared in the mind especially in understanding the crises each one struggled that stimulated them to answer their quest on Islamic existential meaning in the ways that had convinced them.

After that only, we applied on it the pre-conceived ideas to understand into deeper layers underneath their writings and intuitively arranged main themes for further discussion of the results as guided in (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). It is a method that can balance between input and output (Seuring & Gold, 2012). The most important thing is, overall, themes detect the gist of research question (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

## RESULTS

The analysis was finally deduced into this table (Table 1) in summary to the selected writings related to the ideas of Islamic existence.

Table 1: Result of Content Analysis from the selected documents

No.	Author's name, origin, and background	Main coding from written products and content	Category	Themes and Related Remarks
1	<p>Prof. Dr. Abdul Rahman Badawi (1917-2002)</p> <p>Origin: Egypt</p> <p>Early education: Saidiya: a top European-adapted elitist public school</p> <p>Studied in King Fuad University (now Cairo University)</p> <p>Studied in German and stayed in many European countries for long duration</p> <p>Fluent in Arabic, English, German, French, Spanish, and main European languages</p>	<p>Book: <i>The Perfect Human</i> (1976)</p> <p>Islam from the inception of religion era historically within history of humankind through historical origin of religion philosophically</p> <p>He blended in his academic exploration on diverse religions: Iranian Mano 'The Perfect Human' related with</p>	<p>Non-mainstream Sunni Islam</p> <p>Combination: Philosophy: The historical origin of religion - Persian Zoroastrian mysticism</p> <p>Mysticism (Sufism)</p> <p>Arabian Philosophical Islamic Thought</p>	<p>Theme: Philosophy and history of religion especially historical evidence as a medium in understanding existence as being scientific pursuit</p> <p>His main argument is "true existence is that of the individual"</p> <p>Remarks: He was amused by his supervisor's work as a Jewish French Existentialist: Alexander Koyre a philosopher of Russian origin</p> <p>His ideas paradoxes at the Islamic creed level of the Oneness of Allah (Tawhid), thus, rejected by the al-Azhar and Saudi scholars</p>

	<p>Thesis: <i>Existential Time</i> (1943)</p> <p>Book: <i>Humanism and Existentialism in the Arabic Thought</i> (1947)</p> <p>He is considered the Father of Existentialism (The Arabian Sartre) in the Islamic realm and the Arabian region</p>	<p>Zoroastrian ideology in combination with Christian and Islamic Sufism.</p>		<p>and considered as deviant due to the irreconcilable dissonance</p> <p>Moreover, the type of mysticism he had accepted was categorized as deviant esoteric mysticism (<i>al-ṣufiyyah al-bāṭiniyyah</i>), which was rejected by all the Abrahamic religions</p> <p>He saw the conflict of civilizational clashes would happen between Islam's and Greek's legacy of knowledge</p> <p>Involved in politics along with Jamal Abdennaser</p>
2	<p>Abu al-A'la Al-Maududi (1903-1979)</p> <p>Origin: Hyderabad State, India</p> <p>Of Afghan Chishti paternal lineage and Turkish maternal lineage</p> <p>Studied in Oriental High School – a modern school learned Western sciences that turned him modernist in the beginning and later attended Deobandi Darul Uloom traditionalist school</p>	<p>Book: <i>Islamic Way of Life</i> (1996)</p> <p>Book: <i>Understanding Islam</i> (1960)</p> <p>doctrine and practice of Islam</p>	<p>Mainstream Sunni Islam</p> <p>Philosophical aim: Revival of Islam</p> <p>Political aim: Revolutionary Sunni Islam of theocracy state i.e. Pakistan</p> <p>Sufism: Chishti Indian Islamic Thought</p>	<p>Theme: Inspired by the idea of Islamic revival through writing and expression of thoughts</p> <p>Both monographs are brief reference on foundations of Islamic Creeds and practicing and functioning as Muslims especially the worshipping aspects with an emphasis on revival of Muslims from every individual to move as a community globally (Ummah)</p> <p>Remarks: Influenced by Western ideologies and philosophies he explored through his</p>



				<p>British advocate modernist distant relative's: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan writings when he worked in journalism that moved the European society to shift paradigm that he saw himself influencing the Muslim community via his writing</p> <p>He involved in politics along with Muhammad Iqbal</p> <p>He was against secularism, nationalism, and socialism as a reaction to British colonization over India sub-continent and among the mastermind of Pakistan establishment</p>
3	<p>Prof. Dr. Ayatullah Murtada Muttahari (1919-1979) Origin: Iran</p> <p>Studied in Feyzieh old Safavid school</p> <p>Teaching philosophy in the University of Tehran</p> <p>An Iranian Theoretician of the Islamic State</p> <p>Assassinated in 1979</p>	<p>Man and Destiny (<i>Ensan va sarnevesht</i>) (2014)</p> <p>Emphasis on fate and destiny of human within Shiite 12-imams doctrine through philosophical processing of thoughts</p> <p>Islam within history</p> <p>Based on human's</p>	<p>Mainstream Shiite</p> <p>Philosophy blend-in Shiite 12-imams doctrine</p> <p>Persian Islamic Thought</p>	<p>Theme:</p> <p>Human found truth in his/her intuition (fitrah) as the mediator between him/her and the God</p> <p>Politically founded the ideology of the Iran Shiite state based on <i>acculturating cognitive change</i> vs. <i>assimilating foreign ideas</i> especially "foreign ideas with Islamic appearance"</p> <p>Remarks:</p> <p>Was amused with rational sciences since school time</p> <p>Involved in politics</p>

		natural disposition ( <i>fiṭrah</i> )		
4	<p>Prof. Dr. Charles Le Gai Eaton a. k. a. Hassan Abdul Hakeem (1921-2010) Origin: Britain, UK</p> <p>He was raised as an agnostic.</p> <p>Studied history in Charterhouse School and King's College, Cambridge University</p> <p>He served in diplomacy and then consultancy to the Islamic Cultural Centre in London editing the Islamic Quarterly Journal</p>	<p>Book: Islam and the Destiny of Man (1985)</p> <p>Islam within history</p>	<p>Mainstream Sunni Islam</p> <p>Sufism</p> <p>European Islamic Thought - Main Idea: British Islamic Identity</p>	<p>Theme:</p> <p>He was raised an agnostic, thus, recognized the crisis of distrust against the religion or organized belief system in the Europe</p> <p>He explored the existential meaning in the combination of his and humankind's history with a tinge of Sufism practice he adhered to</p> <p>Remarks:</p> <p>He was struggling between being a British and Muslim and keeping both in harmony</p>
5	<p>Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (b. 1931) Origin: Bogor, Indonesia but mostly resided in Malaysia</p> <p>The paternal grandmother was a Turkish married to Arab Malay of Hadhramaut Ba'alwi descent.</p> <p>Upon completion of secondary school, he joined Royal</p>	<p>Book: <i>The Intuition of Existence</i> (1990)</p> <p>Book: <i>The Degrees of Existence</i> (1994)</p> <p>Philosophical Sufism elevating levels of psychical hierarchy through spiritual order</p>	<p>Mainstream Sunni Islam: Islamic philosophy, theology metaphysics and Sufism</p> <p>Nusantara Islamic Thoughts</p> <p>- Main Idea: Islamization of knowledge</p>	<p>Theme:</p> <p>The meaning of being a Muslim through the lenses and terms of Philosophy and Sufism</p> <p>Remarks:</p> <p>Rejected Western secularism</p> <p>Advocated Islamization of Sciences</p> <p>Promoted Malay identity especially through language and Malay Sufism practice</p>

<p>Military Academy, Sandhurst, UK.</p> <p>Studied in University of Malaya, Singapore for his 1<sup>st</sup> degree.</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> degree from McGill University, Canada</p> <p>M.A. Thesis: <i>Raniri and the Wujudiyah of 17th Century Aceh</i></p> <p>Doctorate from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London</p> <p>Ph.D thesis 2 volumes: <i>The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri</i></p> <p>Head of the Department of Malay Language and Literature and later Dean of the Faculty of Arts in the Malaysia National University where he founded and directed the Institute of Malay Language, Literature, and Culture (IBKKM), which is now renamed as The Institute of</p>	<p>and journey along the existence</p>		
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	<p>Malay World and Civilization (ATMA)</p> <p>He was also the founder and director, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC) to realize Islamization of knowledge</p>			
6	<p>Prof. Dr. Abdenmour Bidar (b. 1971)</p> <p>Origin: France</p> <p>Studied in Normal Higher School of Fontenay-Saint-Cloud</p> <p>Thesis: Mohammed Iqbal: a pedagogy of individuation</p> <p>He was responsible for secular education at the Ministry of National Education</p>	<p>Article: The 'Outsiders of Islam' (2010)</p> <p>Article: Reading Abdenmour Bidar: New Pathways for European Islamic Thought (Hashas, 2013)</p> <p>Islam within history of humankind</p> <p>Islam without the submission and devotional practice to adjust with the secular European French social sanction that pressurizes Muslims</p>	<p>Non-mainstream</p> <p>Secular and Liberal Islam</p> <p>Sufism</p> <p>European Islamic Thoughts: Self Islam</p>	<p>Theme: Adjustment of self in the sense of being Muslim and European who must survive and struggle the complication of discordance living in a Christian secular society in France</p> <p>Remarks:</p> <p>He was influenced by the work Mohammed Iqbal (1873-1938) i.e. 'the Luther of Islam' also in adjusting himself after his Brahmin family converted to Islam</p> <p>His "Islam without submission" struggles reflected the influence of Mohammed Iqbal's ideas of spirituality but M. Iqbal disagreed with the idea of God is dead in the West</p> <p>He was recognized among established thinkers of the European Islam e.g., by</p>

		Without sharia vs. Iqbal's although inspired by his work		Prof. Mohammed Hashas
7	<p>Prof. Dr. Haron Din and team</p> <p>Studied in the al-Azhar University and then Cairo University for masters. Later, got doctorate from and then taught in Malaysia National University (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia)</p>	<p><i>Manusia dan Islam</i> (trans. Man and Islam) is a by-product collaboration with the Malaysian Royal Police</p> <p>doctrine and practice of Islam</p>	<p>Mainstream Sunni Islam</p> <p>Nusantara Islamic Thoughts</p>	<p>Theme: Detailed reference of three volumes writing on human origins in relation with foundations of Islamic Creeds and practicing and functioning as Muslims especially the worshipping aspects</p> <p>Remarks: Involved in politics Promoted Nusantara Malay identity and version of Islam</p> <p>Involved in politics</p>
8	<p>Prof. Dr. Abd al-Wadūd Shalabī</p> <p>Early degrees from al-Azhar University Doctorate from University of Cambridge Deputy Shaykh of al-Azhar University</p> <p>doctrinal authority</p>	<p>Islam: Religion of Life (1<sup>st</sup> edition: 1987)</p> <p>doctrine and practice of Islam</p> <p>must affirm the absolute unity of the Transcendent;</p> <p>and secondly, it must affirm the existence of a way of life, which reflects this unity and assists humankind to</p>	<p>Mainstream Sunni Islam</p> <p>North African Arabian Islamic Thoughts</p>	<p>Theme: Brief writing on practicing and functioning as Muslims especially the worshipping aspects</p> <p>Remarks: Brief monograph but more contemporary and multidisciplinary association in writing due to his exposure to the West because was studying doctorate there</p> <p>Acknowledged &amp; responded to the polarization of Western sciences vs. Islam</p>

		<p>draw near to it</p> <p>doctrine and practice</p> <p>need of rearticulation</p> <p>Religion is intensely realistic, not utopian</p> <p>Based on human's natural disposition (<i>fiṭrah</i>)</p> <p>Religion only established collectively</p> <p>devotional practices</p> <p>through human history</p> <p>Westerners saw Islam as a religion of fatalism and apathy, for the Muslims are constantly exhorted by the Qur'an to act.</p>		
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## DISCUSSION

### Diversity of Intersubjectivity

The Muslim scholars' contribution shows us the inevitable diversity that has sprouted from their

concept of existential meaning. So, the psychotherapists will surely need to be intersubjective with their clients' choice of existential concepts they adhere to for the sake of professional competency (American Counselling Association, 2011; Hodge & Nadir, 2008; Roysircar, 2003). Intersubjectivity is a key element in our social engagement in the world with others. The concept aims *to describe our ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other through shared or overlapping either experience or knowledge of experience or both about others* (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Apparently, perceived existential threats out of fear of death due to wars, colonializations, missionary missions, plague, etc., in the past century had impacted Western thinkers to process it through the crisis of identity and origins at individual's level. Their ideas had burst into collective movement of nationalism either at national or continental level like in the Europe. At higher level spiritually, people tend to attach religious meaning of their creation like Islamic global revival was engaging religious unifying motivation in Muslim Community. Similar processes may be involved in the Muslim clients' psyche for psychotherapy or Muslim community at large for preventive psycho-educational intervention against depression through existential meaning (relating to integrating Islamic Existential Psychology) in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT).

It is observed that the blend of thoughts in the categories that made up one's thinking style and fusion of beliefs e.g., mysticism combined with philosophy/liberalism/secularism are combination of answers they found convincing to their spiritual struggle over crises they confronted in life as history recorded. Evidently, each of them are/were from different locations globally as manifested in the Table 1. Every place has their own history, politics and culture that inevitably influenced them in a way or another, which is evident upon reading their writings. Everyone was having own internal crisis, either personally, or of identity being a Muslim in a country, which was colonized by a foreign power, or out of exposure to a foreign country like went studying there, or being a mixed with multinational lineage genealogically or, living among non-Muslim majority or exposed to pluralism of religious cultures reacted with different rooting.

The baffling struggle between the self, religion, and culture of the country they belong and the foreign ideas to Islam had attracted them to understand it through philosophy and religion, specifically via mysticism. Also, the polarizing factors of being a Muslim in an Islamic country is different compared to in a country belong to another religion.

In details, the inherent European history of Enlightenment is evident in the writing of Bidar with his output of '*Self-Islam*' ideology (Bidar, 2010; Hashas, 2013) whose ideas may render heretic by Sunni mainstream scholars especially among Arabian and Malay ones. But Bidar bitterly experienced the hostility of France against the religions that he adjusted by expelling the submission part of being a Muslim and radically bent to the humanistic idea of God's death who was being replaced by humans. However, another European: Eaton tried to survive in the balance between being a Muslim convert and a British against the stigma of national identity being a diplomat of his country before conversion.

Everyone struggled with adjusting identity in the culture they live - whether to adopt or adapt the socially accepted form of Islam locally or creatively adjust like Prof. Badawi. The Egyptian had distinctively adapted the philosophical origin of religion from his tertiary studies and got amused with the Persian idea of the '*The Perfect Human*' (Badawi, 1976). Plus, being

fascinated by his supervisor's philosophy study, who was a Jewish French named Alexander Koyre of Russian origin.

Interestingly, the result of exposure to Western ideologies and sciences had differently influenced al-Maududi who had been educated traditionally at Deobandi School compared to secularly educated Badawi in Egypt. Al-Maududi got politically inspired to move the Muslim Community to revive through persuasive writing like he saw it happened to the West before (A. A.-A. Al-Maududi, 1960; A. al-A. Al-Maududi, 1996; Mehmood & Ahmad, 2018; Paracha, 2015).

However, the tinge of previous religion also could be sensed that the idea of Islam became stricter in the identity struggle of being Muslim Indians or Hindu Indians. The conflict was complicated further with the diversity of the Muslim leaders who involved in establishing Pakistan. Some were secular, or liberal or fundamental or traditional Muslims (Ahmed, 2017).

Perhaps, Shalabi's (1993) and Haron Din's (Malaysia Royal Police Editorial Panels, 1990) versions are more educationally flat in intonation to congruently fit the mainstream Sunni evergreen fundamental understanding of Islam. However, being in Malaysia has the influence of the Nusantara flavour into the work of Haron Din, which is uniquely detailed over the function of being a Muslim in general. The work of languages in both books, Malay and English respectively, also play a role in distinguishing explanation about Islam by a Malay and an Egyptian although both studied early degree in the Al-Azhar University i.e., same foundation. On the other end, Muttahari was a Shiite of Twelve Imams and at the same time also struggled between Persian civilization glorious ancient history and the influence of Greek philosophy at the critical timing when Iran was established according to his mastermind moulding the revolution that toppled the last monarch of Iran. His writing emphasised more on the fate and destiny of human relating to Shiite 12-imams version discussing polarization between freewill and determinism based on human *fiṭrah* (Muttahari, 2014).

Uniquely, in the case of al-Attas, he had been blessed with multinational origins: Yemeni, Turkish, Indonesian, and Malay who resided in Malaysia but was born in Indonesia with affiliation to Ba'lawi: a clan and organization with tendency for mysticism that is specifically related to whom has lineage traced back to the prophet in a form of spiritual practice. However, he apparently supported and contributed a lot to the Malay identity especially with regards to Malay language and as a medium of expression on how Malay understood Islam differently from where it was originated in the present Saudi Arabia (Al-Attas, 1990, 1994; Merdeka Award Secretariat, n.d.; The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, 2021).

So, it hints the pattern or flow of a Muslim client may base his/her existential ideology as related to those writings. Absolutely, philosophy or mysticism is not an interest of everyone as Muslim clients and Muslim community at large are from all strata, from all educational backgrounds, so, it is essential to discover the existential ideology they belong to in the first place to properly integrate suitable type of Islamic version they are familiar with.

Everyone also displays distinct traces of native language, national identity, or place of origin as an aspect of existential meaning blended into the fusion of Islamic ideologies of choice. Moreover, the combination also influences the interpretation, understanding and jurisprudence of Islam like geographically Islam is differently perceived between Arabs, and non-Arabs. Or between traditionally and secularly educated with Islamic sciences at school level to avoid offending due to sensitivity over certain matters e.g., rulings.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Islamic existential ideas do not only collide with non-Islamic ideas due to the location either Western or Eastern ideas. It lies in the divergence of origins, histories, axiologies, ontologies, epistemologies, experience, evolvement of the ideologies along the time or different era, and spaces they are exposed to in comparison to Islam that contradicted especially at the Creed level.

Obviously, psychotherapists need to cover diverse intersubjectivity with regards to existential meaning within Islam. This reality of diversity and differences of beliefs and ideas resonates what Allah SWT Ordains in the Holy Qur'an:

"Mankind was once believed in one religion only [before they deviated]; afterwards Allah sent the prophets to deliver glad-tidings and warnings of mishaps, and sent down the Holy Scripture with plain truth to judge among the people concerning what they had differed. And no dispute should occur related to the Scripture except with those who were also sent down a Scripture before regardless of the clear proofs manifested to them out of enmity among the people of revealed scriptures. And Allah Guides those who believed in the truth concerning what they had differed, upon His Leave. And Allah Guides whom He Wills to a straight path (Q2: 213)."

Similar Qur'anic verse is: "And mankind was once one united community (affiliated to one same religion), but [then] they differed. Had it not for a prior decree from your Lord, their differences already be straightened [19]. And they say, "Why there was no sign revealed by his Lord?" So, say, "The unseen matters belong to Allah, so wait, indeed, I am waiting like you are waiting" (Q10: 19-20).

The latter sounded more like Islam was when the Prophet s.a.w. was still alive. Everyone was united under his leadership. Anyhow, the dispute with the people of the previous holy scriptures had existed then. Intersubjectively, the distrust factor was there to generate prejudice, apart from being humans who were experiencing cognitive dissonance, so, either would accept, reject, or adjust towards the new ideas anyway. Also, fear of the unknown factor if one wants to accept. Or reject anyway due to threats either social sanction, political or business risks.

Some had courage and competency to adjust by combining contradictory elements into another synthesis (but very few produced the safe fusion processed through the filter of the Islamic Creed requirements alone) like between Islam and the Greek philosophy or Islam and the Persian Mysticism. Following the former Qur'anic verse, the dispute should not happen if we refer to the Qur'an for solution. Therefore, the ideas should be re-examined whether they are congruent or not with the Qur'an. Since it is the Words of Allah, the unifying factor is there as much as everything else was and is being centralized to Him. Even interfaith harmony could exist provided the sense of enmity is absent when we try to be intersubjective i.e., between two different set of beliefs between the psychotherapists and his/her client(s).

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