

Love Crystallized: The Significance of Divine Love Contemplation on Meaning and Purpose in Life in Islamic Psychology

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Abstract : Divine love is ubiquitous in many religions and philosophies. In the Islamic Sufi tradition, it is recognized as an “intense yearning for unification” with God. Previous literature demonstrates that divine love plays a role in forming meaning and purpose in one’s life. However, previous research has not explored the effects of the Islamic practice of divine love contemplation on meaning and purpose in life. The current study used an experimental design to investigate whether a divine love contemplation intervention has an impact on meaning and purpose in life in Muslims through the framework of Islamic Psychology. The sample consisted of 34 participants (7 males and 27 females) who were randomly assigned to one of two groups: Intervention (n = 20) and Control (n = 14). Participants in the intervention group did a general litany and a divine love supplication and contemplation exercise, while participants in the control group did only a general litany exercise. Three hypotheses were tested using a mixed-design two-way (split-plot) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine whether participants in the intervention group will report a significant increase in 1) divine love, 2) meaning in life, and 3) purpose in life from before to after the intervention, whereas participants in the control group will not report a significant change in the mentioned constructs. The results supported Hypothesis 1, in that a significant interaction between group and time emerged for divine love. Specifically, the intervention group reported a significant increase in divine love from before to after the intervention, whereas the control group did not report a significant change in divine love. Furthermore, the effect size was large, even though the mean difference was negligible, indicating that this change was substantial enough to have a considerable effect on the sample. However, the tests of the second and third hypotheses were not significant, suggesting that the divine love contemplation intervention did not have a significant impact on meaning or purpose in life. Suggestions for future research include qualitative phenomenological studies that could be conducted to glean experiential insight into the constructs from the participants’ individual accounts.

Keywords : divine love, meaning in life, purpose in life, contemplation, islamic psychology

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