



## **The Model of Behavior Change and Modification from the Perspective of Islam and Positive Psychology**

Mohammad Latif Mohebi<sup>1</sup>; Dr. Mohammad Sharifinia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD in Quran and Educational Sciences at Al-Mustafa International University, Qom, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Member of the Faculty of Al-Mustafa University, Qom, Iran

E-mail: mlmohebei@gmail.com

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v13i1.7327>

---

### **Abstract**

The present study was conducted with the aim of presenting a model of behavior change and modification with an Islamic approach and determining its similarities and differences with the model of behavior change and modification with a positive psychology approach. The research method is qualitative, of a descriptive-analytical and inferential type, and has also been carried out using the comparative method. The data collection method was documentary, and by studying sources and describing and analyzing the data, the Islamic model of behavior modification and change was inferred. The findings of the research indicate that the most important similarities between the two approaches are: an optimistic view of human nature, a positive view of religion, belief in behavior change and modification, belief in human capacities, talents, and abilities, emphasis on a positive attitude and human virtues, and application in the fields of counseling, therapy, and education. Likewise, the most important differences were differences in ontology, teleology, axiology, methodology, and defensive pessimism. The process of the behavior change and modification model with an Islamic approach consists of monitoring actions (moraghebeh), facing the problem, identifying the problem, desire to change (tobah), setting the goal of change (taqwa), designing a change plan (tafakkor), implementing the plan, receiving feedback (mohasebeh), and follow-up (mojahedeh). Whereas the process of the behavior change and modification model in positive psychology (the selected model) includes the stages of pre-contemplation, contemplation, planning, action, maintenance, and termination.

**Keywords:** Model; Modification and Change; Behavior Change and Modification Model; Islam; Positive Psychology

### **Introduction**

Desirable behavior modification and change, as the most significant human achievement, is considered an inseparable phenomenon in the evolution and the secret of humanity's survival in the system of creation. This issue has been a prerequisite for education and also exists as a universal law in the world of creation. All human beings, regardless of race and nationality, seek happiness and avoidance

of suffering and misery. These two important and fateful phenomena are among the genuine and universal concerns of humankind. The happiness and misery of individuals occur through the path of desirable behavior modification and change.

To bring order and structure to educational measures and to determine what specific criteria to apply in various situations and conditions of specific audiences and clients, and to regulate and coordinate our expectations and goals (Severin & Tankard, 2007, p. 68, cited by: Hajiani, 2016, p. 8); we move beyond the stage of merely sporadic and unstructured actions and proceed to design operational models for desirable behavior modification and change so that the actions of educators are accompanied by a comprehensive, practical, and actionable guide.

Since the positive psychology approach has the most affinity with the Islamic approach in the field of behavior change and modification and model presentation; therefore, studying behavior change and modification models through a comparative study centered on anthropological foundations and authentic concepts in both approaches is more beneficial; because multiple thought systems are more effective than a single thought system, and each system presents a part of reality (Sharifinia, 2013, p. 131). The positive approach, which officially began its existence in 1998 AD through its main ideator, Martin Seligman, declared its goal to be the correction and completion of contemporary and pathology-centered psychology and strives to examine and research the positive dimensions and aspects of human existence such as happiness, flourishing, well-being, optimism, hope, flow, spirituality and faith, personal strengths, universal human virtues, and the like, as well as the characteristics of positive groups and organizations (Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 13). In the domain of Islamic studies, scholars in the fields of ethics and mysticism have also described the components, stages, and methods of behavior change and modification using Islamic sources. The literature shows that behavior change and modification have a history as old as humanity. The scientific study of behavior modification and change methods has also been conducted in psychology and educational sciences (Miltenberger, 2013; Seif, 2002). Some common topics have been examined comparatively from the perspectives of Islam and psychology, especially the positive approach, in a scattered manner (Beheshti et al., 2010; Mahmoud Najafi et al., 2015; Zahra Mohagheghian and Azam Parcham, 2011; Pasandideh, 2013). Examining the title of the model of behavior modification and change from the perspectives of Islam and positive psychology, with a comparative approach, does not have a comprehensive and coherent background; therefore, presenting a practical and therapeutic model from the perspective of Islamic sources and the positive approach, centered on anthropological foundations and related, structured components, is a novel phenomenon and a new subject that is the topic of this research. Thus, the most important questions that this research seeks to answer are the following.

1. What is the model of behavior change and modification from the perspective of Islam and the positive psychology approach?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the model of behavior change and modification from the perspective of Islam and the model of behavior change and modification in positive psychology?
3. What are the foundations, components, and structure of the corrective and therapeutic model in both approaches?

### ***Conceptology***

- 1) Behavior; behavior is what people do or say (Miltenberger, 2013, p. 2). This includes both internal and external behaviors (Mesbah Yazdi and colleagues, 2012, p. 332).

- 2) Model; the word "model" lexically means pattern, exemplar, leader, example, and sample (Moin, Mohammad, 2004). In technical terms, a model is a set of components that have a meaningful connection and coherence and are positioned to achieve a single, specific goal (Fa'ali, 2018, p. 134).
- 3) Behavior Change and Modification Model; this refers to a plan, program, and a system of expectations that specifies the practical actions of educators in a specific, monitorable, and executable form.
- 4) Positive Psychology; positive psychology refers to the scientific study of methods to enhance the quality of life (Limon, Avril, and Gladiana McMahon, 2013, p. 11).

### ***Basics of Anthropology***

The models of desirable behavior change and modification in Islam and positive psychology are based on various fundamental hypotheses, one of the most important of which is the anthropological foundation or hypothesis. These hypotheses tell us what characteristics, capacities, inclinations, and capabilities human beings possess. The most important common foundations between the two approaches are mentioned below.

#### **1. Human Free Will**

Islam considers humans as choosing beings who must themselves strive to build their own destiny (Rahimian & Rahbar, 2012, p. 83-84). Narrative evidence and empirical proofs also confirm this view. The Holy Quran states: "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful" (Al-Insan: 3). Seligman, as the main ideator of the positive psychology approach, explicitly states that a deterministic view (the philosophical attitude of being a victim) is worthless in determining life's path, and conducted reviews have not confirmed this type of viewpoint (Seligman, 2016, p. 92-95).

#### **2. Personality Malleability**

From the perspective of Islam, humans are created in such a way that they can, with awareness and will, choose their desired path and, along that same path, shape their intellectual, moral, and cultural personality in various dimensions, gradually attaining physical and spiritual perfections. It is in light of this very characteristic that the philosophy of education finds meaning (The Research Center of Hawzeh and University, 2007, p. 417). In positive psychology, Martin Seligman's viewpoint in the hypothesis of personality malleability or stability implies evolution and change. Seligman emphasizes self-actualization and the positive aspects of humans. Furthermore, self-actualization is an evolutionary concept, not merely about reducing internal tension (Farahani, 1999, p. 189 and 358). Therefore, he has presented a systematic model of the good life with the aim of modifying and changing human behavior (Seligman, 2002, Magyar-Moe, J. L., 2012, p. 112).

#### **3. Special Capabilities**

A voluntary action can be realized only when the person is capable of performing it. Similarly, one must possess capabilities in insight and inclination so that the desire to create behavior or change behavior is formed within them (The Research Center of Hawzeh and University, 2007, p. 417). Humans are honored due to having special potential and capacities in the physical, behavioral, cognitive domains, transcendent inclinations, and special capabilities (Makarem Shirazi, 1992, Vol. 12, p. 198). Peterson and Seligman believe that humans possess the highest talents, virtues, inclinations, and capabilities. These two ideators in the positive approach, through a questionnaire, list twenty-four strengths or characteristics within six major universal virtues extracted from the principles of all monotheistic religions and Eastern

and Western traditions, such as: Wisdom, Knowledge, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Furthermore, thirty-four human talents have also been explained and defined in this approach (Magyar-Moe, J. L., 2012, p. 76-78).

#### 4. Common Nature

One of the anthropological foundations in both approaches is the common nature of humanity (fitrah). Views regarding human nature are philosophical in nature (Roger Tric, 2003, p. 3). Islamic texts such as the Holy Quran (Ar-Rum: 30), Islamic narrations (Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 3, p. 20-21), and Muslim thinkers have emphasized the common nature of all human beings (Motahhari, Fitrat, 1990, p. 37). The positive approach, from a philosophical perspective, also subscribes to a common human nature, unlike most existentialists and [some] humanists who believe in the distinguished and unique nature of each individual (Schultz, 1983, p. 252).

#### 5. Human Innate Goodness

Islamic sources emphasize the innate goodness and virtue of humanity; in other words, the foundation of the universe is based on goodness and perfection (Shojaei, 2015, p. 89). The Holy Quran uses the expression "the best of stature" both regarding the entire universe (ontological foundations) and the special creation of humans (anthropological foundations): "We have certainly created man in the best of stature" (At-Tin: 4). According to this blessed verse, the foundation of human creation is woven with goodness, virtue, and the best structure. "He who perfected everything He created..." (As-Sajdah: 7). The universe is entirely pure good, and the evil and afflictions present in the world can be interpreted and explained (Saberi, 2015, p. 3). In the positive approach, there is a belief in an innate good and positive nature in humans. This approach emphasizes universal human strengths, talents, and virtues and believes that human nature is designed based on goodness and virtue, and that disorders are an exceptional phenomenon that can be corrected and treated using models of desirable behavior change and modification.

#### The Model for Behavior Modification and Change in Islam

The operational model of behavior change and modification with an Islamic approach is designed and presented in a nine-stage structure. This model is introduced as the superior model in this research for the following reasons: 1) It includes a set of specific and structured behaviors. 2) It is frequently found in the literature of scholars in the fields of ethics, mysticism, interpretation, and education. 3) It includes a set of components and variables which, despite their multiplicity, point to the gradual and stage-by-stage process of forming a desirable behavior as a law-governed effect. 4) While the stages are interconnected and intertwined, at each stage there is the possibility of returning to the previous stage to correct and amend it.



## 1. Muraqabah (Monitoring Behavior)

The word Muraqabah lexically means surveillance and monitoring (Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 1, p. 424) and also means to wait expectantly (Al-Ain, Vol. 5, p. 154). In technical terms, it is a behavioral method of self-control, monitoring, and guarding over one's internal and external behaviors in all states, like a sentinel. The holy verse states: And ever is Allah, over all things, a Guardian (Al-Ahzab: 52). Ali (AS) said: "It is fitting for a man to be in control of himself, monitoring his heart, and guarding his tongue" (Amedi, Ghurar al-Hikam, 1987, p. 235). This means monitoring is not limited to observable behavior but also extends to one's belief system, cognitions, motivations, and inner states, which are like the roots, so that one is protected from negative thoughts, undue love and hatred, and destructive perceptions of oneself, others, and the environment.

## 2. Facing the Problem

Individuals often try, through external attributions, to search for the source of the problem outside themselves and, with numerous reasons, try to say they are faultless. This stage, after monitoring one's actions, refers to awakening, alertness, and coming to one's senses. Through monitoring his behavior, man emerges from the state of negligence and begins to think about treatment and reform. This is what Ali (AS) explicitly stated: "So cure the ailment of languor in your heart with determination, and remove the drowsiness of negligence from your eyes with wakefulness" (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 223).

### 3. Identifying the Problem

The third step is to gain a comprehensive and systematic understanding of all factors affecting the problem, the process of its formation and its stages, the dimensions and aspects of the problem, its nature and type, and its consequences and requisites. The Holy Quran warns against any practical or remedial action without prior knowledge: "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned" (Al-Isra: 36). Imam Sadiq (AS) said: "Pause at every matter until you know its entrance and its exit before you fall into it and regret" (Harrani, Tuhaif al-Uqul, 2004, p. 304). Before undertaking any task, first reflect and ponder so that you know the way into it and out of it; otherwise, you will have no way back.

### 4. Repentance (Desire to Change)

Tawbah lexically means to return and turn back [return from opposition] (Qureshi, Al-Qamoos, Vol. 1, p. 85). In Islamic literature, Tawbah means the will, decision, and desire to change, which is also referred to as determination. Repentance holds special importance in Islamic sources. Almighty God first forbids all people from despair and creates the grounds for the desire to change in their emotions: "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah..." (Az-Zumar: 53). In the next step, He increases people's motivation for reform and return, saying: "Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves" (Al-Baqarah: 222). Finally, He commands repentance: "And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed" (An-Nur: 31). Ali (AS) in a hadith pointed to the six levels of repentance: 1. Regret for the past; 2. Resolution to abandon the sin forever; 3. Fulfilling the rights of people; 4. Performing the obligatory acts that were neglected; 5. Melting away the flesh grown from unlawful sustenance; 6. Enduring the hardship and toil of acts of obedience (Nahj al-Balagha, Saying 417).

### 5. Taqwa (Setting the Goal)

Taqwa lexically means placing the soul in a position of protection from anything that one fears: "At-taqwa is to place the soul in protection from what it fears" (Raghib Isfahani, 1992, p. 881). In technical terms, it has been defined as self-restraint, self-preservation, self-guardianship, and being cautious (Tabarsi, 2010, p. 43-44). The scientific meaning of Taqwa: Taqwa is the moderation between the various aspects of human existence and the control of instincts and the proper channeling of carnal desires (Mazahiri, 2016, p. 33). The nature and essence of Taqwa have two aspects: a positive aspect (voluntarily performing obligations and normative behaviors) and a negative aspect (abstaining and distancing from abnormalities and prohibitions). From the Quran's perspective, the effect and benefit of all acts of worship and religious commands is Taqwa (Al-Baqarah: 21). Ali (AS) also, in the Khutbah of Hammam, pointed to approximately one hundred and ten attributes of the God-fearing and the righteous (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 193).

### 6. Tafakkur (Designing the Change Plan)

Every task first needs a coherent plan, and this plan is the product of thought (Tafakkur). The Holy Quran: "Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth..." (Al-Imran: 191). Based on the holy verse, mere initial knowledge is not sufficient; rather, reflection and the use of the faculty of intellect and thought are necessary. Furthermore, the application of the faculty of thought and wisdom is among the prerequisites for faith, mysticism, supplication, invocation, and corrective actions; otherwise, it is merely saying and wanting without foundation. Ali (AS) said: "The foundation of safety from error is thinking before acting" (Tasnif Ghurar al-Hikam, p. 58). Having a plan and program before practical action causes freedom from error and mistake.

## 7. Implementation of the Plan

Implementing the plan is the operationalization of the design and blueprint, which itself has conditions and sub-stages, and its most important element is situational awareness. The concept of situational awareness is that everything is done in its own time and placed in its proper position. Based on this principle, one should refrain from entering a task before its appointed time and should not delay when the opportune moment arrives. Ali (AS) said: "And one who picks the fruit before its ripening time is like one who cultivates in someone else's land" (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 5). He who picks the fruit unripe is like a farmer who cultivates in another's land; he has both deprived the fruit of its fitting perfection and wasted his own time. Illogical haste causes one to be unable to recognize his true good and consequently loses the power of discernment.

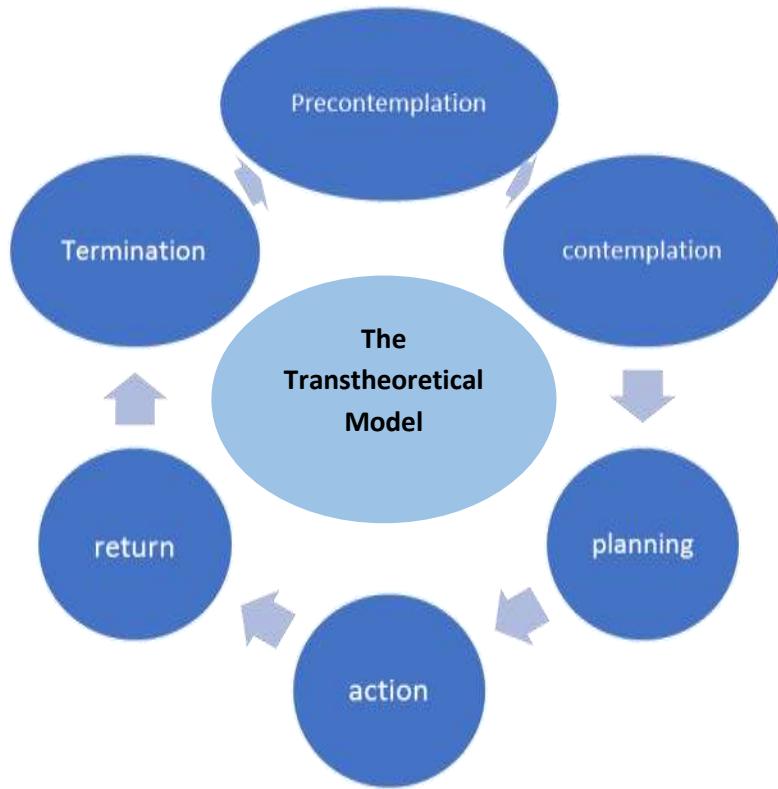
## 8. Muhasabah (Feedback)

Muhasabah, from the root "hasb," lexically means supervision and awareness for the purpose of testing, which is also called accountability; meaning to hold oneself accountable (Danish, 2010, p. 24). The holy verses count accountability as one of God's attributes: "And whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will hold you to account for it" (Al-Baqarah: 284). The Messenger of God (PBUH) said: "O Aba Dhar, a man is not among the God-fearing until he holds himself accountable more strictly than the accountability of a partner towards his partner" (Tabarsi, Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 468). O Aba Dhar, one is not God-fearing unless he holds his soul to account more severely than a financial partner holds his partner to account.

## Mujahadah (Follow-up)

The final step is the follow-up and review of this process; this program may have been met with relative success in various stages, or it may have faced shortcomings in some stages. In both cases, merely taking steps, even if successful, does not mean the end of the work. Rather, follow-up and continuation of the work in case of success, and correcting deficiencies and shortcomings and thinking of multiple new ways in case of failure, is an important part of the model's process. Since this part involves extra effort and struggle, it is also called Mujahadah. Mujahadah lexically means effort accompanied by hardship (Aqrab al-Mawarid). The verbs of this root in the Quran all come in the mufa'ala form, which denotes multiplicity, not reciprocity between two parties. Multiplicity is one of the meanings of the mufa'ala form (Qureshi, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 78). Thus, the behavior modification model from the perspective of Islamic sources has nine stages and practical actions.

## The model of Behavior Change and Modification with a Positive Psychology Approach



In the positive approach, there are various models, but the prominent and selected model is the comprehensive Transtheoretical Model. This model was first proposed by James O. Prochaska, Carlo C. DiClemente, and John Norcross based on an analysis of 24 schools of psychotherapy. They concluded that the mentioned stages are common to all forms of psychotherapy and all self-change processes that occur outside of psychotherapy (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1992, cited in: Alan Carr, 2012, p. 540). Each stage not only reflects a period of time but also a set of tasks that are necessary to progress to the next stage. Although the amount of time an individual spends in each stage varies, the tasks that must be accomplished are invariant (Prochaska & Norcross, 2008, p. 640). Below, considering the previous discussions, the most important similarities and differences between the two approaches are mentioned.

### Similarities

#### 1. Philosophical and Scientific Foundation

Every movement in psychology has its own specific philosophy about human beings (Misiak & Sexton, Virginia Stout, 1992, p. 481). The importance of philosophical assumptions is because they influence the realities we perceive and direct our attention to the variables we are prepared to see (Corey, 2008, p. 506). Just as in Islam, by proposing anthropological foundations and underlying theoretical discussions such as the view of humanity, their status and rank, the value and worth of humankind, and human relations, perspectives are changed so that based on this, changes in behaviors and methods are correctly achieved (Delshad Tehrani, 2004, p. 388; Sedaghat, 2017, p. 151-152).

#### 2. Commonality in Authentic and Positive Concepts

Both approaches share commonality in some authentic and positive concepts such as: hope, freedom and free will, happiness, religion and faith, felicity and optimism, self-knowledge and cognition,

and the like (Seligman, 2004, p. 64; Zahra Mohagheghian, 2016, p. 29) (Makarem Shirazi, 1978; cited by: Hassani, 2014, p. 90) (Pasandideh, 2013, p. 36).

### 3. A Positive View of Human Nature

Another commonality between the two approaches is the positive view of human nature. From the Islamic perspective, all human beings, regardless of religion, nationality, etc., possess inherent dignity. The Holy Quran states: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Al-Isra: 70). According to the view of Allamah Tabatabai, the holy verse refers to the inherent dignity of the human species, and this dignity is not specific to the religious; rather, it refers to the state of humankind in general (Tabatabai, 2009, Vol. 13, p. 214-215). Based on the positive approach, humans also possess inherent and acquired dignity. They also have talents that are applicable for increasing success and satisfaction and for various roles in life. In this context, a talent finder named Donald Clifton has described and defined 34 talents for humans (Magyar-Moe, J. L., 2012, p. 76-78).

### 4. A Positive View of Religion

Another common area between these two approaches is the positive view of religion. Although the religion of Islam has some differences with this approach, which will be examined in the differences section: "In the dimension of thought, humans do not know many scientific knowledges and truths well, and in terms of action, they lack many moral and practical virtues. Religion places scientific truths and moral virtues within their reach for acquiring voluntary perfection" (Amoli, 2005, p. 63).

The positive approach also holds a positive view of religion and believes that: "Positive psychology relates to religion in two ways: First, religion can be considered as a source of ethical inspiration and a dialogue partner that helps provide more useful and complex definitions of this concept (Watts Dutton and Liz Gali Ford, 2006). Second, religion or spirituality can be regarded as a type of goal-oriented activity or pursuit of the sacred which can have positive merits (Pargament and Mahoney, 2002). From Seligman's perspective, the positive function of religion in individual and social life is not a puzzle. A simple observation shows that major religions have forbidden negative and harmful actions and have commanded positive actions.

### 5. Belief in Change and Behavior Modification

Another area of commonality between the two approaches is the belief in the possibility of change and behavior modification and the rejection of determinism. "Thus, based on both religious texts and empirical experiences and rational findings, human morality is changeable, although some individuals have a greater predisposition to accept certain traits and behaviors, and some have less, just as there is a greater readiness for change during childhood and adolescence" (Davoudi, 2016, p. 44). The positive approach, through Martin Seligman's interpretation, has rejected the viewpoint of determinists and places greater emphasis on change and behavior modification (Seligman, 2016, p. 92-95).

### 6. Belief in Human Capacities and Strengths

As expressed in the section on foundations and components of both approaches, both approaches believe in human capacities, talents, strengths, virtues, functions, and a comprehensive and coherent understanding of them (Makarem Shirazi, 1992, Vol. 12, p. 198 and Magyar-Moe, J. L., 2012, p. 71-72).

### 7. Application in Counseling, Therapy, and Education

Another commonality between the two approaches is their application in the fields of counseling, therapy, and education. From the perspective of Islamic sources, the philosophy behind sending

messengers and revealing books is declared to be the education and guidance of humanity: "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom..." (Al-Jumu'ah: 2). The positive approach is also applicable in the fields of counseling, therapy, and education. The goal of positive education is the growth of well-being skills, flourishing, and optimal functioning in children, adolescents, students, parents, and educational institutions. It is also applicable in other areas such as business organizations, healthcare, public policy, and the like (Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 277-317).

## ***Differences***

### **1. Individualism**

One of the most important indicators of Western culture is humanism and individualism. Psychological theories in this culture, in describing, explaining, predicting, and controlling individual behavior, have been developed and presented under the influence of this type of view (Doviri, 2010, p. 87; cited by: Shojaei, 2015, p. 38). In this regard, two researchers named Fiske and Kagiticibasi, in their numerous studies on samples from Eastern and Western societies, found that Eastern culture differs from Western culture in terms of individualism and collectivism, and these cultural differences affect psychological theories about development, personality, normality, and abnormality (Shojaei, 2015, p. 38). Therefore, theoretical models developed based on Western culture cannot be [absolutely] applied to the collectivist personality of Muslims (Doviri, 2010, p. 87-97). However, the Islamic perspective is a combined approach that, according to the requirements of the audience and existing real conditions (the principle of behaving according to exigency), is sometimes individual-centered and sometimes group-centered, and there is no absolute approach in individualism and collectivism. Martyr Motahhari says: From Islam's perspective, both the individual and society are important. Education must prepare the individual for life in society, and individuals, according to the training they receive, should apply and execute their educational activities in society; therefore, in the educational system, both the individual and society should be considered (Motahhari, 2002, Vol. 2, p. 523).

### **2. Description, Prescription, and Technique**

Some thinkers consider the inefficiency of psychology to be examinable in three areas: descriptive, prescriptive, and technical. Since psychology is particularist and focused on describing specific and limited levels of humans, it is accompanied by limitations; consequently, the prescription and technique sections, which are based on description, will also be accompanied by limitations. The main reason is that the psychological approach is based on an incomplete understanding of humans (Farghani and colleagues, 2012, p. 61-64). All three of these aspects exist in the Islamic approach as well, but the scope of description, prescription, and technique is different from the positive approach and psychology. Furthermore, the oughts of religion (prescriptions and instructions) are value-based and ethical, whereas the oughts of psychology are not value-based or ethical but are merely prescriptions whose observance is beneficial (Farghani and colleagues, 2012, p. 149).

### **3. Teleology**

Researchers from various fields have raised numerous criticisms against the positive approach (Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 320 and 325). One of these criticisms from the perspective of Islamic sources is in the area of determining goals; the goals in the positive approach, following the foundations of empiricist psychology and particularism, and following the view of Aristotelian natural realism, are often the acquisition of virtues, rationality, capabilities, and moderation for a comfortable life in this world (virtue-based). But in the Islamic approach, the focus and ultimate goal are God-centered (Ismaili, 2017, p. 172).

#### 4. Axiology

Attitudes and insights are the most fundamental existential layer of every human being. Attitudes are revealed at the level of values, and each person's values shape their behaviors in various ways (Fa'ali, 2018, p. 111). A value is a relatively stable belief upon which an individual relies to choose a specific behavioral method or an ultimate state and with which they become socialized (Milton Rokeach; cited by: Tanhai, 1992, p. 87). Some values in liberalist culture include: independence, freedom, rationalism, selectivity, relativism, individualism, tolerance, and the like. Some values in the Islamic approach include: God-centeredness, focus on the hereafter, Sharia-centricity, expediency-based thinking, rationality, worldly and otherworldly felicity, freedom, seeking independence, selectivity, community-centricity, truth-centricity, and purpose-centricity.

#### 5. Ontology

Humans, as rational beings, are a subset of a system with a specific structure and rules. Understanding these rules and structures helps us in choosing models and methods for desirable behavior modification and change. Seligman believes that the six virtues (wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence) are universal and may have a biological origin in the evolutionary process; meaning that in the process of evolution, these moral perfections were selected as tools for solving important problems related to species survival (Seligman and Peterson, 2021, p. 55). The foundation of the therapeutic model in the positive approach is defined based on a materialist or humanist worldview (anthropocentrism). However, the presupposition of the modification and change model in the Islamic approach is defined based on a theistic worldview, monotheism-centricity, and the pure life (Hayat al-Tayyibah), encompassing worldly life and otherworldly orientation

#### 6. Postmodernist Viewpoint

The positive approach and modern psychology are influenced by postmodernist views in psychology, which are based on breaking traditions and deconstruction, as well as respecting religious and cultural pluralism, etc. Therefore, the indirect implications of Martin Seligman's theory lean towards postmodernism; meaning his viewpoint is normative and does not include the gender and cultural biases of the audience, and it acknowledges negligible differences among racial groups, genders, and the like (Seligman, Linda, & Richmond, 2016, p. 617). Some of the most important indicators of postmodernism can be traced in Martin Seligman's approach. In Islam, foundationalism and various accepted principles exist. There are fundamental and transcendent concepts. Values and anti-values, oughts and ought-nots, have criteria and are stable. Pluralism, pluralistic thinking, and relativism are also rejected.

#### 7. Methodology

Some scientists believe that positive psychology places excessive emphasis on cross-sectional correlational research and cannot reveal causal direction (Lazarus, 2006; cited by: Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 320). Also, humanistic psychology, criticizing the methodology of the positive approach, says this approach, in its quest to be scientific, has relied too heavily on quantitative research and ignores important areas of qualitative research and methods, and this causes limitations in generalizing its research (Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 27). In research with an Islamic approach, depending on the subject and phenomenon under investigation, multiple methods such as rational, intuitive, narrative, and empirical are used (Azerbaijani, 2003; Farghani and colleagues, 2012, p. 83).

#### 8. Defensive Pessimism

One prominent criticism of the positive approach is that the positive aspects of negative thinking (defensive pessimism) are often overlooked. The positive approach, by criticizing the traditional psychology view based on excessive emphasis on repairing human defects and weaknesses (a negative

view of humans), has been accused of excessively emphasizing positivity and positive thinking (Keith & Boniwell, 2020, p. 145 & 325). In the Islamic approach, by accepting the principle of inherent soundness, the emphasis is on maintaining a balance between positivity and positive thinking on one hand, and negative viewpoints and negative thinking on the other; this approach strives to avoid absolutism; humans are complex beings who, due to being influenced by various factors, conditions, and states, change their position very quickly. For this reason, attention must be paid to the principle of acting according to exigency; meaning understanding the audience based on current conditions and behaving accordingly.

## 9. Relativism

In the Islamic approach, vices and virtues (intrinsic values) have an absolute aspect; therefore, relativism in ethics is rejected; because in the Quran, good and bad ('khabith' and 'tayyib') are mentioned absolutely [inherent goodness and badness] and are not subject to individuals' desires or conditions (Makarem Shirazi, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 67). The holy verse states: "Say, 'Not equal are the evil and the good...'" (Al-Ma'idah: 100; Al-A'raf: 157). The impure and the pure, good and bad, are never equal. Martin Seligman says: In this age of postmodernism and moral relativism, the assumption has become very widespread that the six universal virtues are a matter of social conventions specific to the time and place of their observers. Thus, in twenty-first-century America, self-esteem, physical attractiveness, boldness, independence, uniqueness, wealth, and competitiveness are highly desirable. But St. Thomas Aquinas, Confucius, Buddha, and Aristotle did not consider any of these traits to be virtues, and in fact condemned some of them as vices. Chastity, silence, grandeur, and vengefulness, all of which have been considered virtues in different times and places, are now considered foreign and even undesirable to us (Seligman, 2016, p. 168).

Table of Similarities and Differences

Similarities	1. Philosophical and Scientific Foundation	2. Commonality in Authentic and Positive Concepts	3. A Positive View of Human Nature
4. A Positive View of Religion	5. Belief in Change and Behavior Modification	6. Belief in Human Capacities and Strengths	7. Application in Counseling, Therapy, and Education

Differences	1. Individualism	2. Description, Prescription, and Technique	3. Teleology	4. Axiology
5. Ontology	6. Postmodernist Viewpoint	7. Methodology	8. Defensive Pessimism	9. Relativism

## Conclusion

From the review of the preceding discussions, the following points were obtained:

1. A model or pattern is a set of components that have a meaningful connection and coherence and are arranged to achieve a single, specific goal. The purpose of positive psychology is the scientific study of models and methods for enhancing the quality of life. The formal existence of positive psychology was also established by its main ideator, Martin Seligman, in 1998 AD. The goal of this field has been declared to be the correction and completion of contemporary, pathology-centered psychology.

2. The examination of the modification and change model in this research was conducted using a combined and comparative method; because examining a phenomenon from the perspective of two schools leads to a better understanding and greater mastery of the subject.
3. The existence of a philosophical and theoretical foundation, a positive view of human nature, a positive and optimistic view of religion, belief in the possibility of behavior change and modification, belief in human capacities, talents, and ethical character traits, and application in the fields of counseling, therapy, and education were introduced as part of the similarities between the two viewpoints. Furthermore, the following matters were identified as some of the differences between the two approaches: cultural differences, differences in description, prescription, and technique, goals, axiology, ontology, postmodernist viewpoint, methodology, defensive pessimism, and relativism.
4. The behavior change and modification model with an Islamic approach was designed in a nine-stage structure. In the positive perspective, the comprehensive Transtheoretical Model in psychology was introduced as the superior and selected model of the research, for certain reasons, in a six-stage structure.
5. The positive approach has the most affinity with the Islamic approach to the extent that this approach has been accused of being a kind of ideology. Most of the topics and domains addressed by positive psychology have also been examined in religious literature under the title of virtues, etc.
6. The research result showed that the model of desirable behavior change and modification from the perspective of Islam has greater comprehensiveness and scope than the behavior change and modification model from the perspective of positive psychology, and that the positive perspective, from the viewpoint of individual worldview, excessive emphasis on the positive aspect, greater emphasis on objective aspects, material and meaning-oriented goals, etc., has limitations and specific interpretations; therefore, the Islamic viewpoint was introduced as a complementary approach.

## References

1. The Holy Quran (1999). Translation: Makarem Shirazi. Qom: Amir al-Momenin Publications.
2. Nahj al-Balagha (2018). Translation: Mohammad Dashti. Qom: Asar Farhang Bartar Publishing.
3. Ibn Manzur, Muhammad ibn Mukarram (1994). Lisan al-Arab. Beirut: Dar Sadir.
4. Ibn Shubah al-Harrani, Hasan ibn Ali (2004). Tuhaf al-Uql. Translation: Sadegh Hassan Zadeh. Qom: Al al-Ali.
5. Azerbaijani and colleagues (2003). Social Psychology with an Approach to Islamic Sources. Tehran: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
6. Avril, Limon (1952) & Gladiana Mc Mahon (1954). Positive Thinking. Translation: Mahdi Davaei & Shiri Kuhepaye (2013). Tehran: Sokhan Publications.
7. Prochaska, James O. & Norcross, John C. (1942). Systems of Psychotherapy. Translation: Yahya Seyyed Mohammadi (2008). Tehran: Ravvan Publishing.
8. Hawzeh and University Research Center (2007). Mankind from the Viewpoint of Islam. Tehran: Samt.
9. Pasandideh, Abbas (2013). The Islamic Model of Happiness with a Positive Psychology Approach. Qom: Dar al-Hadith.

10. Tricket, Roger (1941). Perspectives on Human Nature (Historical Approach). Translation: A group of translators (2003). Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.
11. Al-Tamimi al-Amedi, Abdul-Wahid ibn Muhammad (1987). Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim. Qom: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
12. Tanhai, Hossein Abolhasan (1992). An Introduction to Sociological Schools and Theories. Tehran: Marandiz.
13. Javadi Amoli, Abdullah (2005). Mankind's Expectation from Religion. Qom: Esra Publishing.
14. Hassani, Ramadan Ali (2014). Optimism and Psychological Security. Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute.
15. Davoudi, Mohammad (2016). Islamic Ethics (Foundations and Concepts). Qom: Maaref Publishing.
16. Delshad Tehrani, Mostafa (2004). The Prophetic Conduct (Practical Logic). Tehran: Faragoft.
17. Doviri, Marwan (2010). Psychotherapy and Counseling with Muslims: A Culture-Centric Approach. Translation: Barati Sade & Afsaneh Sadeghi. Tehran: Roshd.
18. Ragheb Isfahani, Hussein ibn Muhammad (1992). Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Quran. Damascus: Dar al-Ilm.
19. Rahimian, Mohammad Hassan & Rahbar, Mohammad Taghi (2012). The Method of Purification. Qom: Bustan Ketab.
20. Mohagheghian, Zahra (2016). Hope Theory, Strategies for Creating and Increasing Hope from the Perspective of the Quran and Positive Psychology. Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization.
21. Salari Far, Mohammad Reza and colleagues (2011). Mental Health with an Approach to Islamic Sources. Qom: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
22. Seif, Ali Akbar (2002). Behavior Change and Behavior Therapy; Theories and Methods. Tehran: Duran Publishing.
23. Seligman, Martin and colleagues (1942). The Optimistic Child. Translation: Forouzan Davarpanah (2009). Tehran: Roshd Publications.
24. Seligman, Martin (1942). Flourishing Positive Psychology. Translation: Amir Kamkar & Sakine Hejbarian (2021). Tehran: Ravvan Publishing.
25. Seligman, Martin (1942) & Christopher Peterson (1950). Classification of Character Strengths and Human Virtues. Translation: Mohsen Zandi & Leila Bagheri (2021). Tehran: Roshd Publications.
26. Seligman, Martin (1942). Authentic Happiness. Translation: Mostafa Tabrizi and colleagues (2016). Tehran: Danjeh Publications.
27. Seligman, Linda and colleagues (1944). Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy. Translation: Jamshid Jerare and others (2016). Tehran: Avaye Noor.
28. Severin, Werner & James Tankard (2005). Communication Theories. Translation: Alireza Dehghan (2007). Tehran: University of Tehran.

29. Shamlou, Saeed (2003). Schools and Theories in Personality Psychology. Tehran: Roshd Publications.
30. Shojaei, Mohammad Sadegh (2018). An Introduction to Behavior Regulation Psychology with an Islamic Approach. Qom: Dar al-Hadith Publishing.
31. Shojaei, Mohammad Sadegh (2015). Islamic Psychology, (Foundations, History, and Scope). Qom: Al-Mustafa.
32. Shojaei, Mohammad Sadegh (2017). Personality from the Trait Perspective (Psychological and Islamic Theories). Qom: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
33. Shojaei, Mohammad Sadegh (2010). Theories of the Healthy Human with a View to Islamic Sources. Qom: Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute.
34. Sharifinia, Mohammad Hossein (2013). Integrated Psychotherapy Models. Qom: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
35. Schultz, Duane & Sydney Ellen Schultz (1934). Theories of Personality. Translation: Yahya Seyyed Mohammadi (2000). Tehran: Homa Publishing.
36. Al-Hurr al-Amili (1989). Wasa'il al-Shia. Qom: Al al-Bayt Institute.
37. Saberi, Aniseh (2015). Positive Thinking from the Perspective of Psychology and Religion. Qom: Aliyyah Bent al-Huda Institute.
38. Sedaghat, Mohammad Aref (2017). Behavior Change Methods in Religious Teachings and Psychology. Qom: Al-Mustafa.
39. Tabarsi, Fazl ibn Hasan (2010). Makarim al-Akhlaq. Qom: Sharif Razi.
40. Tabatabai, Seyyed Mohammad Hossein (2009). Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Quran. Translation: Seyyed Mohammad Bagher Musavi Hamedani. Qom: Islamic Publications.
41. Farghani, Morteza and colleagues (2012). A Look at Islamic Psychology. Qom: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
42. Farahani, Mohammad Naghi (1999). Personality Psychology (Theory, Research, Application). Tehran: Tarbiat Moallem University.
43. Al-Farahidi, Khalil ibn Ahmad (1990). Kitab al-Ayn. Qom: Hijrat.
44. Fa'ali, Mohammad Taghi (2018). Foundations of the Islamic Lifestyle. Tehran: Al-Yasin Institute.
45. Qureshi, Seyyed Ali Akbar (1992). Qamus Quran. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.
46. Qaraati, Mohsen (2004). Tafsir Noor. Tehran: Center for Cultural Lessons from the Quran.
47. Carr, Alan (1957). Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths. Translation: Hassan Pasha Sharifi and colleagues (2012). Tehran: Sokhan Publications.
48. Kenneth Pargament (1991). Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy. Translation: Masoud Jan Bozorgi and colleagues (2020). Qom: Hawzeh and University Research Center.
49. Karimi, Yousef (2017). Personality Psychology. Tehran: Virayesh Publishing.

50. Corey, Gerald (1937). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Translation: Yahya Seyyed Mohammadi (2008). Tehran: Arasbaran.

51. Mazlo, Abraham H., *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1995). Translation: Ahmad Rezvani. Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi.

52. Motahhari, Morteza (1990). *Fitrat (Human Nature)*. Tehran: Sadra Publications.

53. Motahhari, Morteza (2002). *Man and His Destiny*. Tehran: Sadra Publications.

54. Mazahiri, Hossein (2018). *Conduct and Wayfaring (Third Station; Taqwa)*. Isfahan: Al-Zahra Cultural Studies Institute.

55. Mesbah Yazdi and colleagues (2012). *Philosophy of Islamic Education*. Tehran: Madrese Publishing.

56. Moin, Mohammad (2004). *Moeen Persian Dictionary*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications.

57. Magyar-Moe, Jenna L. (2008). *Techniques of Positive Psychology*. Translation: Farid Barati Sade (2012). Tehran: Roshd Publications.

58. Miltenberger, Raymond (1956). *Behavior Modification Methods*. Translation: Mohammadi & Jamshidi (2013). Tehran: Arasbaran Publications.

59. Makarem Shirazi, Nasser and colleagues (2006). *Ethics in the Quran. Volume 1*. Qom: Madrasat al-Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib.

60. Makarem Shirazi, Nasser (1992). *Tafsir Nemooneh*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah.

61. Vaezi, Ahmad (1998). *Mankind from the Viewpoint of Islam*. Tehran: Samt.

62. Hefferon, Kate (1981) & Ilona Boniwell (1976). *Positive Psychology: Theory, Research and Applications*. Translation: Mohammad Taghi Tabik & Mohsen Zandi (2020). Qom: Dar al-Hadith Publishing.

63. Misiak, Henryk (1911) & Virginia Stout Sexton (1941). *History and Schools of Psychology*. Translation: Ahmad Rezvani (1997). Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi.

## Articles

64. Ismaili, Maryam & Mohammad Yazdani (2017). A Comparative Study of the Six Moral Virtues in Positive Psychology and Nahj al-Balagha. *Biannual Scientific-Research Journal of Islam and Psychology Studies*. Year 11. No. 20. pp. 149-175.

65. Azam Porcham & Zahra Mohagheghian (2011). A Comparative Study of Strategies for Creating and Increasing Hope from the Perspective of Positive Psychology and the Holy Quran. *Ma'refat*. Year 20. No. 164. pp. 99-113.

66. Hajiani, Ebrahim (2016). Methodology for Designing and Developing an Ideal Model in Strategic Research. *Rahbord Quarterly*. Year 25. No. 78. pp. 5-28.

67. Danish, Ismail (2010). Methods of Self-Education from the Viewpoint of Islam. Qom: Al-Mustafa International University, *Rah Tarbiyat Quarterly*, Special Issue on "Moral Education". Year 5, No. 11, pp. 15-36.

68. Azimpour, Alireza (2007). The Philosophical Roots of Positive Psychology. *School Counselor*. No. 7, p. 6.
69. Beheshti, Saeed, Khari Arani, Majid; Ali Akbarzadeh Arani, Zahra (2010). The Meaning and Components of Hope in Islamic Texts and Positive Psychology. *Shahed University Scientific-Research Monthly*. Year 17, New Volume, No. 45, pp. 157-170.
70. Najati, Vahid, Kamari Saman, Shahidi Shahriar (2017). Positive Cognition: The Relationship Between Positive and Negative Self-Referential Traits and Positive Thinking. *Quarterly Journal of Research in Psychological Health*. Shahed University. Volume 11, No. 2, pp. 1-18.
70. Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14.
71. Fraser Watts Kevin Dutton.Liz Gullhford (2006).Human spiritual qualities: Integrating psychology and religion. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, 9(3):277-289.

## **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).