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## **Ibn Sina's Marriage Concept: Integration of Islamic Philosophy and Modern Psychology**

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**Abstract.** This qualitative research aims at finding the concept of marriage according to Ibn Sina and the synthesis of the concept of marriage by him with the concept of marriage in John Bradshaw's modern psychology through the number of books they wrote. After examining a number of sources, the authors found that there are many areas of discussions that Ibn Sina missed but were scrutinized in detail by John Bradshaw. This study concludes that interdisciplinary studies are needed as an effort to complement both Islamic knowledge and modern studies in order to produce an integral discussion.

**Keywords:** *marriage concept; Ibn Sina; modern psychology*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Marriage and family are a system, in which one member influences the others. Therefore, one has to make sure that all the components in the family are functioning properly if he wants to have a *sakinah* or tranquil relationship.

A German biologist who invented general system theory (GST) Karl Ludwig von Bertalanffy defines a system as a complex element in an interaction. Here, the system requires mutual influence while maintaining the existing elements. Although born from the womb of biology, this principle can be applied to the system in general, including that of marriage and family. In a system, each part works interrelatedly and interdependently.

In marriage, the running main element of the functions in the system is the relationship between husband and wife. If the relationship is intimate, characterized by cooperation and a fair division of responsibilities, the marriage will be functional. On the other hand, if the main component is missing, the system will be disrupted, including the family which is born as a result of marriage.

The intimacy of the relationship between two people does not mean that they melt into one and lose boundaries, but each partner can be him/herself in a unique function in the system. Let's imagine a watch. It's called a watch not because its components are fused together like scrap metal melted into a metal bar, but each component functions as it should: some function as a band, hand, bezel, machine, etc. The metal bar cannot be called a system, nor do people who marry and are forced to be what their partner wants them to be. A Marriage that eliminates one's identity will not be functional.

Marriage is the smallest unit of the social system. Aristotle even called it the smallest country. When a marriage gives birth to one or more children, the system changes to a family. This change in the system makes people have to adjust to the new governance.

Therefore, managing a marriage is not the same as managing a family; managing a family is different from managing a community; Managing society is not the same as managing a nation or state. Each system requires certain skills. People who are successful in managing the community are not necessarily successful in taking care of the household, on the contrary, a head of household from a harmonious family is not essentially steady in managing the country. Each system has its own uniqueness.

Because of its urgency for the community, marriage has been a topic of discussion for a long time, from philosophers to clergy. In fact, in the course of Islamic history, the institutions that deal with marriage have been formalized as official state institutions. Fukaha includes many discussions of this theme in their books.

Meanwhile, among the philosophers who pay close attention to the issue is Ibn Sina (980-1037). Therefore, his thoughts on marriage are important for us to observe as a treasure trove of wisdom that we can take lessons in order to realize the purpose of marriage. He said that marriage is a bond that must be declared in public because if it is done secretly, it will only invite various harm. He also talks about a number of other themes, from security to the conflicts that will arise in a marriage.

Ibn Sina's thought was chosen because not many philosophers have discussed this issue. In fact, quite a lot of important contemporary figures (more precisely famous) have slipped because they are not able to manage their marriage in an orderly manner. Furthermore, Ibn Sina's views on marriage are much clearer and natural, even compared to a number of contemporary pop religionists who seem excessive in glorifying marriage as an asylum for singles. In fact, their own married life and family are falling apart.

To get a more detailed picture of the philosophy of marriage, Ibn Sina's thoughts need to be integrated (synthesized) critically and reflectively using the discipline of psychology, which in this case is with the thoughts of psychologist John Bradshaw (1933-2016) through a number of his works on marriage and family, including: *On the Family: A Revolutionary Way of Self Discovery*, *Family Secrets What You Don't know Can Hurt You*, *Homecoming: Reclaiming and Championing Your Inner Child*, and *Creating Love The Next Stage of Growth*.

Bradshaw is a renowned US marriage and family expert. Meanwhile, the psychological approach was chosen because this study is seriously dealing with the issue. Specifically, psychology is also a discipline that has produced many therapeutic methods for victims of dysfunctional families— compared to fiqh, which only produces verdicts of ungodly children or

wives without ever producing to any so-called “methods” to improve their behavior. Thus, this synthesis or integration is relevant to reveal what really happens in marriage.

A number of scientists are still loyal to the view that science must be value-free, both ontologically, epistemologically, and axiologically. However, some others assert that science at the third level must be based on ethics, so that science is not value-free (Bahrum, 2013). This idea arises because all the conveniences produced by science do not make life essentially easier, produce happiness and benefit the universe. The initiators of scientific integration, of course, belong to the second group, who try to give the divine spirit to every branch of science, whatever the name of the science. This also confirms that all knowledge comes from al-Aleem, Allah, the Most Knowledgeable.

The initial idea for the integration of knowledge emerged at the first world conference on: Muslim education in Mecca, in 1977 was initiated by King Abdul Aziz University. It was Ismail Raji al-Faruqi who called this integration idea the Islamization of science in his paper "Islamizing Social Science" and Sheikh Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in his paper "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of knowledge and the Aims of Education". According to al-Attas, the biggest challenge facing Muslims is the challenge of knowledge, not merely because of ignorance, but the knowledge that is spread throughout the Islamic world by Western civilization.

Meanwhile, al-Faruqi said that the Islamic education system has been printed in Western designs, so he views it as the essence of the suffering experienced by Muslims. He criticized Western science for depriving people of spiritual and divine values. For al-Faruqi, the approach that can be used to overcome the above problems is to incorporate Western science into an Islamic framework, which among its practices is the effort to rewrite textbooks and various disciplines with Islamic insights, while according to al-Attas is to how to clean up Western science through laying down the essential elements of Islam and its key concepts so as to produce a composition that summarizes the main points of knowledge.

Observing the background described above, the focus of this research is: 1) The concept of marriage according to Ibn Sina; 2) Synthesis of Ibn Sina's thoughts on marriage with the concept of marriage according to modern psychology.

## **METHOD**

The type of research used in this research is a qualitative research which is characterized by the use of verbal descriptions in presenting its findings, or not in the form of numbers. In connection with this research, qualitative methods are useful for describing the concept of marriage by Ibn Sina and revealing the extent to which this concept corresponds to the concept of marriage according to modern psychology.

We used an integral-interconnective approach that will not contradict each other. The integral-interconnective approach wants to emphasize that general science (Western) and religion (Islam) can go hand in hand in several respects: material, methodology, and approach.

The source of data that will be used in this study is primary data, namely data obtained directly by researchers from observations and documentation studies. Meanwhile, data collection methods include documentation studies, namely tracing and reviewing several books and other research reports related to the research topic.

The data processing is done by categorizing and editing. Meanwhile, this study uses a flow model of data analysis, which starts with data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and then draws conclusions (Moleong, 2007). To obtain the validity of the data, the researchers used triangulation techniques, namely checking then confirming, and testing the truth of the data through three sources: theorists, other researchers, and experts.

## **RESULT**

Ibn Sina (Abu al-Ali Husein ibn Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali Ibn Sina) or in the West known as Avicenna (370-428 H/980-1037 AD) was born in Safar in the village of Afsana, a village near Bukhara, Uzbekistan. At that time this area was part of the Persian empire. His mother, Setareh, was from Bukhara, while his father was Abdullah, a scholar from Baklan (Afghanistan), which was an important city during the reign of the Samanid dynasty.

Besides being famous as a doctor, Ibn Sina is also an expert in psychology, theology, education, logic, ethics, and metaphysics. Ibn Sina did not specifically write a book on marriage. However, his thoughts on love, parenting, and household can still be traced through a number of his works such as, "Risolai tadbiri manzil" (Treatise on Reaching the Family Happiness), "Kitab al-Siyasa" (the Book of Politics), "al-Qanun fit Tibb" (Canon of Medicine), and "Risalah fil-Ishq" (a Treatise on Love).

### **a. Self Management**

In "Siyasa" (which Afnan 1958 claimed to be Ibn Sina's authentic book), Ibn Sina said that it is impossible for a person to manage a household if he has not been able to manage himself (siyasat nafsah, self-management). Here, Ibn Sina emphasizes that if a person has managed to control himself, he will not fail to carry out other tasks assigned to him. Ibn Sina assures that a person has a mind/intellect (which is the leader) and a lower soul (nafs) who likes bad things (ammara bi al-su').

He reminded that to be self-control, one needs a psychological approach. People cannot easily believe in themselves because their mind is not free from the will (al-hawa) to please themselves. Therefore, humans need faith and friends as mirrors so that they can reflect on the behavior they have made.

In John Bradshaw's marriage psychology (1988), people who have not been able to manage themselves like that are referred to as adult-children, physically/mature but their soul is like a child. If married, this person will only produce other adult children, and so on. Bradshaw dares to say that there are hundreds of millions of these model people, and they are everywhere: even leaders in schools, politics, religion, and so on.

So, people who have not been able to solve the problems that exist in themselves should reform themselves before marriage. More specifically, Bradshaw mentions if people like this are the result of a dysfunctional family, which has the following characteristics:

1. Full control. In this case, at all times members are in tight control, including their feelings and life choices.
2. Perfectionist. Family members who are controlled by perfectionism will always be afraid to make mistakes. In fact, mistakes are part of the process that must be passed by anyone. Following a perfectionist perspective will only lead one to despair.
3. Blame. Blaming is a habit used to gain illusory power. When someone feels threatened that his weaknesses will be exposed, he then uses the strategy of blaming others.
4. Ignoring freedom. The freedom in question is the freedom to feel, think, observe, will, and imagine. This type of neglect is still associated with perfectionism. Members are led to only feel and think according to what the perfectionist feels and thinks.
5. No right to speak. Members are not given the opportunity to express what is in their hearts and heads spontaneously.
6. Mythmaker. Myths in the family are usually created to maintain rigid and closed rules, or to distract someone from the real situation.
7. There is no solution. This situation is characterized by two things: repeated conflicts with no clarity on when to end and "agreements" to never agree. In this family, the members (especially the children) will be grief and confused.
8. No trust. In this condition, each member will not be able to fulfill his needs. The husband does not trust the wife and vice versa; parents do not trust children or vice versa. This condition will make each other distance and lose intimacy.

The key to a healthy family lies in a father and mother who love each other. Each of them also loves themselves, which is evidenced by living in a disciplined manner. Such people will do first what they expect the children to do. The functional parent does not act like a tyrant whose orders must be obeyed even if he does not do it himself.

### **b. Marriage as a Partnership**

Still in the same book, *Siyasa*, Ibn Sina mentions that the wife is a partner (*sharikat*) for the husband in managing property and other assets. With this position, Ibn Sina said that women who can carry out this role must be wise and religious (*al-aqilat al-dayyinat*), intelligent intellectual (*al-hayiyatal fatana*), attractive and fertile (*al wadud al walud*), able to work together (*al mutawi'a al-inan*), a good adviser (*al-nasihah al-jaib*), trusted (*al-aminat al-ghaib*), sweet (*alkhafifah*), a good household manager (*tuhassinu tadbiraha*), and she is able to relieve her husband's anxiety through

her grace (tusali humumahu bi latifi madaratih). Ibn Sina also emphasized that husbands must fulfill their obligations to their wives and use their intellectual and psychological approaches to educate their wives.

Even though he has advanced thinking by referring to his wife as a partner, rather than "ownership" and the like, Ibn Sina still seems unable to let go of the culture of gender inequality. In the mujadalah principle adopted by the contemporary progressive Muslim community, onesided standardization of such wives is certainly difficult to accept. According to this group, standards or criteria must apply equally, not only to wives.

In *Creating Love The Next Stage of Growth*, Bradshaw said that the most fundamental love relationship in a family is the relationship between father and mother (husband and wife). This relationship is the root of all kinds of human relationships, because every child will also learn from these relationships. A husband-wife relationship cannot be intimate unless each party is on an equal footing. Unequal social relations, regardless of the type, will only result in domination and hegemony. Bradshaw also confirmed that husband-wife partnership can occur if there is a fair division of roles based on the agreement of both parties. In contrast to Ibn Sina, Bradshaw elaborated his thoughts without mentioning if the wife should be like this or the husband should be like that. He simply called it a partner (spouse/partner).

### **c. Educating children**

When marriage produces children, the system turns into a family. In the *Siyasa*, Ibn Sina specifically mentions that the duty of parents to the earliest child is to choose a good name. We can observe Ibn Sina's opinion from popular hadiths about this. Furthermore, related to education, Ibn Sina said the stages, namely: morals, religion, literature and poetry, mathematics, engineering (handasah), and treatment. Here Ibn Sina seems not to mention physical education; he concentrates on developing morals, religion, and knowledge to raise a good family. In more detail, Bradshaw mentions that because children are the weakest human species, they need more attention from parents, in addition to material needs, namely: love, presence, appreciation, education, role models, providing opportunities to express feelings, spirituality, sex education, care and security.

Bradshaw (1998) says the power of good parenting lies in the relationship between partners. As long as the relationship is good, it is the foundation of the family, then the children will feel safe. When two people meet and make a promise to get married, they are husband and wife first, then children are born and they become parents. The marital relationship existed before the parent-child relationship. Their togetherness and intimacy is manifested in their children; children are representations of masculinity and femininity. A man and a woman are physiologically fused in the form of a child, by giving genes.

Systemically, the quality of the relationship with the partner precedes the relationship with the child. That is, the relationship with the child should be "merely" the continuation of the relationship with the partner. This is because the love between couples comes first and becomes the root that provides nutrition for a tree so that the fruit is of good quality.

From there, we can observe that among parenting that Ibn Sina did not discuss is the quality of the marital relationship as the key to parenting, in addition to a more detailed discussion of the need for feelings (feeling/emotion).

#### **d. Couple Criteria**

In the book *Avicenna & House Management* (1941), it is stated that Ibn Sina said marriage is a natural task for every human being. Therefore, he recommends that young people get married. According to Ibn Sina's observations, marriage has a number of purposes, such as: economy, social status, love, and peace, as well as fulfilling sexual needs. Meanwhile, the best woman to marry is successively having the following criteria: 1. Wise; 2. Practicing religion; 3. Pure; 4. Smart; 5. Friendly and compassionate; 6. Fertile; 7. Not naughty; 8. Obedient; 9. Clean; 10. Trusted; 11. Proportionally shy; 12. Simple; 13. Try not to be the center of attention, or avoid harsh words; 14. Be humble when helping partner; 15. Behave well; 16. Likes to save; 17. Eliminate husband's sadness by saying sweet

Ibn Sina does not recommend forced marriage because it will have bad effects, such as misfortune and divorce. He also suggested that people should not easily cast divorce or file for divorce because of minor issues. He admits that no marriage is without problems. However, if there are serious problems, they can get divorced. Among the serious problems referred to by Ibn Sina are infidelity and infertility, especially the wife who cheats and is sterile (see Raei 2014).

In a number of books on the psychology of marriage that he wrote, John Bradshaw never once mentioned criteria such as those offered by Ibn Sina. In fact, Bradshaw criticizes a number of patriarchal views, which make the institution of marriage only as a tool to curb freedom and repress emotions.

From Ibn Sina's way of setting the criteria for a good wife, one can observe if the target readers of his book are men, or if his one-sided judgment is gender-biased. We don't find words or phrases like "obedient" or "pleasing husband" in modern marriage psychology books, because the idea of a couple is intertwined.

Bradshaw, for example, prefers the words "discipline" and "commitment" as part of love for a partner. Meanwhile, happiness is the responsibility of each: the partner is not responsible for the happiness of the other. Each partner should not depend on the happiness of the other. If someone is dependent, there are signs that the partner is a child. Someone who is still dependent will not be able to build a household.

## **CONCLUSION**

The nature of science as a guide in revealing the truth is always open to criticism and fluctuates, so that there is no single truth in a scientific tradition, not least if the scientific ideas were expressed by great philosophers such as Ibn Sina.

Furthermore, the perception of interdisciplinary studies in the end, shows that the sciences were once separate, then there was an effort to reunite through what is called the concept of scientific integration. Looking at the great Islamic heritage of science, of course, almost no information will be obtained that science is separate, except for categorization as a form of grouping scientific clumps, not separating each science itself into religious science and general science. The concept of integration allows every scientist to be confident as a servant of God who is elevated because of his knowledge; enables every Muslim to feel pious in whatever discipline he studies, and in the end all branches of knowledge are valued as a light for mankind.

From the explanation above, we can observe that there is always an empty space from disciplines that can be filled by other disciplines, no matter where they come from. Interdisciplinary studies will open the eyes of how vast and beautiful Allah's knowledge is. What Muslim scientists have missed maybe thoroughly discussed by disciplines developed by Confucians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, or Christians. The integration between sciences which was later translated by Azyumardi Azra as “reapproachment” shows that there is no separation between religious and general knowledge.

Therefore, when discussing marriage, an Ustaz does not always feel obliged to quote Islamic jurisprudence experts or philosophers, if indeed Christian theologians and Western psychologists are able to describe them more clearly, in detail and fairly. Moreover, marriage is a concern of all religions because in it the figures who carry out religious missions are educated in real terms

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