Mental Health and Healing Practices in the Ottoman Empire

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ruh Sağlığı ve Şifa Uygulamaları

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Abstract

This study conducts a general view of mental health care within the Ottoman Empire and its impact on current psychological understandings and treatments, highlighting the significant role of cultural and historical contexts in shaping mental health practices. It demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the Ottoman Empire's holistic and integrative approaches, emphasizing compassionate, comprehensive care that incorporates a wide array of therapeutic modalities, such as herbal remedies and spiritual healing. These methods illustrate the importance of addressing the complex nature of mental well-being. The research addresses the difficulties of applying historical mental health practices to contemporary settings, advocating for a method that honors cultural and societal variances. Insights from Ottoman mental health and healing practices provide essential lessons for today, endorsing a more empathetic, patient-focused, and culturally inclusive mental health care system. The enduring influence of Ottoman methods invites further investigation into historical mental health strategies, pointing to future research opportunities, including the integration of traditional healing into modern care models and the creation of fair mental health systems. This general view underlines the importance of historical perspectives in enhancing contemporary mental health care, proposing an approach that respects the past while catering to the diverse needs of the global community today.

Keywords: Ottoman Mental Health Care, Cultural Sensitivity, Holistic Approach, Historical Practices

Öz

Bu çalışma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda ruh sağlığı bakımının uygulanışı ve çağdaş psikolojik anlayışlar ile tedavilere etkileri üzerine genel bir bakış sunmaktadır. Kültürel ve tarihsel bağlamların ruh sağlığı uygulamalarının gelişimindeki derin etkisini vurgulayarak, Osmanlı'nın bütüncül ve entegratif yaklaşımlarının günümüz zihinsel sağlık paradigmaları için hâlâ nasıl geçerli olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. İmparatorluğun bitkisel ilaçlardan spiritüel şifaya kadar geniş bir terapötik yöntem yelpazesini entegre etme biçimi, zihinsel iyilik haliyle ilgilenen şefkatli ve bütüncül bakımın sürekli önemini vurgulamaktadır. Araştırma, tarihi zihinsel sağlık uygulamalarının modern bağlamda yorumlanmasının karşılaştığı zorlukları ve sınırlılıkları ele almakta, kültürel ve toplumsal farklılıklara saygılı bir yaklaşımı savunmaktadır. Bu zorluklara rağmen, Osmanlı zihinsel sağlık ve iyileştirme uygulamalarından elde edilen temel içgörüler, daha merhametli, hasta merkezli ve kültürel çeşitliliğe açık bir ruh sağlığı bakım sistemi için önemli dersler sunmaktadır. Osmanlı uygulamalarının mirası, ruh sağlığı bakımına yönelik tarihsel yaklaşımların daha derinlemesine incelenmesini teşvik etmekte ve geleneksel şifa yöntemlerinin çağdaş modellere entegrasyonu gibi gelecekteki araştırma alanlarını belirlemektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu genel değerlendirme, tarihsel perspektiflerin modern ruh sağlığı bakımını nasıl zenginleştirebileceğini ve geçmişten alınan derslerle bugünün global ve çeşitli nüfusunun ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilecek bir yaklaşımı nasıl teşvik edebileceğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Ruh Sağlığı Bakımı, Kültürel Hassasiyet, Bütüncül Yaklaşım, Tarihsel Uygulamalar.

Introduction

1. The Ottoman Empire: A Melting Pot of Cultures and Traditions

The Ottoman Empire, renowned for its vast geographical expanse and enduring legacy, stood as a monumental testament to the power of cultural and religious synthesis. From the late 13th century until the dawn of the 20th century, it spanned three continents, enveloping large swathes of Southeast Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa. This sprawling empire was not merely a political and military behemoth but a vibrant mosaic of cultures, languages, and traditions. Its ability to incorporate and harmonize a diverse array of cultural identities under a single imperial banner is one of its most remarkable achievements.[1]

The empire's strategic position at the crossroads of East and West facilitated the exchange of ideas, goods, and traditions, making it a crucible for cultural interaction and exchange. This unique geographical and cultural positioning allowed the Ottoman Empire to serve as a bridge between the ancient civilizations of the East and the burgeoning societies of the West. The confluence of diverse populations within the empire—ranging from Arabs, Greeks, and Slavs to Armenians, Jews, and many others—contributed to a rich tapestry of cultural practices and traditions. Each group maintained its own identity yet contributed to the empire's collective cultural heritage.[2]

The Ottoman approach to governance, known for its relative tolerance and flexibility, enabled the coexistence and flourishing of various religious and ethnic groups. The millet system, a distinctive Ottoman administrative innovation, allowed for a certain degree of religious and cultural autonomy within a multi-ethnic empire, fostering a sense of communal harmony and mutual respect among its diverse subjects. This pluralistic approach to governance was instrumental in creating an environment where different cultures could interact, blend, and influence one another.[3]

In the realm of arts, literature, architecture, and science, the Ottoman Empire was a beacon of innovation and creativity. The architectural marvels of the empire, including the majestic Hagia Sophia and the sublime Blue Mosque, stand as enduring symbols of its rich cultural and artistic legacy. Ottoman literature and poetry flourished, reflecting the complex interplay of diverse cultural influences that defined the empire's intellectual and spiritual life.[4]

The melting pot nature of the Ottoman Empire was also reflected in its approach to medicine and healing practices, which were characterized by an extraordinary synthesis of knowledge from various cultures. The Ottoman medical system, deeply influenced by the Islamic medical tradition, also integrated elements from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources. This fusion of medical knowledge created a unique healthcare system that was advanced for its time, with hospitals and medical schools that were centers of learning and healing.[5]

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[1] Donald Quataert, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, 1700-1922,* çev., Ayşe Berktay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 41.
[2] Arnold J. Toynbee, "Chapter 1," *The Ottoman Emparies Place in World History* 1. edt., ed., K.H. Karpat (London: BRILL, 1974), 15.
[3] Ayşe Zarakol, "The Ottomans and Diversity. Culture and Order in World Politics," *Cambridge Core*, (2020 April), 49. (dowloaded 16.01.2024)
[4] Kaya Şahin, "The Ottoman Empire in the Long Sixteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 70/1 (2017): 220.
[5] Miri Shefer Mossensohn, "A Tale of Two Discourses: The Historiography of Ottoman-Muslim Medicine," *Social History of Medicine* 21/1 (2008): 1.

Understanding the Ottoman Empire as a melting pot of cultures and traditions provides crucial context for exploring its approach to mental health and healing practices. The cultural diversity and synthesis that defined the empire had a profound impact on how mental health was understood, treated, and managed. This backdrop of cultural richness and exchange facilitated the development of a holistic approach to health care, where mental well-being was considered integral to the overall health of the individual and the society.

1.1. The Importance of Historical Perspectives in Mental Health Studies

The integration of historical perspectives into mental health studies offers invaluable insights into the evolution of medical understanding and practices, shedding light on how cultural, social, and political contexts have shaped approaches to mental health care across different epochs. Delving into the history of mental health not only enriches our understanding of past practices and theories but also provides a nuanced framework for evaluating and appreciating contemporary approaches to mental health care. This historical lens allows us to recognize the diversity of mental health practices and the complexity of their development over time, influenced by an interplay of various factors.[6]

Historical perspectives enable us to trace the lineage of current mental health paradigms,[7] revealing how they are rooted in earlier beliefs and practices. By understanding the origins and transformations of mental health care concepts, we can better appreciate the progress made and the challenges that have persisted through the ages. This historical insight can inform current practices, offering lessons from the past that can guide future improvements in mental health care. It highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need to adapt mental health services to the cultural and societal contexts of those they serve.

Moreover, historical analysis of mental health practices exposes the influence of societal attitudes and beliefs on the treatment and stigmatization of mental illness.[8] It reveals how shifts in these attitudes have led to changes in care practices, from the isolation and mistreatment of individuals with mental health issues to more humane and therapeutic approaches. Understanding these shifts is crucial for advocating for continued progress towards more inclusive, effective, and compassionate mental health care.

Studying the history of mental health also challenges modern practitioners and scholars to question and critically evaluate current practices. It encourages a reflective approach to mental health care, prompting professionals to consider how future generations will view their contributions to the field. This reflection fosters a commitment to ethical practice, continuous improvement, and the pursuit of treatments that respect the dignity and humanity of those seeking help.

In the context of the Ottoman Empire, historical perspectives on mental health open a window into a society where diverse cultural influences converged. The Ottoman approach to mental health, characterized by a blend of Islamic, Greek, Persian, and Indian medical traditions, offers a unique case study of how different cultures have contributed to the understanding and treatment of mental

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[6] Seyma Afacan, "Searching for the Soul in Shades of Grey. Modern Psychology's Spiritual Past in the Late Ottoman Empire," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 32 (2021): 1.
[7] Robert Cloninger, "A New Conceptual Paradigm from Genetics and Psychobiology for the Science of Mental Health," *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 33/2 (1999): 174.
[8] Nil Sarı, "A Review of Ottoman Court Records on Mental Diseases," *Journal of Health & Culture* 1/1 (2016): 58.

illness. By examining these historical practices, researchers can gain insights into alternative approaches to mental health care, enriching the global discourse on mental health with perspectives from the past.

2. Methodological Approach: Historical and Comparative Analysis

In this review, I embark on a methodological journey that bridges the historical expanse of the Ottoman Empire's mental health and healing practices with the nuanced landscape of modern psychological analysis. My exploration is rooted in a dual approach: historical analysis complemented by comparative analysis. This methodology is meticulously designed to peel back the layers of time, revealing the intricate tapestry of mental health care practices within the Ottoman Empire, and to juxtapose these findings against the backdrop of contemporary mental health understandings and treatments.

2.1. Historical Analysis: The cornerstone of my methodological approach is a deep dive into the historical practices of mental health care within the Ottoman Empire. I draw upon a rich array of primary and secondary sources, from medical texts and legal documents to personal narratives, each providing a window into the past. Through rigorous examination and contextualization, i aim to unearth the empire's approaches to mental health, dissecting the cultural, religious, and societal influences that molded these practices. This historical inquiry is not merely an academic exercise; it is a quest to understand the foundations of mental health care and the evolution of its practice within a diverse and complex society.

2.2. Comparative Analysis: Building upon the historical foundation, i then engage in a comparative analysis, setting the Ottoman Empire's mental health practices against the contemporary landscape of psychological care. This comparison is not intended to draw direct lines of influence but rather to illuminate the contrasts and continuities that exist between past and present. Through this lens, i assess the relevance of historical practices to today's mental health challenges, exploring how ancient wisdom can inform modern approaches and how the evolution of mental health care reflects broader societal changes.

2.3. Integration of Findings: The culmination of my methodological journey is the integration of historical insights with contemporary analysis. This synthesis not only enhances my understanding of the Ottoman Empire's legacy in mental health care but also offers a unique perspective on the development of mental health practices over time. By bridging the historical with the modern, i aim to contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of mental health care, one that acknowledges the depth of its historical roots while addressing the complexities of its present and future challenges.

In adopting this methodological approach, i set the stage for a detailed exploration of the Ottoman Empire's mental health and healing practices. This exploration is not only an academic contribution to the field of historical and psychological studies but also a reflective journey that challenges us to reconsider our contemporary approaches to mental health care in light of historical practices and perspectives.

3. Historical Context of Mental Health in the Ottoman Empire

3.1. Geographical Expanse and Cultural Diversity of the Ottoman Empire

I delve into the historical backdrop crucial for understanding the Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health. This empire, spanning from the late 13th century until the early 20th century, was not just a political entity but a vast mosaic of cultures, languages, and religions. Its territories stretched over three continents, including Southeast Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa, making it one of the most expansive empires in history.[9] This geographical spread was matched by a remarkable cultural diversity, as the empire encompassed many different peoples and civilizations, from the bustling markets of Istanbul to the desert cities of the Arabian Peninsula and the fertile valleys of the Balkans.

This diversity was not incidental but central to the empire's identity and its approach to governance and society, including the realm of health and medicine. The Ottoman Empire was characterized by its ability to absorb and synthesize a wide range of cultural influences, creating a unique blend that was reflected in every aspect of life, including its medical practices. The empire's position at the crossroads of East and West facilitated the exchange and integration of knowledge, including medical knowledge, from various corners of the world.[10] Islamic medical traditions, deeply rooted in the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith, were enriched by the contributions of Greek, Persian, and Indian scholars, whose works were translated and studied within the empire.

This cultural and geographical diversity played a significant role in shaping the Ottoman approach to mental health.[11] The variety of beliefs, practices, and medical philosophies within the empire contributed to a rich tapestry of healing practices. Traditional Islamic medicine, with its holistic view of health, emphasized the balance between the physical, spiritual, and mental aspects of well-being. This was complemented by the Greco-Roman medical traditions, which introduced the humoral theory of medicine to the Ottoman medical landscape, and the Persian and Indian influences that brought a variety of herbal remedies and philosophical perspectives on health and disease.

The understanding and treatment of mental health in the Ottoman Empire cannot be separated from this complex web of cultural and geographical influences. The empire's medical practitioners, whether they were working in the sophisticated hospitals of Istanbul or in smaller clinics in the provinces, drew upon a wide array of medical texts and traditions.[12] The diversity of the empire's population also meant that medical practitioners were often familiar with a variety of healing practices and were adept at navigating the cultural sensitivities related to health and illness.[13]

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[9] Alan Mikhail & Christine Philliou, "The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54/4 (2012): 721.

[10] Huri Islamogu and Çağlar Keyder, " Chapter 2," *Agenda for Ottoman History*, 1. edt. ed., Huri İslamoğlu-İnan (Paris: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 42.

[11] Chien Yang Erdem, "Ottomentality: Neoliberal Governance of Culture and Neo-ottoman Management of Diversity," *Turkish Studies* 18/4 (2017): 710.

[12] Mehrdad Kia, *Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire* (California: Greenwood Publishing House, 2011), 261.

[13] Ahmet Yadi, "Osmanlı Belediyelerinde Bir Sağlık Hizmeti: Ebelik [Kabilelik]," *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Araştırmaları Dergisi* 20 (2024): 1.

3.2. The Evolution of Medical Knowledge: A Synthesis of Traditions

The evolution of medical knowledge within the Ottoman Empire stands as a testament to the empire's capacity for cultural synthesis and intellectual curiosity. As the empire expanded its borders, it became a confluence where the medical traditions of East and West, North and South, met and merged. This synthesis of traditions was not merely an accumulation of knowledge but an active process of integration, adaptation, and innovation that enriched the empire's approach to health care, including mental health.[14]

At the heart of the Ottoman medical system was the Islamic medical tradition, which itself was an amalgamation of earlier knowledge derived from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources.[15] Islamic medicine was highly advanced, with its practitioners, known as "hakims," drawing on the works of esteemed physicians like Al-Razi (Rhazes)[16] and Ibn Sina (Avicenna),[17] whose comprehensive texts synthesized and expanded upon the medical knowledge of their time. These foundational texts, which covered everything from pharmacology to surgery, also included significant discussions on mental health, recognizing the importance of psychological well-being long before it was commonly acknowledged in many other parts of the world.

The Ottoman Empire embraced this rich heritage of Islamic medicine and sought to further it by incorporating the medical knowledge of the cultures it encountered and absorbed. The empire's scholars and physicians were well-versed in the medical texts of the Greeks, such as Hippocrates and Galen, whose works were translated into Arabic and later into Ottoman Turkish. The influence of Greek medicine, with its emphasis on the humoral theory, complemented the Islamic medical framework, enriching the Ottoman understanding of the body and its functions, including the mind.

Persian and Indian medical traditions also contributed to the Ottoman medical synthesis. Persian medicine, with its sophisticated understanding of herbs and minerals, introduced new treatments and remedies to the Ottoman pharmacopeia. Similarly, the Indian Ayurvedic tradition, known for its holistic approach to health, offered a different perspective on the interconnection between the mind, body, and environment, which resonated with the Islamic emphasis on balance and well-being.[18]

This synthesis of medical traditions was facilitated by the empire's extensive network of hospitals and medical schools, which served as centers of learning and innovation. The most famous of these, the Süleymaniye Medical Complex in Istanbul, founded by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent,[19] was not just a place for healing but also an institution where medical knowledge was taught, debated, and advanced. These institutions attracted scholars and physicians from across the

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[14] Yakup Bektas, "Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Science, Technology and Learning in the Ottoman Empire: Western Influence, Local Institutions and the Transfer of Knowledge," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 39/2 (2006): 287.

[15] Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, *Science Among the Ottomans: The Cultural Creation and Exchange of Knowledge* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2015), 110.

[16] Amin N. Daghestani, "al-Razi (Rhazes), 865–925," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 154/11 (1997): 1602.

[17] L. E. Goodman, *Avicenna* (London: Routledge, 2013), 74.

[18] Alain Touwaide & Emanuela Appetiti, "Knowledge of Eastern Materia Medica (Indian and Chinese) in Pre-modern Mediterranean Medical Traditions: A Study in Comparative Historical Ethnopharmacology," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 148/2 (2013): 361.

[19] Gülhan Benli, "Hospitals in the Ottoman Period and the Work Of Sinan the Architect: Suleymaniye Complex Dar Al-Shifa and the Medical Madrasa," *A+ Arch Design International Journal of Architecture and Design* 2/3 (2016): 1.

empire and beyond, creating a vibrant intellectual community that was dedicated to improving and expanding the field of medicine.

Within this context, the approach to mental health in the Ottoman Empire was both comprehensive and progressive. Mental illnesses were treated with a combination of pharmacological remedies, dietary adjustments, and therapeutic practices, including music and water therapy. The care provided in Ottoman hospitals reflected the empire's holistic view of health, recognizing the need to treat the mind and the body as interconnected entities.

The evolution of medical knowledge in the Ottoman Empire, therefore, was not just a process of accumulation but a dynamic synthesis of diverse traditions. This process resulted in a distinctive medical culture that was open to external influences yet grounded in the rich heritage of Islamic medicine. The empire's approach to mental health, informed by this synthesis, offers valuable insights into the historical interplay between culture, knowledge, and the understanding of mental well-being.

3.3. Hospitals and Medical Institutions: Pioneering Healthcare in the Empire

The Ottoman Empire's approach to healthcare, particularly its establishment and operation of hospitals and medical institutions, exemplified its pioneering spirit in the medical field. These institutions were not only centers for healing but also hubs of medical education and knowledge dissemination, reflecting the empire's commitment to public health and welfare.[20]

The foundation of the Ottoman healthcare system can be traced back to the early centuries of the empire[21] when the tradition of building hospitals was inherited and significantly expanded from the Seljuk Turks. These hospitals, known as "bimaristans,"[22] were among the most advanced medical institutions of their time, serving a multitude of purposes: treating patients, educating future physicians, and serving as centers for medical research.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Ottoman hospitals was their inclusivity. Treatment was provided free of charge to all, irrespective of the patient's religion, ethnicity, or social status. This policy of universal care was rooted in the Islamic tradition of charity and the moral obligation to help those in need. The hospitals were funded by endowments known as "waqfs,"[23] which ensured their operation and maintenance without direct cost to the patients.

The architectural design of these hospitals was also noteworthy, with considerations that went beyond mere functionality. Many Ottoman hospitals were built with courtyards, gardens, and fountains,[24] creating a serene environment that promoted healing. The layout of these hospitals was designed to maximize natural light and air circulation, evidencing an early understanding of the importance of a healthy environment in patient care.

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[20] Behire SANÇAR, B. "Chapter 1.," *Nursing Services in the Ottoman Empire,* 1. edt., eds., Adil Çamlı et al. (Sofia: Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2016), 1.

[21] Bilal AK, "Chapter 58," *Hospital Management and Organization in the Ottoman Empire*, 1. edt., eds. Adil Çamlı et al., (Sofia: Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2016), 623.

[22] Sharif Kaf Al-Ghazal, "The Origin of Bimaristans (hospitals) in Islamic Medical History," *Foundation for Science Technology and Civilisation* (2007): 1.

[23] Mehmet Bulut and Cem Korkut, "Ottoman Cash Waqfs," *Insight Turkey* 21/3 (2019): 91.

[24] Nina Ergin, "Healing by Design? An Experiential Approach to Early Modern Ottoman Hospital Architecture," *Turkish Historical Review* 6/1 (2015): 1.

The Süleymaniye Medical Complex in Istanbul, established by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent,[25] stands as a testament to the empire's medical advancements. This complex included a hospital, a medical school, a library, and a kitchen, which provided meals for patients and staff. The medical school played a crucial role in the education of physicians, offering a curriculum that included both theoretical knowledge and practical training. Students were taught a wide range of medical disciplines, from anatomy and pharmacology to surgery and psychiatry, reflecting the comprehensive nature of Ottoman medical education.

Ottoman hospitals were also among the first in the world to have separate wards for different diseases, including mental illnesses. This specialization indicated a sophisticated understanding of medical care, recognizing the need for tailored treatment approaches for different conditions. The treatment of mental health in these institutions was progressive for its time, often incorporating holistic methods that addressed both the physical and psychological needs of patients.

Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire made significant contributions to medical knowledge and practice,[26] documented in an extensive body of medical literature. Physicians and scholars in the empire wrote extensively on various medical subjects, contributing to the global body of medical knowledge. These works were often translated into other languages, spreading Ottoman medical insights far beyond the empire's borders.

The hospitals and medical institutions of the Ottoman Empire were not just places of healing but beacons of medical progress and education. They embodied the empire's holistic approach to healthcare, its commitment to public welfare, and its capacity for integrating diverse medical traditions into a coherent system. These institutions laid the groundwork for modern healthcare practices and continue to inspire with their pioneering achievements in the field of medicine.

4. Mental Health Understandings and Practices

Conceptualizing Mental Health in the Ottoman Empire

Within the rich tapestry of the Ottoman Empire's medical heritage, the conceptualization of mental health reveals a sophisticated understanding that bridges various medical traditions and cultural insights. This nuanced perspective on mental health is reflected in the empire's definitions, perceptions, and the influential texts and authors that contributed to its psychiatric knowledge base.[27]

Definitions and Perceptions

The Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health was deeply influenced by Islamic medicine, which emphasized the balance between physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being.[28] Mental health disorders were often perceived within this holistic framework, recognizing the interconnectedness of the mind and body. This view was complemented by the humoral theory

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[25] Gülru Necipoğlu-Kafadar, "The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 3 (1985): 92.

[26] Ekmelettin İhsanoğlu, "Chapter 1," *Science in the Ottoman Empire*, 1. edt., ed. Ekmelettin İhsanoğlu., (London: Routledge, 2020), 3.

[27] Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, "Chapter 36," *Medicine in the Ottoman Empire*, 1. edt., ed., Helaine selin (Tel Aviv: Springer, 2014), 1.

[28] Orhan M. Ozturk and Vamik D. Volkan, "Psychiatry in a Changing World: The Theory and Practice of Psychiatry in Turkey," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 25/2 (1971): 240.

inherited from Greek medicine, which posited that mental health conditions resulted from imbalances among the four bodily humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.[29]

Mental health, in the Ottoman context, was not merely the absence of illness but a state of overall well-being where an individual could fulfill their personal and social duties. Illnesses of the mind were treated with the same seriousness as physical ailments, reflecting a progressive understanding of mental health that predated many Western notions of psychiatric care.

Influential Medical Texts and Authors

The Ottoman Empire's medical scholarship was rich and varied, drawing from and contributing to a vast pool of knowledge that spanned continents and cultures. Several texts and authors stand out for their significant contributions to the field of mental health:

- **Ibn Sina (Avicenna)**: Although predating the Ottoman Empire, Ibn Sina's works, especially "The Canon of Medicine," were highly influential in Ottoman medical circles. His treatise, which included sections on psychology, was integral to the medical curriculum in Ottoman schools and provided detailed descriptions of mental health conditions, their causes, and treatments.[30]

- **Serefeddin Sabuncuoglu**: A notable Ottoman surgeon and physician, Sabuncuoglu authored the "Cerrahiyyetu'l-Haniyye" (Imperial Surgery), which included chapters on psychological conditions and their treatments. His work represents one of the earliest attempts to illustrate surgical procedures and treatments in the Islamic world, including interventions for mental health disorders.[31]

- **Gevrekzade Hafız Hasan**: Another prominent figure, Gevrekzade Hafız Hasan, contributed extensively to the field of medicine through his works that explored the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that included spiritual healing alongside physical treatments.[32]

These texts and authors contributed to a body of knowledge that was both deep and broad, reflecting the empire's diverse influences and its capacity for medical innovation. The works were not static but part of a vibrant scholarly tradition that engaged with medical knowledge from across the known world, adapting and expanding upon it within the context of the Ottoman healthcare system.

The conceptualization of mental health in the Ottoman Empire, as seen through its definitions, perceptions, and the influential medical texts and authors of the time, highlights a complex understanding that was ahead of its time in many respects. This historical perspective not only enriches our understanding of the past but also offers valuable insights for the ongoing discourse on mental health and its treatment in contemporary times.

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[29] Serge Erlinger, "A History of Research into the Physiology of Bile, from Hippocrates to Molecular Medicine," *Clinical Liver Disease* 20/1 (2022): 33.

[30] Mumtaz Mazicioglu, "Ibni Sina (Avicenna) the Most Known and Greatest Turkish Medical Doctor in Late Ancient World," *Archives of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 292/3 (2015): 473.

[31] M. Turgut, "Illustrations of Neurosurgical Techniques in Early Period of Ottoman Empire by Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu," *Acta Neurochirurgica* 149 (2007): 1063.

[32] Derya Karataş, "Gevrekzâde Hâfız Hasan Efendi, Netîcetü'l-Fikriyye fî Tedbîri Vîlâdeti'l-Bikriyye Çocuk Sağlığı ve Gelişimi," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları* 67 (2020): 847.

Healing Practices and Treatment Methods

The Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health was holistic, incorporating a blend of healing practices and treatment methods that addressed the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of well-being. This multifaceted approach is evident in the use of herbal remedies and pharmacology, the application of physical therapies, and the integration of spiritual healing and religious practices. Each of these components played a significant role in the empire's mental health care system, reflecting a deep understanding of the complexities of human health.[33]

Herbal Remedies and Pharmacology

Herbal remedies were a cornerstone of Ottoman medical treatment, with an extensive pharmacopeia derived from the empire's diverse flora and the integration of knowledge from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources. Ottoman physicians, or "hakims,"[34] employed a wide range of plant-based treatments, believing in their efficacy to restore the balance of the humors within the body, which was thought to be essential for mental health.

Pharmacology in the Ottoman Empire was a highly developed field, as evidenced by the works of scholars like Dioscorides and Galen, whose texts were translated and studied alongside Islamic medical literature. The "Materia Medica" of Dioscorides, in particular, served as a crucial reference for Ottoman physicians in identifying and using medicinal plants. Pharmacies, often attached to hospitals, dispensed these herbal remedies, prepared according to complex recipes that sometimes included minerals and animal products, to treat a range of mental health conditions, from depression and anxiety to more severe psychoses.

Physical Therapies and the Role of Hospitals

Physical therapies, including massage, hydrotherapy (water therapy),[35] and music therapy, were integral to the Ottoman approach to mental health. The empire's hospitals, known for their architectural beauty and serene environments, were designed to facilitate these therapies. The inclusion of gardens, fountains, and spacious courtyards within hospital complexes underscored the importance of a calming, aesthetically pleasing environment in the healing process.

Ottoman hospitals were advanced medical facilities that provided care for all, regardless of social status or background. They had specialized wards for mental health patients, where treatments were administered under the supervision of skilled physicians. The role of these hospitals extended beyond treatment to include patient rehabilitation, aiming to reintegrate individuals into society as healthy members.

Spiritual Healing and Religious Practices

Spiritual healing and religious practices were deeply woven into the fabric of Ottoman mental health care. The Islamic view of health as a balance between the physical, spiritual, and mental

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[33] Suleyman Ganidagli et al., "Approach to Painful Disorders by Şerefeddin Sabuncuoğlu in the Fifteenth Century Ottoman Period," *The Journal of the American Society of Anesthesiologists* 100/1 (2004): 165.

[34] Esin Kahya, "Did the Ottoman Physicians Make any Contributions to the Medical Science in the Ottoman Empire in the Fourteenth Century (At the Flourishing Period of the Empire)," *Belleten* 70/257 (2006): 155.

[35] Rania Awaad and Merve Nursoy-Demir, "Melodies in the Hospital Courtyard: A Comparative History of Ottoman Music Therapy in the Early Modern Period (c. 1400–1800)," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 86/102092 (2023).

dimensions underscored the use of spiritual practices, such as prayer and recitation of the Quran, in treating mental illnesses. Spiritual healers, often Sufi sheikhs or imams, played a prominent role in this aspect of care, offering solace and spiritual guidance to those suffering from mental health issues.[36]

The practice of "ruqyah,"[37] a form of spiritual healing involving the recitation of Quranic verses, was commonly employed to treat mental disturbances believed to be caused by spiritual afflictions or jinn possession. This method reflected the holistic nature of Ottoman medicine, which did not strictly separate the spiritual from the medical but saw them as complementary parts of a unified approach to health.

The healing practices and treatment methods in the Ottoman Empire illustrate a sophisticated, integrated approach to mental health care that valued the interconnection between mind, body, and spirit. Through the combination of herbal remedies, physical therapies, and spiritual healing, the Ottoman medical system provided a comprehensive model of care that addressed the multifaceted needs of individuals with mental health conditions.

5. Case Studies of Notable Treatments and Patient Care

The Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health and healing practices was marked by a rich tapestry of treatments that catered to the holistic well-being of patients. Through the examination of notable case studies, the effectiveness and complexity of these treatments, as well as the compassionate care provided to patients, can be highlighted. These case studies exemplify the empire's advanced understanding of mental health care and its practical application in patient treatment.

The Use of Music Therapy in Ottoman Hospitals

One of the most innovative treatments used in Ottoman mental health care was music therapy.[38] This practice was based on the understanding that music could influence emotions and mental states, a concept that was both culturally significant and medically recognized within the empire. At the hospital in Edirne, established by Sultan Bayezid II, patients with mental health conditions were treated with music played by skilled musicians as part of their therapeutic regimen.[39] Different musical modes, or "makams," were employed to evoke specific emotional responses that were believed to facilitate healing. This early use of music therapy demonstrates the Ottoman's holistic approach to mental health, integrating the arts into patient care.

Hydrotherapy Treatments

Hydrotherapy, or the use of water for treatment, was another innovative method employed in Ottoman hospitals. The hospital in Bursa, for example, was renowned for its use of water treatments, leveraging the city's famous thermal springs.[40] Patients were bathed in or made to drink water from

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[36] Zekeriya Işık, "Sufism in The Sense of Folk Medicine in Ottoman Society," *Hitit İlahiyat Dergisi* 21/2 (2022): 921.

[37] Alvi Nour Sholihah, "Living Sufism in SIHATSU (Silat Hati Suci): Practices and Impact," *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 4/2 (2022): 63.

[38] İvana Mihaljinec and Erdal Eser, "Architecture of Hospitals and Music Therapy Healing in the Anatolian Seljuk State-A New Perspective," *PESA Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3/3 (2017): 116.

[39] Enver Sengul, "Edirne Sultan Bayezid II Hospital," *Turkish Neurosurgery* 25/1 (2015).

[40] Kyle Evered and Emine Evered, "Therapeutic Landscapes and Nationalism: Turkey and the Curative Waters of Kemalism," *Landscape History* 38/2 (2017): 77.

these springs, which was believed to have curative properties for both physical ailments and mental health conditions. The calming effect of water, combined with its perceived medicinal qualities, made hydrotherapy a popular treatment for patients suffering from conditions such as anxiety and melancholia.

The Integration of Herbal Remedies and Pharmacology

A notable case of the use of herbal remedies in the Ottoman mental health care system is found in the writings of Dawud al-Antaki,[41] a prominent physician and pharmacist. He documented the use of "balgham" (phlegm) reducing agents for patients suffering from depression and anxiety, employing a variety of herbs and substances such as saffron, roses, and violet flowers.[42] These remedies were compounded into syrups, teas, or pills and administered to patients, showcasing the sophisticated use of pharmacology in treating mental health conditions. The precision in the preparation and use of these remedies highlights the empirical approach to treatment that characterized Ottoman medicine.

Spiritual Healing Practices

A fascinating case of spiritual healing involved the treatment of a patient believed to be afflicted by jinn, according to historical records from the 16th century. The patient was brought to a hospital where a combination of recitation of the Quran (ruqyah) and medical treatment was employed.[43] This dual approach underscored the Ottoman belief in the interplay between spiritual and physical health. The patient's recovery was attributed to this integrative treatment, reflecting the importance of spiritual practices in the Ottoman approach to mental health care.

These case studies illustrate the diversity and sophistication of the Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health treatment. The empire's hospitals were not just places of healing but also centers of innovation, where various treatments, from music therapy to hydrotherapy and herbal pharmacology, were developed and refined. Moreover, the inclusion of spiritual healing practices alongside medical treatments highlights the holistic view of health that prevailed in Ottoman society. Through these examples, the advanced and compassionate care provided to patients with mental health conditions in the Ottoman Empire becomes evident, offering valuable insights into historical approaches to mental health that continue to resonate today.

6. Societal and Cultural Influences on Mental Health Care

Religion and Spirituality: Their Impact on Mental Health Practices

In the Ottoman Empire, religion and spirituality were deeply woven into the fabric of society, profoundly influencing various aspects of life, including mental health practices. The impact of religion and spirituality on these practices underscores the holistic approach to health care in the empire, where physical well-being was inseparable from spiritual health. This integration reflects

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[41] Esraa Elmallwany, "The Ottoman Physicians in Egypt (Case of study Dawud al-Antaki and Overview About his Book Tazkiratu ulil Albab wa al-ʿjam'li al-ʿajab al-ʿujab)," *Minia Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research MJTHR* 14/1 (2022): 23.

[42] Ali Gorji and Maryam Khaleghi Ghadiri, "History of Headache in Medieval Persian Medicine," *The Lancet Neurology* 1/8 (2002): 510.

[43] Iqbal Syauqi Al Ghiffary et al., "Re-reading Ruqyah: Comprehensive Analysis of Ruqyah within Hadith, Medicine, And Psychological Perspective" (ICIIS 2020: Proceedings of the 3rd International Colloquium on Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies, European Alliance for Innovation, ICIIS 2020 Jakarta, Indonesia, October 20-21, 2020).

the broader cultural and societal norms that characterized the empire, highlighting the significance of religious beliefs and spiritual practices in shaping mental health care.[44]

The Role of Islamic Teachings

Islam, as the predominant religion in the Ottoman Empire, played a central role in shaping societal attitudes towards mental health. Islamic teachings, which emphasize compassion and care for the sick, encouraged the establishment of hospitals and the provision of care for individuals with mental health conditions. The concept of "tibb al-nafs" (psychological medicine) in Islamic medicine recognized the importance of mental and emotional well-being, advocating for treatments that included spiritual care alongside physical remedies.[45]

The Quran and Hadith provided guidance on treating mental health conditions, advocating for kindness, understanding, and the removal of stigma associated with mental illness. This religious framework fostered an environment where seeking treatment for mental health conditions was not only accepted but encouraged, facilitating a compassionate approach to mental health care.

Sufism and Mental Health

Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, had a significant influence on mental health practices in the Ottoman Empire. Sufi teachings, which emphasize inner peace, self-reflection, and a deep connection with the divine, contributed to therapeutic approaches that addressed the spiritual dimensions of mental health. Sufi practices such as dhikr (remembrance of God), meditation, and spiritual guidance were employed as forms of treatment for mental and emotional distress, offering solace and healing to those in need.[46]

Sufi lodges (tekkes)[47] often served as sanctuaries for individuals seeking relief from psychological ailments. The spiritual leaders of these lodges, known as sheikhs, provided counseling and spiritual support, leveraging the therapeutic potential of Sufi practices to treat mental health conditions. This spiritual care was complemented by the broader medical treatments available in hospitals, illustrating the integration of religious practices within the Ottoman health care system.

Religious Endowments and Health Care Institutions

The establishment and operation of hospitals and other health care institutions in the Ottoman Empire were often funded through religious endowments (waqfs). These endowments, which were charitable donations made in the spirit of Islamic philanthropy, supported the construction and maintenance of hospitals, including those that specialized in mental health care. The provision of care in these institutions was guided by Islamic principles, ensuring that treatment was available to all, regardless of social or economic status.[48]

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[44] Aziz Esmail, "Chapter 10," *Islamic Communities and Mental Health*, 1. edt., ed., Dinesh Bhurga (London: Routledge, 2013), 138.
[45] Lon İskandar et al., "Waqf's Substantial Contribution Toward the Public Healthcare Sector in the Ottoman Empire," 3/1 (2023): 275.
[46] Donald M. Brown, "An Introduction to Sufism," *Esoteric Quarterly* 12 (Fall 2016). (downloaded 12.01.2024)
[47] Hamid Algar, "Chapter 10," *Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey,* 1. edt., ed., Raymond Lifchez (California: University of California Press, 1992), 209.
[48] John Alexander and Sophia Laiou, "Health and Philanthropy Among the Ottoman Orthodox Population, Eighteenth to Early Nineteenth Century," *Turkish Historical Review* 5/1 (2014): 1.

This system of endowments reflects the deeply ingrained belief in the importance of health care as a form of religious duty, further emphasizing the role of religion and spirituality in shaping mental health practices. Through the support of these endowments, the Ottoman Empire was able to create a sustainable health care system that prioritized the well-being of its citizens, embodying the Islamic values of compassion and community service.

Societal Attitudes and the Stigma of Mental Illness

The societal attitudes towards mental illness and the associated stigma within the Ottoman Empire were complex and varied, influenced by a confluence of cultural norms, religious beliefs, and medical knowledge. Understanding these attitudes provides crucial context for the empire's approach to mental health care and highlights the challenges and progress in addressing mental health issues.[49]

Societal Attitudes Towards Mental Illness

In the Ottoman Empire, attitudes towards mental illness were shaped by a mixture of Islamic teachings, traditional beliefs, and medical understandings. Islam's emphasis on compassion and mercy often fostered a more compassionate view of those suffering from mental illnesses compared to some contemporary societies. The religion's teachings encouraged care for the ill and discouraged discrimination, influencing how individuals with mental health conditions were treated within the community.

However, traditional beliefs and superstitions about mental illness also played a role, sometimes contributing to stigma and misunderstanding. Mental illnesses were occasionally perceived as a result of spiritual or demonic possession, leading to a mix of fear and pity towards affected individuals. This view was not universal and varied significantly across different regions and communities within the empire.[50]

The Role of Medical Knowledge in Shaping Attitudes

The advanced state of medical knowledge in the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the field of mental health, helped combat some of the stigma associated with mental illness. Physicians and scholars, influenced by the holistic approach of Islamic medicine and the integration of Greek, Persian, and Indian medical traditions, advocated for a more enlightened understanding of mental health conditions. They recognized these conditions as illnesses that required medical intervention, similar to physical ailments.

Notable medical texts and physicians of the time contributed to a nuanced understanding of mental health, challenging prevailing superstitions and promoting a more compassionate and informed approach to treatment. This medical perspective was instrumental in shaping societal attitudes, gradually altering perceptions of mental illness from a mark of shame to a condition deserving of empathy and care.[51]

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[49] Ebru Boyar, "Medicine in Practice: European Influences on the Ottoman Medical Habitat," *Turkish Historical Review* 9/3 (2018): 213.

[50] Şeyma Afacan, "From Traditionalism to Modernism: Mental Health in the Ottoman Empire" (doctoral dissertation, Sabancı University, 2010), 60.

[51] Edna Bonhomme and Lamia Moghnieh, "Medicine and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa: Transdisciplinary Approaches in Medical Humanities," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 47/1 (2023): 1.

Institutional Support and Public Perception

The establishment of hospitals and medical institutions dedicated to the care of individuals with mental health conditions reflected the empire's progressive stance towards mental health care. These institutions not only provided treatment but also served as a testament to the society's capacity to integrate care for mental health into the public health system. The visibility of such institutions and their role in the community played a part in normalizing mental health care and reducing the stigma associated with mental illness.

Despite these advances, the stigma of mental illness persisted in some areas, influenced by lingering superstitions and a lack of understanding. The efforts of medical professionals and religious leaders to educate the public and improve the treatment of individuals with mental health conditions were crucial in gradually changing societal attitudes.[52]

Legal and Social Frameworks Governing Mental Health Care

The Ottoman Empire's approach to mental health care was not only shaped by its rich medical tradition and societal attitudes but also by its legal and social frameworks. These frameworks played a crucial role in the administration of mental health services, the protection of individuals with mental health conditions, and the overall societal response to mental illness. Understanding these legal and social structures provides insight into the comprehensive nature of mental health care in the empire and highlights the ways in which legal norms and societal practices intersected to influence mental health care.[53]

Legal Frameworks Governing Mental Health Care

The legal system of the Ottoman Empire, largely based on Islamic law (Sharia), incorporated specific provisions for the care and rights of individuals with mental health conditions. Sharia recognized the importance of protecting vulnerable populations, including those with mental illnesses, and provided guidelines for their treatment and care within the community. This included stipulations for guardianship, management of the individual's financial affairs, and their right to humane treatment.[54]

Additionally, the Ottoman legal system utilized "kanun" (sultanic law) to address issues not explicitly covered by Sharia. Kanun laws could include regulations for the operation of hospitals, the responsibilities of medical professionals, and the rights of patients. These laws reflected the empire's commitment to public welfare and health, including mental health care, and demonstrated the adaptability of the legal system in responding to the needs of its populace.

Social Frameworks and Community Support

Beyond formal legal structures, social frameworks within Ottoman society played a significant role in the care of individuals with mental health conditions. The concept of community welfare and support was ingrained in Ottoman culture, partly driven by Islamic principles of charity and

[52] Carter Vaughn Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A social history* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 40.
[53] Haim Gerber, *State, Society, and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 117.
[54] Mırı Shefer-Mossensohn, *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500-1700*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), 21.

compassion. Families and local communities often took an active role in caring for individuals with mental illnesses, supported by religious and charitable institutions.[55]

Waqfs (endowments), a key feature of Ottoman social welfare,[56] provided funding for hospitals, including those specializing in mental health care. These endowments ensured that care was accessible to all, regardless of economic status, and underscored the societal commitment to public health. The involvement of religious institutions in mental health care, providing spiritual support and guidance, further exemplified the integrated approach to mental health within the social fabric of the empire.

Impact on Mental Health Care

The legal and social frameworks of the Ottoman Empire created an environment where mental health care could be approached holistically, considering the medical, legal, and social needs of individuals with mental health conditions. The legal system provided protections and rights for these individuals, while the social welfare system facilitated community support and access to care.

This integrated approach allowed for a more compassionate and comprehensive response to mental health issues, setting a precedent for the importance of legal and social considerations in mental health care. It also highlighted the empire's advanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of mental health and the need for a coordinated response that encompasses medical care, legal protection, and social support.

7. Comparative Analysis with Modern Psychological Understandings and Treatments

7.1. From Ottoman Practices to Modern Mental Health Care: Continuities and Changes

The transition from Ottoman mental health practices to modern care systems presents a fascinating study of continuities and changes, revealing how historical approaches have influenced contemporary understandings and treatments of mental health. This comparative analysis sheds light on the evolution of mental health care, highlighting the enduring legacy of Ottoman practices alongside significant advancements in the field.[57]

Continuities in Holistic Care

One of the most notable continuities between Ottoman mental health practices and modern care is the emphasis on holistic treatment. The Ottoman approach, which integrated physical, psychological, and spiritual care, resonates with current trends in mental health that advocate for treating the whole person rather than focusing solely on symptoms. Today, the bio-psycho-social model of mental health care reflects this holistic perspective, recognizing the importance of addressing biological factors, psychological dynamics, and social environments in the treatment process.

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[55] Hayriye Oya Saf and Emre Ergül, "The Social And Cultural Structure Of The Ottoman City" (The International Academic Research Conference Presentation, Rome, 2018).

[56] Izzatul Muna, "Ottoman Cash Waqf System: An Alternative to the Western Capitalist System," *Islamic Economics Journal* 9/1 (2020): 101.

[57] Burçak Özlüdil Altın, "Psychiatry, Space, and Time: Case of an Ottoman Asylum," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 5/1 (2018): 67.

The Legacy of Compassionate Care

The Ottoman Empire's emphasis on compassionate care, driven by Islamic principles of charity and the moral imperative to care for the sick, has left a lasting impact on modern mental health practices. The concept of providing care regardless of an individual's social or economic status is echoed in contemporary efforts to ensure universal access to mental health services. This principle of compassion and accessibility continues to challenge modern health care systems to prioritize equity and empathy in their services.[58]

Changes in Medical Understanding and Treatments

While continuities can be observed in the philosophy of care, significant changes have occurred in the medical understanding and treatments of mental health conditions. Advances in neuroscience, psychology, and pharmacology have transformed the diagnosis and management of mental illnesses, moving away from the humoral theories that influenced Ottoman medicine.[59] Modern treatments now include a wide range of psychopharmacological interventions, evidence-based psychotherapies, and innovative approaches such as digital mental health services, reflecting a deeper understanding of the complex nature of mental health conditions.

Institutional and Legal Evolution

The evolution of mental health care has also been marked by changes in institutional and legal frameworks. Unlike the Ottoman era, where hospitals served as the primary centers for care, modern mental health services are delivered through a variety of settings,[60] including community-based programs, outpatient clinics, and specialized care units. Furthermore, contemporary legal frameworks have evolved to provide greater protections for individuals with mental health conditions, emphasizing rights-based approaches to care and the importance of informed consent, autonomy, and patient advocacy.

Integration of Traditional Practices

Despite these advancements, there's a growing recognition of the value of traditional practices in contemporary mental health care. Similar to the Ottoman use of herbal remedies, music therapy,[61] and spiritual healing, modern integrative mental health approaches increasingly incorporate complementary and alternative medicines, acknowledging their potential benefits when used alongside conventional treatments.

Cultural Sensitivity in Contemporary Mental Health Practices

The concept of cultural sensitivity has become increasingly important in contemporary mental health practices, reflecting a growing recognition of the diverse cultural backgrounds of individuals and their impact on mental health care. This emphasis on cultural sensitivity mirrors, to some extent,

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[58] Anna Sieben and Ayşe Yıldırır, "Cultural Spaces of Popularized Psychological Knowledge: Attachment Parenting in Turkey," *Culture & Psychology* 26/3 (2020): 335.

[59] Judith I. Haug, "Nourishment of the Soul–Music, Medicine, and Food in Ottoman Culture," *Oriens* 1 (2023):1.

[60] M. Suheyl Pozanti and Paul Bruder, "The Turkish Healthcare System: Can the United States Learn from the Ottoman Legacy?," *Hospital Topics* 73/2 (2010): 28.

[61] Gülsen, Erdal and Đlknur, Erbas, "Darüssifas Where Music Threapy Was Practiced During," *Journal of History, Culture & Art Research/Tarih Kültür ve Sanat Arastirmalari Dergisi* 2/1 (2013): 1.

the Ottoman Empire's approach to health care,[62] which was inherently multicultural due to the empire's vast and diverse population. The transition towards culturally sensitive practices in modern mental health care highlights both an acknowledgment of cultural differences and a commitment to providing equitable and effective care to all individuals, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds.

Roots in the Ottoman Approach

The Ottoman Empire's medical system, characterized by its integration of various medical traditions and its provision of care to a culturally diverse population, laid early groundwork for the importance of cultural considerations in health care.[63] Ottoman physicians were accustomed to treating patients from different cultural and religious backgrounds, which necessitated an understanding and respect for varied health beliefs and practices. This historical context underscores the long-standing recognition of the need for cultural sensitivity in effective health care delivery.

Contemporary Significance of Cultural Sensitivity

In today's globalized world, mental health professionals encounter a wide array of cultural perspectives on health, illness, and healing. Cultural sensitivity in contemporary mental health practices involves understanding these diverse cultural beliefs and values and incorporating this understanding into the diagnosis, treatment, and care of individuals. This approach recognizes that cultural factors can significantly influence an individual's experience of mental illness, including symptoms, coping mechanisms, and attitudes towards seeking treatment.[64]

Implementing Culturally Sensitive Practices

Contemporary mental health care systems are actively adopting culturally sensitive practices through a variety of strategies to enhance the care provided to diverse populations.[65] This involves training mental health professionals in cultural competence to equip them with the necessary skills for understanding and respecting patients' cultural backgrounds. Additionally, treatment models and therapies are being adapted to accommodate cultural differences, making them more relevant and accessible to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Efforts to engage with communities to understand their specific mental health needs and cultural nuances are crucial for delivering more tailored and effective mental health services. Furthermore, offering services in a patient's preferred language or providing interpreters plays a significant role in overcoming barriers to care, ensuring better understanding, and improving treatment adherence. These initiatives collectively contribute to a more inclusive and effective approach to mental health care, acknowledging and addressing the varied needs and perspectives of all individuals.

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[62] Can Veyselligil, "The Ottoman Empire And "The Rest of the World": Late Ottoman First Person Narratives Regarding the Ottoman Perceptions on The Non European World and the Ottoman Periphery" (Doctoral Dissertation, Sabancı University, 2011), 32.

[63] Christpher Dole, "In The Shadows Of Medicine and Modernity: Medical Integration and Secular Histories of Religious Healing in Turkey," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 28 (2004): 255.

[64] Leslie Peirce, "Changing Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire: The Early Centuries," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19/1 (2007): 6.

[65] Rhoads Murphey, "Ottoman Medicine and Transculturalism From the Sixteenth Through the Eighteenth Century," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (1992): 376.

The Legacy of Ottoman Mental Health Care: Implications for Today

The legacy of Ottoman mental health care carries profound implications for contemporary approaches to psychological understandings and treatments. The Ottoman Empire's advanced practices in mental health care, characterized by its holistic and compassionate approach, offer valuable insights into the integration of diverse therapeutic methods and the importance of treating the individual as a whole.[66] This historical perspective underscores the benefits of blending medical, psychological, and spiritual care, a practice that is increasingly resonant in today's mental health paradigms.

Modern psychological treatments continue to evolve, with an expanding emphasis on personalized care that addresses not only the biological aspects of mental health conditions but also the psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions.[67] The Ottoman example, with its incorporation of herbal remedies, physical therapies, and spiritual healing, illustrates the potential for a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to mental health care. This multifaceted approach is reflected in contemporary interest in integrative medicine, which combines traditional and modern therapeutic practices for mental health.

The emphasis on education and the dissemination of medical knowledge in the Ottoman Empire also highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and public education in mental health care.[68] Just as Ottoman physicians were trained in a diverse body of medical knowledge, today's mental health professionals benefit from a multidisciplinary education that prepares them to meet the complex needs of their patients in a culturally sensitive manner.

The legacy of Ottoman mental health care, with its emphasis on holistic treatment, compassion, accessibility, and education, continues to inform and inspire contemporary mental health practices. By examining this historical example, modern mental health professionals and policymakers can glean insights into creating more effective, inclusive, and compassionate mental health care systems that recognize the multifaceted nature of mental well-being. This comparative analysis not only honors the contributions of the past but also encourages a forward-looking perspective that seeks to improve mental health care for all individuals, drawing on the rich tapestry of human knowledge and experience.

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[66] Rania Awaad et al., "3rd Chapter," *Islamic Psychology,* 1. ed., Applying Islamic Principles to Clinical Mental Health Care (New York: Routledge, 2020), 69.
[67] John Swinton, Spirituality and Mental Health Care: Rediscovering A'forgotten' Dimension (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 93.
[68] Miri Shefer-Mossensohn, "3rd Chapter," *The Transfer of Knowledge to, from, and within the Ottoman Empire,* 1. ed., Science Among the Ottomans (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2021),87.

Conclusion

The exploration of mental health care within the Ottoman Empire, set against the backdrop of modern psychological understandings and treatments, reveals the profound impact of cultural and historical contexts on the evolution of mental health practices. This comparative analysis highlights how the holistic and integrative approaches of the past continue to inform and inspire contemporary mental health paradigms. The relevance of Ottoman mental health practices to modern psychology lies in their embodiment of compassion, holistic care, and the incorporation of a wide range of therapeutic modalities, from herbal remedies to spiritual healing. These practices underscore the importance of addressing the multifaceted nature of mental health, advocating for a care system that respects the interplay of physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being.

However, engaging with historical mental health research presents its own set of challenges and limitations. The primary challenge lies in the interpretation and application of historical practices to contemporary settings, requiring careful consideration of the differences in cultural and societal norms. Additionally, historical records may offer incomplete pictures of mental health practices, necessitating a cautious approach to drawing conclusions about their efficacy and relevance.

Despite these challenges, the key insights gained from Ottoman mental health and healing practices provide valuable lessons for the future of mental health care. They advocate for a more compassionate, holistic, and patient-centered approach, emphasizing the need for mental health systems that are accessible to all segments of society and that respect cultural diversity. The Ottoman Empire's integration of various medical traditions and its commitment to public welfare and education in mental health care offer enduring lessons for addressing today's mental health challenges.

Looking forward, the legacy of Ottoman mental health practices calls for further research and exploration into historical approaches to mental health care. This includes a deeper examination of the specific treatments and methodologies employed, as well as the societal structures that supported mental health care delivery. By delving into these historical practices, contemporary mental health research can uncover new insights and innovations that can be adapted for modern use. Areas ripe for further research include the integration of traditional healing practices into contemporary care models, the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on mental health treatment and outcomes, and the development of equitable mental health care systems that draw on the lessons of the past to better serve diverse populations.

In conclusion, the general overview of Ottoman mental health care practices offers a rich tapestry of insights and lessons that remain relevant for modern psychology and mental health care. By embracing the holistic, compassionate, and culturally sensitive approaches of the past, contemporary mental health care can evolve to meet the complex needs of today's global and diverse population, ensuring that the lessons from history inform the future of mental health care.

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