
EDITORIAL

The current issue of the *Journal of Integrated Sciences (JIS)*, *Issue IV.*, includes articles highlighting different aspects of the multifaceted reality of contemporary Islam. I do not mean here simply “of Islamic thought”, but rather of Islam as a living reality, composed of the experiences, issues – and yes, also thoughts – of Muslims committed to practicing Islam based on the Qur’an and Sunnah even in difficult times.

Thus, the first topic that *JIS Issue IV.* addresses is the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been defined as an “ongoing global stressor”, and has been a cause for restructuring our world in many ways – economic, geographic, and even cultural. I believe that the inherent adaptability of the Muslim community and their propensity to seek solutions within Islam in response to these changes, will aid Muslims everywhere to find ways to support each other.

This orientation towards empathetic and compassionate intervention is the underlying purpose of the article “Prevalence of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress among the Expatriate Population in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province”, which presents a study conducted through various psychological scales, to assess the mental health situation of Muslims when faced with the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, it has been a global trend in the past few months to study the relationship between the mental health of Muslims and different experiences connected to Covid-19, and I am glad to see that *JIS Issue IV.* manages to be at the center of contemporary discourse.

Increasingly, attention has been dedicated to the role of women in the wake of Covid-19. With many women forced away from the workplace because of the closure of schools and the necessities of childcare, and the consequent economic pressure on families, the ideal role women should play in society – especially in the Muslim world – has been at the center of discussion. The paper “Women’s Empowerment: An Islamic Perspective” directs the focus of the Muslim community towards the issue of women’s empowerment, which the author regards as a “central theme” of the secularist propaganda, while simultaneously acknowledging that it “has not received sufficient response from the Islamic scholarship”.

Another example of the ideological divide between traditional Islamic scholarship and liberal Arab modernism is discussed in the article “Arab Modernists against Imām Ash-Shāfi’i: A Critical Analysis”. The paper refutes the unfounded allegations of many Arab modernists who accuse Imām Ash-Shāfi’i of being an “innovator” in the religion on the grounds of his

consolidating the “Principles of the Religion” (Usūl al-fiqh). This article clearly shows the attempts of Arab modernists “to create an epistemological divide”, i.e. a detachment between contemporary Islam and its foundational history, a divide “with the heritage of Usūl al-Fiqh as well as with semantics and the rules governing the Arabic language”.

The effort of maintaining the correct narrative, and to follow Islam as practiced by the *Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*, requires efforts in two directions: on the one hand against secularism, as exemplified by the article on Imām Ash-Shāfi'i, and on the other hand against extremism as well. In the paper, “The Real Reasons behind the Phenomenon of Religious Extremism in the Muslim Community”, we read an in-depth analysis of the causes and implications of religious extremism, based on the analysis of literature on the subject. The discussion concludes by noting that we should always be aware that “our societies are not immune” to religious extremism, and that we should foster the “collective awareness of Muslims” against this deviation.

The final article entitled, “The Impact of Instructional Communication Skills Training on Educators” discusses some important issues in this area. It attempts to highlight some measures for improving the quality of teaching by offering short training sessions on communication skills. Needless to say, communication skills are fundamental for Muslim teachers, especially in the current milieu, when there is an often unpredictable alternation between online and in-person teaching, which could act as a de-motivating factor even for serious students committed to learning.

I am pleased to say that the collection of articles in *JIS Issue IV*. is much more than simply “multidisciplinary” in scope. The contents of this issue are comprehensive, wide-ranging, eclectic in terms of the issues addressed, and extremely beneficial to the Ummah.

Francesca Bocca, Associate Professor

Head: Department of Psychology

International Open University