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The Role of Islam in the Prevention of Suicide: An Analytical Study
of the Reasons Behind Suicide Prevention in Islam

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The purpose of this research is to extrapolate and analyze the causes leading to suicide prevention in the Islamic religion, by deducing the relationship between the level of Islamic religiosity and mental health, specifically suicide, then extrapolating the factors or components that lead to suicide prevention in the Islamic religion, as well as analyzing the Islamic faith's position on Suicide, then inferring the effect of belief in fate and destiny on psychological security and in reducing suicide. **Methods:** This study follows the inductive and analytical approach, based on extrapolating studies and statistics about suicide rates in the world as a whole, then the Islamic world, then the deductive approach by construing and analyzing the relationship between the level of Islamic religiosity and the suicide rate, and the effect of belief in fate and destiny in reducing suicide. **The importance of the study:** it has appeared in that it addresses non-Arab societies, clarifying the position of Islamic law on suicide. Given that suicide is a global issue, this paper proposes solutions to this phenomenon by presenting Islamic teachings. **Results and Conclusions:** The study concluded with a number of results. Most notably, the existence of a positive correlation between the high level of Islamic religiosity and mental health at the onset, and that the lower the

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religious faith and the level of Islamic religiosity, the more this leads to a higher rate of suicide in Islamic countries. Then, the Islamic religion's prohibition of suicide and the stipulation of its punishment on the Day of Resurrection led to a lower rate. Suicide among Muslims, in addition to prohibiting causes that can lead to suicide, such as drug abuse. **Recommendations:** The study recommends conducting more research in the English language – to further dialogue with non-Muslims - on the impact of the Islamic faith on the problems of the contemporary world including the impact of the Islamic faith in preventing addiction as well in preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

Keywords: Suicide, Islam, Prohibition, Fate and Destiny.

دور الإسلام في الوقاية من الانتحار: دراسة تحليلية لأسباب الوقاية من الانتحار في الدين الإسلامي

حمزة حماد*1

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ملخص

الهدف: يهدف هذا البحث إلى استقراء وتحليل أسباب الوقاية من الانتحار في الدين الإسلامي، وذلك من خلال استنتاج العلاقة بين مستوى التدين الإسلامي والصحة النفسية: الانتحار تحديداً، ثم استقراء العوامل أو المقومات التي تؤدي إلى الوقاية من الانتحار في الدين الإسلامي، وكذلك تحليل موقف العقيدة الإسلامية من الانتحار ثم استنتاج تأثير الإيمان بالقضاء والقدر في الأمن النفسي والحد من الانتحار. **المنهج:** تتبع هذه الدراسة المنهج الاستقرائي التحليلي، القائم على استقراء الدراسات والإحصائيات حول نسب الانتحار في العالم ككل، ثم العالم الإسلامي، ثم المنهج الاستنتاجي باستنتاج وتحليل العلاقة بين مستوى التدين الإسلامي ونسبة الانتحار، وأثر الإيمان بالقضاء والقدر في الحد من الانتحار. **أهمية الدراسة:** تظهر أهمية الدراسة في كونها تخاطب المجتمعات غير العربية مبينة موقف الشريعة الإسلامية من الانتحار؛ نظراً لكون الانتحار قضية عالمية، وتأتي هذه الورقة بطرح حلول لهذه الظاهرة من خلال طرح التعاليم الإسلامية. **النتائج والاستنتاجات:** خلصت الدراسة إلى عدد من النتائج؛ أبرزها: وجود علاقة ارتباطية إيجابية بين ارتفاع مستوى التدين الإسلامي والصحة النفسية ابتداءً، وأنه كلما انخفض الوازع الديني ومستوى التدين الإسلامي فإن ذلك يؤدي إلى ارتفاع نسبة الانتحار في الدول الإسلامية، ثم إن تحريم الدين الإسلامي للانتحار، والنص على عقوبته يوم القيامة أدى إلى انخفاض نسبة الانتحار بين المسلمين، فضلاً عن تحريم الأسباب التي يمكن أن تؤدي إلى الانتحار مثل تعاطي المخدرات. **التوصيات:** توصي الدراسة بإجراء المزيد من البحوث باللغة الإنجليزية -لخطاب غير المسلمين- حول تأثير العقيدة الإسلامية في مشاكل العالم المعاصر، مثل أثر العقيدة الإسلامية في الوقاية من الإدمان، وأثرها كذلك في الوقاية من الأمراض الجنسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتحار، الإسلام، التحريم، القضاء والقدر.

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Introduction

In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) stated that suicide is one of the main causes of death in the world, as it constitutes one case out of every 100 deaths. Every year, more people die as a result of suicide than from HIV, malaria, breast cancer, or victims of war or murder.

Moreover, some studies, which will be discussed later, conducted in recent years indicated that suicide rates in most Muslim-majority countries are lower than the global average.

Scope and Objectives of the Study

In light of the above, the scope of this study is to extrapolate and analyze the reasons leading to suicide prevention in the Islamic religion, by achieving a number of objectives as follows:

- Contrasting suicide rates in Islamic countries compared to countries around the world.
- Concluding the relationship between the level of Islamic religiosity and mental health, specifically suicide.
- Extrapolating the factors or components that lead to suicide prevention in the Islamic religion.
- Analysis of the Islamic faith's position on suicide.
- Concluding the effect of belief in fate and destiny on psychological security and reducing suicide.

Methodology of the Study

This study follows the inductive and analytical approach, based on extrapolating studies and statistics about suicide rates in the world as a whole, then the Islamic world, then the deductive approach by construing and analyzing the relationship between the level of Islamic religiosity and the suicide rate, and the effect of belief in fate and destiny in reducing suicide.

Previous Studies

There are many Arab studies that have addressed the impact of the Islamic religion in reducing and preventing suicide including:

Boukerdid, N. (2013), *Islamic Law Approach to Combating Suicide*, & Isa, M. (2019), *Suicide: Its Motives and Treatment in Light of the Prophet's Sunnah*.

However, what distinguishes this study is as follows:

This study is quite distinguished as it addresses non-Arab societies, explaining the position of Sharia on suicide. Given that suicide is a global issue, this paper proposes solutions to this phenomenon by presenting Islamic teachings, in addition to the fact that it relies on the main sources in the Islamic religion namely Quranic verses and Prophetic hadiths.

First: Suicide rates in Muslim countries compared to other countries in the world

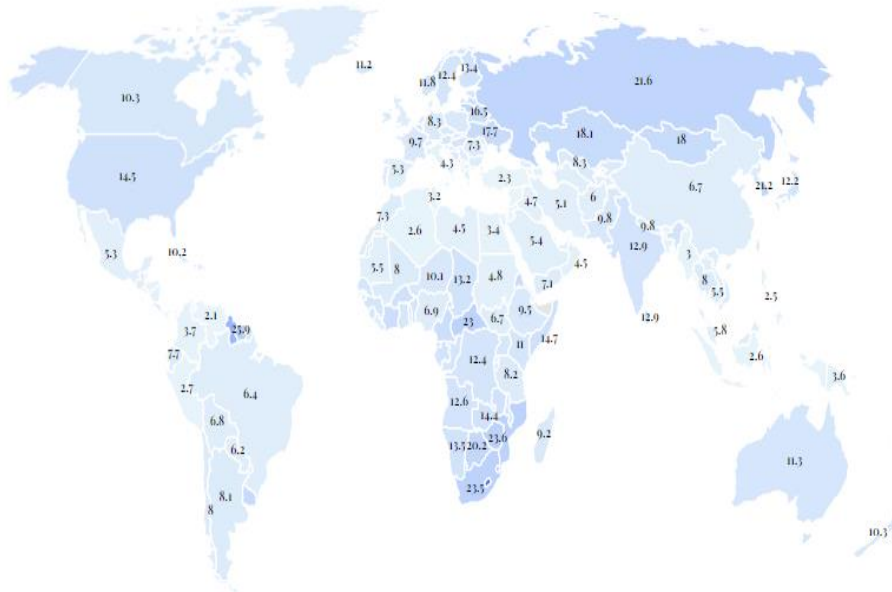
Based on a number of studies conducted over the past twenty years, the researcher finds that a study by Lew et al., (2022), analyzed suicide rates by age in Muslim-majority countries in the period from 2000 to 2019, and concluded that most Muslim-majority countries had suicide rates below the global average. The same result was confirmed by the World Health Organization-Eastern Mediterranean Region that estimated suicide rates in the Eastern Region. The average for the World Health Organization is much lower than for other regions of the WHO, and explained this by the influence of religious beliefs, social and cultural habits towards suicide and its attempts (WHO, 2012).

In addition to the findings of Shah & Chandia (2010) that suicide rates are lower in Muslim countries. Similarly, the findings of Rezaeian, (2009), Lester, 2006 studies indicate that suicide rates among Muslims in Islamic countries are lower than those in other religions.

While the study by Bertolote, & Fleischmann (2002), which classified suicide rates in the world according to the religion of the state, it showed

that the suicide rate in Muslim countries (such as Kuwait) was close to zero: (0.1 per 100,000 people).

In addition to the above, it is worth noting the map below:



Source: <https://wisevoter.com/country-rankings/suicide-rates-by-country/>

This map reflects statistics of the year 2021, and it shows the rates of suicide in all countries across the globe. For instance, in Indonesia - as a Muslim country in a non-Arab environment, is ranked 170th in the world with a suicide rate of 2.6% per 100,000 capita. Similarly, Malaysia ranked 129th in the world in terms of suicide rate, with a rate of 5.6% per 100,000 population.

If we move to the rates of suicide in Muslim societies in non-Muslim countries, we find that according to a study by Awaad, 2021; It has been proven that American Muslims have twice the suicide rates compared to other religious groups in the United States of America.

Second: The Relationship Between the Level of Islamic Religiosity and Mental Health: Suicide in Particular

Initially the researcher believes that there is a positive correlation between the high level of Islamic religiosity and mental health, and this was confirmed by Al-Maslahiyah & Al-Khawaja (2021), which attempted to investigate the relationship between religiosity and mental health among a sample of social workers. The study sample consisted of 151 individuals, who are working in the schools of Muscat Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman during the academic year 2016/2017. Also, it was confirmed by Balazem (2022), which implemented the comprehensive Islamic religiosity survey and the brief public health survey on a sample of 127 male and female students from various disciplines at the universities of Oran in Algeria. It concluded that there is a positive correlation between religiosity and mental health of the university student.

Similarly, Shernai (2019) assessed the role of religiosity and its relationship to mental health. This study was conducted on a sample of 400 men and women from the state of Tizi Ouzou in Algeria, and it concluded that there is a positive correlation between religiosity and mental health of the Algerian individual. In addition, the study of El Sejary (2017), which dealt with religiosity and social support as well as its relationship to the quality of life and life satisfaction among men with cancer in Kuwait. A questionnaire was distributed to 124 patients at the Makki Juma Cancer Center. The study concluded that there is a positive correlation between the social status of the patients and the quality of life, the degree of religiosity and both satisfaction with life and quality of life of the patients.

Whereas the researcher believes that the lower the religious motive and level of Islamic religiosity, this leads to an increase in the suicide rates in Muslim countries. As one of the most prominent causes of suicide in Muslim countries, especially Arab countries, is the weakness of the religious motive and non-compliance with the provisions of the Islamic religion. This result is indicated on a number of field studies in different Arab countries, including Al-Abadi & Al-Adwan (2021) study, which analyzed suicide cases in Jordan through the statistics published on the Jordanian Criminal Information Department website, from 2011 to 2018

period. The study indicated that the rates of suicide and attempted suicide in Jordanian society are constantly increasing, and that most of these cases are due to economic and social conditions, and that suicide spreads among young people in particular due to weak religious faith and recommended activating the role of clerics and psychologists in society in order to combat suicide and warn of its dangers. Comparable result was reached by the study of Jubeir and Muhammad (2021), as they concluded that one of the causes of suicide was the weak religious motive and lack of acceptance in God's fate and destiny. Similarly, the study of Al-Hasnawi (2018), who analyzed the relationship of suicide with social problems in the city of Diwaniyah in Iraq, relied upon criminal investigations following each suicide act and attempt of suicide. This study deemed that one of the reasons for suicide is the lack of commitment to the prohibition of Sharia to commit suicide and the attempt to commit suicide, which indicates superficial religiosity or weak religious motives.

In addition to the above, the study of Al-Shaeri (2018) recommended the need for Islamic education to reduce the phenomenon of suicide in Algeria, and Majali and Damour (2014) recommended the need to strengthen the religious viewpoint to reduce the phenomenon of suicide in Jordan.

Third: The Factors or Elements Leading to the Prevention of Suicide in Islam

The researcher can address this issue in terms of linking it to the teachings of Islam. As these teachings are divided into two sections: (i) A theoretical, doctrinal section is related to the unseen (faith) beliefs and is not linked to behaviors in the daily life of a Muslim, which is expressed in Islam by the belief that deals with the pillars of belief in God; (ii) A practical and procedural section that includes Islamic practices such as prayer, zakat, and pilgrimage. It also includes a statement of the Sharia ruling on the actions of Muslims in terms of the permissibility or prohibition of this act in Islam based on Sharia evidence, which is expressed as: Sharia (Tijjani, 2018).

The Position of Sharia on Suicide

It is necessary to return to the original Islamic texts, and by that I refer to the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Prayers and Peace be Upon Him). Suicide is forbidden, and it is one of the greatest sins in Islam. The Quranic verses are as a clear and explicit indication of preventing a person from disposing of himself by killing or destroying, God said: "...And do not kill 'each other or' yourselves. Surely Allah is ever Merciful to you" (Surat An-Nisa, Verse 29) and in Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 195: "... and do not let your own hands throw you into destruction 'by withholding'. And do good, for Allah certainly loves the good-doers."

Suicide is when a person kills himself by any means whether it is by shooting bullets, or drinking poison, or burning, or drowning, or abstaining from food and drink until death. All of these ways and others like it are forbidden in Islamic Law (Sharia), and the Prophet (Prayers and Peace be Upon Him) warned the one who commits suicide will be punished according to the type of his action, then the individual will be punished in the same manner he committed suicide when he said: "Whoever commits suicide by an iron weapon, his iron is in his hand, and he will use it in his stomach, in the fire of Hell, to abide therein for eternity, and whoever drinks poison and kills himself, he will drink it in the fire of Hell, wherein he will abide forever, and whoever jumps from a mountain and kills himself, he will be bound to hell-fire forever." (Arifi, 2022; Monajjed, 2021; Muslim, 2006, p. 61)

Moreover, the prophetic texts not only prohibited suicide, but also prohibited wishing for death, the Prophet (PPBUH) said: "None of you should wish for death because of a harm that befell upon him." (Bukhari, 2002, p.1583). The justification for the prohibition of wishing for death is because wishing indicates weakness of faith in God and weakness of belief in God, fate and destiny (Al-Hams & Al-Jarjawi, 2015).

The researcher can analyze Islam's view of the prohibition of suicide by the fact that Islam considers the human soul as a trust in the hands of its owner and the real owner of it is God Almighty, for the individual does

not own himself, but the real owner is God Almighty, and it is not permissible to dispose of the soul except according to the will of the real owner and within the limits that He permitted. Humanity is a gift from God Almighty, and it is not permissible to transgress it by destroying it or forfeiting its benefits, whether that is by the action of others or by the human being himself. Thus, Sharia prohibited suicide (Jubeir & Mohamed 2021; Boukerdid, 2013).

Furthermore, Islam made suicide a major crime because it contradicts the purpose for which God Almighty created man namely for the worship of God Almighty, succession in the earth and the development of the earth. This wisdom can be deduced from Surat Al-An'am, Verse 165, where God said: "He is the One Who has placed you as successors on earth and elevated some of you in rank over others, so He may test you with what He has given you. Surely your Lord is swift in punishment, but He is certainly All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

The researcher believes that this explicit prohibition of suicide, and the stipulation of its punishment on the Day of Judgement, led to a decrease in the suicide rate among Muslims, in addition to prohibiting the causes that could lead to suicide, such as drug abuse (Sabry, & Vohra, 2013; Dervic, et al., 2012; El-Sayed, et al., 2011)

The Position of the Islamic Faith on Suicide

The Islamic faith mainly consists of the six pillars of faith, namely: faith in God, His angels, His messengers, His books, the Day of Judgement, and finally faith in fate and destiny, (Al-Harbi, 2020; Tijjani, 2018; Saleh, 2001).

The first thing that God Almighty created was the pen. Then, God Almighty wrote in a book called Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz all human amounts of sustenance, health and disease, wealth and poverty. Thus, God Almighty wrote in the heavens everything that will happen in life from the inception of creation to the Day of Judgment (Maher & Bissondath 2019).

Belief in fate and destiny means that God Almighty predestined things in the past, and He, may He be glorified, knows that they will occur at

known times and according to specific attributes, and they will occur according to what God Almighty has destined for them (Al-Harbi, 2020; Al-Attas & Al-Salami, 2020; Abu Ouf, 2017; Saleh, 2001).

Therefore, Muslims firmly and unquestionably believe that sickness, health, riches, and poverty fall in accordance with God's will, and they have no choice but to submit and be content (Hafez, et al.; 2022; Tijjani, 2018).

Belief in fate and destiny is one of the foundations of faith, and a Muslim's faith is not complete without it (Daoud, 2019). This is derived from many texts elucidating the meaning as in Surat Al-Hadid, Verse 22, where God Almighty said: "No calamity 'or blessing' occurs on earth or in yourselves without being 'written' in a Record before We bring it into being. This is certainly easy for Allah." What is meant by a "Record", which is the book in which God Almighty wrote the destinies of creation before He created them, before He created them, that is, before He created the earth and the souls. (Al-Harbi, 2020; Samarrai, 2018; Saleh, 2001).

And the Almighty said in Surat Al-Furqan, verse 2: "...He has created everything, ordaining it precisely." The meaning here is that Allah has decreed everything in term of life span, disease, and sustenance (Al-Otaibi, 2017) One of the texts of the hadiths is: "A servant does not believe until he believes in fate, its good and its bad, until he knows that what befell him was not to miss him, and that what missed him would not have befallen him." (Al-Tirmidhi, 2000, p. 493; Abu Auf, 2017). It should be noted here that although man has free will and the ability to choose his actions, good or bad, nothing can happen without the knowledge of God Almighty (Tijjani, 2018).

The Effect of Belief in Fate and Destiny on Psychological Stability and Suicide Prevention

The researcher can say that belief in fate and destiny achieves psychological stability for the Muslim. This belief seeks psychological reassurance as the Muslim considers that everything that befalls him, whether good or bad, happens according to God Almighty's judgment and knowledge, and that nothing will happen unless God writes it on the

Muslim in the “Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz: Record”. The Prophet (PPBUH) said: “And know that if the nation gathered together to benefit you, they will not benefit you except with something that God had *written for you, and if they were to gather to harm you with something, they would not harm you, except with something that God has ordained for you.*” God Almighty wrote in the Record what was written of the estimations, so he described fate and destiny by the expression of raising the pen and drying the paper, analogous to the writer's completion of his writing. In fact, the benefit of the entire nation to man is indeed from God Almighty because He is the One who fated it. (Al-Thamer, 2020; Tirmidhi, 2000, p. 572)

On the other hand, the researcher can say that among the behavioral effects that are based on belief in fate and destiny is contentment with what happens to the Muslim in terms of trials and tests in this world. As the Muslim is subject to trials. God Almighty says in Surat Al-Anbya, verse 35: “...And We test you ‘O humanity’ with good and evil as a trial, then to Us you will ‘all’ be returned.” This means that we test you with hardships and prosperity, money and good; So that those of you who disbelieve in God and those who thank God appear evidently (Isa, 2019).

When we review the prophetic texts, we find that they affirm that patience with illness, sorrows, and worries contains expiation for sins and bad deeds, so that the Muslim will meet God on the Day of Judgement without sins. The Prophet (PPBUH) said: “What afflicts a Muslim in terms of weariness, illness, anxiety, sadness, harm, or grief, even the prick of a thorn, but God expiates some of his sins for it.” (Bukhari, 2002, p. 1431)

The Prophet (PPBUH) also said: “Trials will continue to befall the believing man and woman in himself, his children and his wealth until he/she meets God when there is no sin on him/her.” (Tirmidhi, 2000, p. 547) The Wisdom in God's affliction of His servants is for the expiation of bad deeds and sins in the life of this world, and that the reward for patience in affliction is Paradise.

One of the behavioral effects of belief in fate and destiny is reassurance and contentment. The Muslim is content with what God Almighty has ordained for him, and praise to God for the blessings he has

further to optimism. The world is made of worries, and the Muslim does not know despair, so whatever difficulties he encounters, he knows that relief (or ease) will follow them. The Almighty said in Surat Ash-Sharh, verses 5 & 6: “So, surely with hardship comes ease [5] Surely with ‘that’ hardship comes ‘more’ ease.[6]”. (Taufik, et al., 2022; Al-Attas & AlSalami, 2020).

Amongst the behavioral effects as well is the psychological stability in relation to the economic and social aspects, and avoidance of frustration and despair through God Almighty’s promise of human sustenance. Therefore, the Muslim is certain that God is the Provider, the Almighty said in Surat Hud, verse 6: “There is no moving creature on earth whose provision is not guaranteed by Allah. And He knows where it lives and where it is laid to rest. All is ‘written’ in a perfect Record.” (Al-Kubaisi, 2021).

The influence of the family and the Muslim community in suicide prevention

The researcher can say that the Muslim family has a major role in preventing suicide through the psychological and faith support it provides to its members who face some psychological or material difficulties and problems. This prevents individuals from thinking about or resorting to suicide as a solution to their problems, in addition to the influence of societal culture, which is based on solidarity among its members and sympathy with the afflicted, especially in times of crisis. In addition to society’s negative view of suicide, as suicide is a sign of personal weakness, psychological defeat, and disobedience to God Almighty.

The effect of the factor of patience with illness in preventing suicide

A person may be afflicted with the loss of a limb or the loss of his sight, hearing, or suffering from incurable diseases. If the person is patient in that affliction, he will be greatly rewarded. The Messenger of God, May God’s prayers and peace be upon him, said: “Indeed, God said: *When I afflict my servant with his two beloved ones - that is, his eyes - and he is patient, I will compensate him for that with Paradise,*” (Al-Bukhari, 2002, p. 1433). As for the wisdom of some people being afflicted with incurable

diseases; it is neither a curse from God Almighty nor a punishment for a previous sin. Rather, it is a trial and a test in which the believer increases his attachment to acts of worship, and turns to God with hope and supplication, and in it also increases faith in God. In critical circumstances, a person turns to God to provide relief for him (Al-Qadoumi, 2004, p. 518; Morad. & Merrick. J. (2001), p. 66).

The researcher believes that the factor of patience in coping with illness has a significant impact on suicide prevention. If a Muslim is afflicted with a terminal or incurable illness, patience with the illness and hope for reward from God Almighty will prevent him from committing suicide.

Conclusions

This study came to determine the reasons for the decline in the suicide rate in Islamic countries and the influence of religion on this matter, and it concluded to the following results:

- Regarding suicide rates in Islamic countries compared to countries of the world, the study concluded that suicide rates in these countries are lower than other countries in the rest of the world, and the same is true in Muslim societies within Western countries.
- Regarding the relationship between the level of Islamic religiosity and mental health, particularly suicide, the study concluded that there is a positive correlation between the high level of Islamic religiosity and mental health to begin with, and that the lower the religious strife and the level of Islamic religiosity, the higher the suicide rate in Islamic countries.
- Regarding the factors or components that lead to the prevention of suicide in the Islamic religion, the study concluded that the position of Islamic law on suicide, the explicit text prohibiting this act, and the stipulation of its punishment on the Day of Resurrection, led to a decrease in the rate of suicide among Muslims. In addition to prohibiting the causes that could lead to suicide, such as drug abuse.

- Regarding the effect of belief in fate on psychological security and reducing suicide, the study concluded that belief in fate achieves psychological security for the Muslim, as this faith works to create psychological reassurance. The Muslim believes that everything good or evil that befalls him occurs according to God Almighty's discretion and knowledge, and that nothing will happen unless God writes it down for the Muslim in the Preserved Tablet⁽¹⁾.
- Regarding the influence of the family and the Muslim community in suicide prevention, the study concluded that the Muslim family has a major role in suicide prevention through the psychological and faith support it provides to its members, who face some psychological or material difficulties and problems. Thereby, it prevents individuals from thinking about or resorting to suicide as a solution to their problems.
- Regarding the effect of patience with illness in preventing suicide, the study concluded that patience with illness in the hope of God's satisfaction and reward in the afterlife has a significant impact in preventing suicide as a result of illness.

The study recommends the following:

- Conducting more research in English – to further dialogue with non-Muslims - on the impact of the Islamic faith on the problems of the contemporary world, such as the impact of the Islamic faith in preventing addiction, and its impact as well in preventing sexually transmitted diseases.
- Conducting studies based on interviews and surveys on the views of Muslims in Islamic countries and Muslim communities in Western countries, on their opinion on the impact of religion in reducing suicide.

(1) Refers to the record in which Allah the Almighty has recorded the fate of His creatures before He created them.

Statements & Declarations

Human and Animal Participants: All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee of Seoul Christian University. This article does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects.

Disclosure Statement: The author declares that he has no relevant or material financial interests that relate to the research described in this paper.

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