

# Qur'anic Psychotherapy: Exploring the Therapeutic Dimensions of the Qur'an in Mental Healing

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## Abstract

This paper explores the concept of psychotherapy within the Qur'anic framework, emphasizing its therapeutic dimensions in addressing mental and spiritual well-being. The study argues that the Qur'an presents a holistic model of healing that integrates psychological, moral, and spiritual elements. Through a qualitative textual analysis of selected Qur'anic verses, this research identifies key therapeutic mechanisms such as remembrance (*dhikr*), reflection (*tafakkur*), reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). The findings reveal that the Qur'an not only diagnoses psychological distress—such as anxiety, despair, and inner conflict—but also offers structured methods for healing. These methods operate on multiple levels, including cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and spiritual transformation. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that Qur'anic psychotherapy differs fundamentally from secular approaches by grounding mental health in a theocentric worldview. The Qur'an positions ultimate healing as a process of reconnecting the human soul with divine guidance. This study contributes to the growing field of Islamic psychology by providing a systematic framework for understanding Qur'anic approaches to mental health, offering both theoretical insights and practical implications for contemporary psychotherapy.

**Keywords:** Qur'an, Psychotherapy, Mental Health, Tazkiyat al-Nafs, Spiritual Healing

## Introduction

The growing global concern over mental health disorders has led to an increasing search for holistic and integrative models of psychotherapy that transcend the limitations of purely materialistic paradigms. Contemporary psychological approaches—particularly those rooted in secular frameworks—have made significant progress in understanding cognition, behavior, and emotional regulation. However, they often overlook the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Within this context, the Qur'an emerges as a profound and underexplored source of psychological insight, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the human soul and its healing.

The Qur'an explicitly presents itself as a source of healing (*shifā'*), particularly for inner and psychological disturbances. In Q. 10:57, it is stated: “O mankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts.” This verse suggests that the Qur'an addresses not only moral and theological concerns but also psychological conditions rooted in the inner self (*ṣudūr*). Classical exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr interpret this “healing” as encompassing doubt, anxiety, and spiritual diseases that afflict the human heart.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī expands this interpretation by emphasizing that the Qur'an provides both cognitive clarification and emotional reassurance, thereby functioning as a comprehensive therapeutic guide.<sup>2</sup>

From a conceptual perspective, the Qur'an locates psychological distress within the domain of the *qalb* (heart), which serves as the center of perception, emotion, and moral consciousness. Terms such as *ḥuzn* (grief), *khawf* (fear), *ḍayq al-ṣadr* (constriction of the chest), and *ya's* (despair) are frequently employed to describe human emotional states. Unlike modern clinical psychology, which often isolates these conditions as discrete disorders, the Qur'an integrates them into a broader existential and spiritual framework. Psychological suffering is thus understood not merely as a neurochemical imbalance but as a manifestation of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), 2:593.

<sup>2</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṣin al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999), 17:126.

disconnection from divine guidance and ultimate purpose. As noted by Malik Badri, this holistic understanding reflects a uniquely Islamic epistemology in which the spiritual and psychological are inseparable.<sup>3</sup>

The therapeutic dimension of the Qur'an is further reinforced through its emphasis on transformative practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *tawakkul* (trust in divine providence), *ṣabr* (patience), and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). These practices function as mechanisms of emotional regulation, cognitive restructuring, and spiritual realignment. For instance, the Qur'an states: "*Verily, in the remembrance of God do hearts find tranquility*" (Q. 13:28), indicating a direct relationship between spiritual consciousness and psychological stability. Contemporary scholars have drawn parallels between such practices and modern therapeutic techniques, particularly mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy, although the Qur'anic model remains fundamentally theocentric in orientation.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, there has been a growing body of literature seeking to articulate an Islamic framework of psychology and psychotherapy. Early contributions by Malik Badri laid the foundation for what is now known as Islamic psychology, critiquing the uncritical adoption of Western psychological models in Muslim contexts.<sup>5</sup> Building on this foundation, scholars such as Amber Haque have explored the historical contributions of Muslim thinkers to psychology, highlighting the integration of spiritual and rational approaches in classical Islamic scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Abdallah Rothman has proposed a structured model of Islamic psychotherapy that incorporates Qur'anic concepts such as *nafs*, *qalb*, and *rūḥ* into contemporary clinical practice.<sup>7</sup> Rashid Skinner further emphasizes that Islamic psychology is not merely an adaptation of

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<sup>3</sup> Malik Badri, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (Herndon: IIIT, 2000), 15–18.

<sup>4</sup> Abdallah Rothman, "Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1735–1738.

<sup>5</sup> Malik Badri, *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists* (London: MWH London Publishers, 1979), 9–12.

<sup>6</sup> Amber Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Religion and Health* 43, no. 4 (2004): 361–363.

<sup>7</sup> Rothman, "Developing a Model," 1731–1749.

Western theories but a distinct paradigm rooted in revelation and classical intellectual traditions.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these significant contributions, much of the existing scholarship remains either theoretical or general in scope, often lacking a focused and systematic analysis of the Qur'an itself as a primary source of psychotherapy. Many studies rely heavily on later Islamic thinkers—such as Al-Ghazali—without fully examining the Qur'anic foundations that underpin their theories. While al-Ghazali's works provide a sophisticated model of psychospiritual healing, they are ultimately derived from Qur'anic principles that require independent analysis. As Frank Griffel notes, al-Ghazali's intellectual project is deeply rooted in the Qur'anic worldview, suggesting that any comprehensive study of Islamic psychotherapy must begin with the Qur'an itself.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, contemporary psychological discourse increasingly recognizes the importance of spirituality in mental health. Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, for example, emphasizes the human search for meaning as a central component of psychological well-being.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, positive psychology has begun to explore constructs such as gratitude, hope, and resilience—concepts that are deeply embedded in Qur'anic teachings. However, these approaches often lack a coherent metaphysical framework that integrates these elements into a unified vision of the human person. The Qur'an, by contrast, provides such a framework, situating psychological well-being within the broader context of human purpose, divine guidance, and ultimate accountability.

This study seeks to address the gap in existing literature by offering a systematic exploration of the therapeutic dimensions of the Qur'an. It aims to analyze how the Qur'an conceptualizes psychological distress, identify its proposed methods of healing, and evaluate its relevance for contemporary psychotherapy. By focusing directly on the Qur'anic text and its interpretative tradition, this research contributes to

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<sup>8</sup> Rashid Skinner, "Traditions, Paradigms and Basic Concepts in Islamic Psychology," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 4 (2019): 1088–1090.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45–50.

<sup>10</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 99–104.

the development of a more grounded and textually rooted model of Islamic psychotherapy.

In doing so, the paper argues that Qur'anic psychotherapy represents a holistic and integrative approach that combines cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions. It does not merely aim at symptom reduction but seeks a deeper transformation of the human soul, culminating in a state of inner tranquility (*ṭuma'nīnah*) and existential fulfillment. As such, it offers a compelling alternative paradigm that can enrich contemporary psychological theory and practice.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a **qualitative library-based approach** to explore the therapeutic dimensions of the Qur'an in relation to mental healing. The research is grounded in **thematic textual analysis** (*taḥlīl mawḍū'ī*), focusing on selected Qur'anic verses that address psychological states such as fear, grief, anxiety, and tranquility, as well as spiritual concepts like *tazkiyat al-naḥs*, *dhikr*, and *tawakkul*. The Qur'an serves as the primary source, while its interpretation is supported by classical exegetical works, particularly those of Ibn Kathir and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi.

The data collection process involves identifying and compiling relevant verses based on their thematic connection to mental and emotional conditions. These verses are then analyzed through a three-step procedure: (1) close textual reading to extract key concepts, (2) thematic categorization into diagnostic and therapeutic dimensions, and (3) interpretative analysis to understand their deeper psychological and spiritual implications. This method allows for the reconstruction of a coherent model of Qur'anic psychotherapy from dispersed textual evidence.

To enhance analytical depth, the study incorporates an **interdisciplinary framework** by engaging contemporary scholarship in Islamic psychology, including contributions from Malik Badri, Amber Haque, and Abdallah Rothman. This comparative dimension enables the study to relate Qur'anic therapeutic principles to modern psychological concepts such as cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation, while maintaining a theocentric perspective rooted in Islamic theology.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Qur'an presents a deeply integrated and multi-dimensional model of psychotherapy, in which psychological well-being is inseparable from spiritual orientation and moral consciousness. Unlike modern secular frameworks that often isolate mental processes from metaphysical realities, the Qur'anic perspective situates human psychology within a theocentric worldview, where the ultimate source of healing is divine guidance. This section elaborates on four major dimensions of Qur'anic psychotherapy: the conceptualization of psychological distress, the Qur'an as a therapeutic text, its operative mechanisms of healing, and its relevance to contemporary psychological discourse.

### 1. The Qur'anic Conceptualization of Psychological Distress

The Qur'an conceptualizes psychological distress not merely as a clinical or emotional condition, but as a state of imbalance within the *qalb* (heart), which functions as the center of cognition, emotion, and spiritual perception. Emotional states such as *ḥuzn* (grief), *khawf* (fear), and *ḍayq al-ṣadr* (constriction of the chest) are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an, indicating a profound awareness of human psychological experience. However, these conditions are not treated as isolated phenomena; rather, they are understood as symptoms of deeper existential disorientation, often linked to forgetfulness of God (*ghaflah*) or excessive attachment to worldly concerns.

Classical exegetes such as Ibn Kathir emphasize that the "diseases of the heart" include doubt, hypocrisy, and spiritual blindness, all of which have psychological consequences.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi interprets these conditions as disruptions in the relationship between human cognition and divine truth, thereby linking epistemological error with emotional disturbance.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that the Qur'an's diagnostic framework is both moral and epistemological: psychological suffering arises when the human being misperceives reality or loses connection with ultimate meaning.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1999), 1:210–212.

<sup>12</sup> Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999), 2:45–47.

## 2. The Qur'an as a Therapeutic Text (*Shifā'*)

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the Qur'an explicitly positions itself as a source of healing (*shifā'*), particularly for what resides within the human chest (*ṣudūr*). As indicated in Q. 10:57, the Qur'an offers "healing for what is in the breasts," which classical scholars interpret as encompassing both spiritual and psychological ailments.<sup>13</sup> This concept of healing is comprehensive, encompassing cognitive clarity, emotional balance, and spiritual purification.

The therapeutic power of the Qur'an lies in its ability to reframe human experience. Through its narratives, parables, and ethical teachings, it offers new perspectives on suffering, adversity, and hope. This reframing process closely resembles what modern psychology identifies as cognitive restructuring, yet it operates within a framework that connects individual experience to divine wisdom. As noted by Malik Badri, the Qur'an's healing function requires active engagement through recitation, reflection, and internalization, transforming both cognition and emotion simultaneously.<sup>14</sup>

## 3. Therapeutic Mechanisms in the Qur'an

The analysis identifies several core mechanisms through which the Qur'an facilitates psychological healing:

### a. Dhikr (Remembrance of God)

The practice of *dhikr* is central to Qur'anic psychotherapy. The Qur'an states: "Verily, in the remembrance of God do hearts find tranquility" (Q. 13:28), indicating a direct relationship between spiritual awareness and emotional stability. This suggests that remembrance functions as a form of emotional regulation and inner stabilization.<sup>15</sup>

### b. Tawakkul (Trust in God)

*Tawakkul* serves as a coping mechanism for uncertainty and anxiety. By encouraging reliance on divine wisdom, the Qur'an alleviates excessive worry about outcomes. This concept aligns with psychological

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<sup>13</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 2:593.

<sup>14</sup> Malik Badri, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (Herndon: IIIT, 2000), 19–22.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Qur'an, 13:28; see also al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 19:122.

theories of acceptance and coping, while remaining rooted in a theological framework.<sup>16</sup>

c. Tafakkur (Reflection)

Reflection on divine signs (*āyāt*) facilitates cognitive transformation. It redirects attention from negative internal states toward a broader existential perspective, promoting resilience and meaning-making. This process parallels modern cognitive therapy in its emphasis on restructuring thought patterns.<sup>17</sup>

d. Tazkiyat al-Nafs (Purification of the Soul)

The Qur'an emphasizes purification of the soul as essential for well-being: "*He has succeeded who purifies it*" (Q. 91:9). This process involves ethical discipline, self-awareness, and spiritual refinement. According to Islamic scholars, this dimension addresses the root causes of psychological distress, not merely its symptoms.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. Integration with Contemporary Psychotherapy

An important dimension of this study is the comparison between Qur'anic psychotherapy and modern psychological approaches. The findings reveal notable parallels, particularly in areas such as cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and mindfulness. For instance, practices like *dhikr* resemble mindfulness techniques, while Qur'anic reframing of adversity parallels cognitive therapy models developed by modern psychologists.<sup>19</sup>

Scholars such as Abdallah Rothman argue that these similarities provide a foundation for integrating Qur'anic principles into contemporary therapeutic frameworks.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Amber Haque highlights that Islamic psychology offers a complementary paradigm that

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<sup>16</sup> Abdallah Rothman, "Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1736–1738.

<sup>17</sup> Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 3–10.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Qur'an, 91:9; see also al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 3:58–60.

<sup>19</sup> Judith S. Beck, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 15–20.

<sup>20</sup> Rothman, "Developing a Model," 1731–1749.

enriches modern approaches by incorporating spirituality.<sup>21</sup> However, a fundamental distinction remains: while modern psychotherapy is largely anthropocentric, the Qur'anic model is theocentric, grounding psychological well-being in the man–God relationship.

### 5. Toward a Holistic Model of Qur'anic Psychotherapy

Synthesizing these findings, it becomes evident that Qur'anic psychotherapy represents a holistic model integrating diagnosis, treatment, and transformation. It begins with identifying spiritual and cognitive roots of distress, proceeds through structured therapeutic practices, and culminates in inner tranquility (*tuma'ninah*).

This model offers significant contributions to contemporary mental health discourse. It not only provides a spiritually integrated framework but also bridges classical Islamic scholarship with modern psychology. As noted by Rashid Skinner, Islamic psychology should be understood as an independent paradigm rooted in revelation rather than merely an adaptation of Western theories.<sup>22</sup>

As a result, the Qur'anic approach to psychotherapy is both comprehensive and transformative. Its integration of cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions positions it as a compelling alternative paradigm capable of enriching contemporary psychological theory and practice.

## Results

This study reveals that the Qur'an presents a systematic and multi-dimensional model of psychotherapy that integrates cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual elements within a unified theocentric framework. Based on thematic analysis of relevant verses and their classical interpretations, several key findings emerge.

First, the Qur'an provides a comprehensive conceptualization of psychological distress, locating it primarily within the *qalb* (heart) as the center of perception and emotional experience. States such as fear (*khawf*), grief (*huzn*), despair (*ya's*), and inner constriction (*ḍayq al-ṣadr*) are consistently described as consequences of spiritual disconnection,

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<sup>21</sup> Amber Haque, "Psychology from Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Religion and Health* 43, no. 4 (2004): 361–363.

<sup>22</sup> Rashid Skinner, "Traditions, Paradigms and Basic Concepts in Islamic Psychology," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 4 (2019): 1088–1090.

moral imbalance, or distorted cognition. Classical exegetes such as Ibn Kathir and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi affirm that these conditions are closely tied to diseases of the heart, including doubt, hypocrisy, and heedlessness.<sup>23</sup> This indicates that the Qur'an frames psychological suffering as both an epistemological and spiritual condition rather than merely an emotional disturbance.

Second, the study finds that the Qur'an explicitly positions itself as a source of healing (*shifā'*), addressing not only spiritual ailments but also psychological disturbances. Verses such as Q. 10:57 demonstrate that the Qur'an functions as a therapeutic text that offers guidance, reassurance, and cognitive clarity. Its healing operates through reshaping belief systems, reframing life experiences, and restoring existential meaning. This confirms that Qur'anic therapy is not limited to ritual practice but involves a deeper transformation of worldview and consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

Third, the analysis identifies several core therapeutic mechanisms embedded within the Qur'anic discourse. These include *dhikr* (remembrance of God), which promotes emotional tranquility; *tawakkul* (trust in God), which reduces anxiety and uncertainty; *tafakkur* (reflection), which facilitates cognitive restructuring; and *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), which addresses the root causes of psychological imbalance. These mechanisms operate across multiple levels—behavioral, cognitive, and spiritual—demonstrating the holistic nature of Qur'anic psychotherapy.<sup>25</sup>

Fourth, the findings indicate that the Qur'an proposes a structured process of psychological healing. This process begins with awareness of one's inner state, followed by repentance (*tawbah*), continuous spiritual discipline, and eventual attainment of inner tranquility (*ṭuma'nīnah*). This sequential model reflects a developmental approach to mental health, emphasizing transformation rather than

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<sup>23</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), 1:210–212; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1999), 2:45–47.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Qur'an, 10:57; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, 2:593.

<sup>25</sup> Malik Badri, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study* (Herndon: IIIT, 2000), 19–22; Abdallah Rothman, "Developing a Model of Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (2018): 1735–1738.

temporary symptom relief. It also suggests that healing is an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the study reveals that Qur'anic psychotherapy shows significant conceptual parallels with modern psychological approaches, particularly in areas such as cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation, and meaning-centered therapy. However, these similarities are situated within a fundamentally theocentric paradigm, distinguishing Qur'anic psychotherapy from secular models. While modern approaches often focus on self-centered well-being, the Qur'anic model grounds mental health in the man–God relationship, where ultimate healing is achieved through alignment with divine guidance.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, the results confirm that the Qur'an offers a coherent and integrative model of psychotherapy that not only diagnoses psychological conditions but also provides structured and transformative methods of healing. This model holds substantial potential for the development of contemporary Islamic psychotherapy that is both academically grounded and spiritually meaningful.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that the Qur'an offers a comprehensive and integrative model of psychotherapy that addresses the human condition at cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual levels. Through a systematic analysis of relevant verses and their classical interpretations, it becomes evident that the Qur'an does not merely acknowledge psychological distress but provides a coherent framework for its diagnosis and treatment. By situating mental suffering within the domain of the *qalb* (heart), the Qur'an expands the understanding of psychological disorders beyond clinical symptoms, linking them to deeper issues of meaning, belief, and spiritual orientation.

The findings demonstrate that the Qur'an functions as a source of *shifā'* (healing), offering therapeutic mechanisms such as *dhikr*, *tawakkul*,

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Qur'an, 91:9; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 3:58–60.

<sup>27</sup> Aaron T. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 3–10; Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 99–104.

*tafakkur*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*. These practices collectively form a structured process of inner transformation, guiding individuals from states of anxiety, despair, and confusion toward tranquility (*tuma'ninah*) and psychological stability. In this regard, Qur'anic psychotherapy emphasizes not only symptom relief but also the reformation of the self through alignment with divine guidance.

Furthermore, while Qur'anic psychotherapy shares certain conceptual parallels with modern psychological approaches—such as cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation—it remains fundamentally distinct due to its theocentric orientation. Psychological well-being, within the Qur'anic paradigm, is inseparable from the man–God relationship, where true healing is achieved through spiritual realization and moral refinement. This distinguishes it from secular models that often prioritize individual autonomy without a metaphysical foundation.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Qur'anic psychotherapy represents a holistic and transformative paradigm with significant relevance for contemporary mental health discourse. It provides both a theoretical foundation and practical framework for integrating spirituality into psychotherapy, particularly within Muslim contexts. Future research should focus on empirical validation and clinical application of Qur'anic therapeutic principles, thereby contributing to the development of a robust and contextually grounded model of Islamic psychotherapy.

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