



A Critical Analysis of Selected Literature on Islamic Psychology: The Qur'anic Understanding of Human Nature and Its Relevance to Contemporary Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Psychology as we know it today is a recent discipline, but the Quran provides answers to several basic questions about man's essence, morality, his internal struggles, self-reflection, hope and his well-being from a complete religious perspective. Therefore these subjects provide an important base to examine the relation between the Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary psychological inquiry. This paper will be a critical examination of some selected classical and contemporary writings on Islam and psychology. The focus of this paper will be on four Quranic terms that have been interpreted as being related to psychology: Nafs (Self), Qalb (Heart), Ruh (Spirit) and Aql (Intellect/Reason). This paper will argue that the Quran's view of man goes beyond a description of his behavior or mental process and deals with what makes up the spirit of man, how he is responsible morally, and the purpose of man's existence. The paper will explore potential relationships between Quranic teachings and current psychological theories of self-control, emotional control, reflection, hope, and individual agency. Finally, the paper will discuss how classical Islamic scholars and contemporary authors have contributed to the developing field of Islamic Psychology. Through the above discussion, the paper has identified a continued need for clear definition when comparing Quranic expressions with modern psychological terminology. To address this need, the paper will present a Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework to assist researchers in transitioning from textual interpretations to the formation of researchable psychological questions. The framework will distinguish the meaning of Quranic expressions from possible psychological interpretations and identify empirical data that would be needed to test those psychological interpretations. Finally, the paper will conclude that Islamic Psychology could contribute significantly academically through utilizing its own intellectual bases while providing a critical engagement with contemporary research rather than viewing the Quranic anthropological constructs from a modern psychological perspective.

Introduction

In the same way as the disciplines of physics, biology, geology, history, mathematics and economics each address the nature of reality, psychology seeks to understand the world we live in and ourselves. Psychology is concerned with thinking, feeling, making decisions, experiencing internal conflicts, forming relationships and searching for meaning. Psychology has addressed many of these areas of concern through various theories and research methodologies. However, the questions behind these concerns date back long before the establishment of psychology as a separate field of scientific inquiry. What does a person mean when he says “the self”? Why does someone choose to perform an action contrary to his values? How does a person recognize an error in judgment? How does an individual control his impulses, endure hardships, and alter his behavior? Each of these issues is prominent in the Quranic explanation of human existence.

The Quran presents man’s nature within a comprehensive framework connecting an individual’s inner being to faith, moral responsibility, performance of action, interpersonal relations and final reckoning before God. In doing so, the Quran provides insight into the awareness of right and wrong, the effects of an individual’s decisions, introspection regarding his/her behavior, and the connection between remembering God and achieving peace of mind. These subjects are not isolated theoretical explanations of specific cognitive processes. Instead they represent parts of a greater account of humanity encompassing a higher order purpose and moral accountability. This difference becomes significant as the Islamic perspective is contrasted with modern psychology. Modern psychology can investigate specific aspects of human experience such as affective regulation, coping, cognition and behavioral change. On the other hand, the Quranic framework situates human experience within a larger framework consisting of belief, worship, moral growth and accountability. Therefore both perspectives can provide answers to similar inquiries but from completely different epistemological frameworks and may share little in common in terms of assumptions, methodology or goals.

Other than the Quran itself, classical Muslim scholars provided considerable insight into aspects of human nature and personal development. Abu Zayd al-Balkhi investigated psychological and physical aspects of distress; Abu Hamid al-Ghazali explored desire, personality type, moral development, and spiritual purification; and Ibn Sina produced notable philosophical accounts of the soul and its faculties. Additionally, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya authored several works discussing the spiritual/moral aspects of human existence. Classical Muslim scholars were writing at different periods of time and under varying intellectual influences. Thus it would be incorrect to consider all of their collective writings as representing a single unified psychological model.

Many scholars today continue to explore the interface between Islamic thought and psychology. Badri (1979, 2000) questioned whether Muslim psychologists had adopted too many non-Islamic assumptions about human nature without first examining if those assumptions conflicted with an Islamic view. Haque (2004) reviewed some of the contributions of early Muslim scholars and discussed some current challenges confronting contemporary Muslim psychologists. Keshavarzi and Haque (2013) described a therapeutic approach designed to treat mental health problems among Muslims using an Islamic framework. Utz (2011) and Rassool (2021) have also participated in general discussions concerning psychological constructs and experiences associated with Islam.

As a result of this growing body of work there is an additional issue to be considered, namely how psychological theories/research can be utilized to explain Muslim experiences without dismissing the religious/moral worldview upon which many Muslims base their self-concept.

This paper attempts to answer this question by conducting a critical examination of relevant literature. The central assertion of this article is that Islamic psychology cannot simply be generated by taking Qur'anic concepts and translating them into contemporary psychological language. Rather, Qur'anic anthropology could serve as the foundational concept upon which Islamic psychology is based while psychological research can aid in clarifying specific questions, investigating lived experiences, and identifying specified psychological processes.

The article has two basic objectives. First, it critically evaluates select contributions from both classical and contemporary sources of Islamic psychology. Secondly, it proposes an analytical framework for assessing connections between Qur'anic principles and contemporary psychological concerns while maintaining a distinction between religious interpretations and empirical data.

Research Problem

In general terms the main problem that is being discussed in modern Islamic psychology relates to how the religious concepts of Islam are used and interpreted in conjunction with those of modern psychology. Translations of some key Islamic terms such as *nafs* (self), *qalb* (heart), *ruh* (spirit) and *'aql* (reason/intellect) can be helpful; however these will rarely provide a complete picture of what each term means.

Further complications arise when conceptual similarities are taken as the basis for suggesting that the Quran and psychology are describing the same thing. For instance the Quran's references to moral awareness could be likened to self-regulation, and the act of reflecting upon one's own actions could be equated with cognitive appraisal. Although comparisons like this have merit in establishing possible areas for further investigation, it would be premature to suggest that the Quran has described an exact equivalent to modern psychological constructs.

Another complication relates to the type of evidence provided. A single Quranic verse provides religious teachings based upon its use within the context of Islamic worldviews. A study conducted in psychology may investigate a specific area of human experience through established methodologies and then draw conclusions from the findings. It is possible to bring both types of inquiry into dialogue; however it is also important that the validity and limits of each line of inquiry are clearly understood.

Therefore, the major concern raised in this paper is how the selected literature on Islamic psychology can be reviewed and critiqued in order to recognize the Quran as a primary source for understanding humanity and at the same time utilize comparative analysis with contemporary psychology that utilizes both conceptual clarity and scientific methodology.

Research Questions

This article addresses the following questions:

1. What contributions do selected classical and contemporary works make to the development of Islamic psychology?

Sub Questions:

1. How does the Qur'anic understanding of human nature relate to contemporary psychological discussions of behaviour, emotion, self-regulation, and well-being?
2. What conceptual and methodological difficulties arise when Islamic concepts are compared with modern psychological constructs?
3. How can selected Qur'anic passages inform the formulation of research questions concerning human behaviour and well-being?
4. What analytical framework can support a more coherent relationship between Qur'anic interpretation and psychological research?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the article are:

1. To examine the conceptual foundations of selected literature on Islamic psychology.
2. To analyse the relevance of Qur'anic principles to contemporary discussions of human behaviour and well-being.
3. To identify limitations associated with translating Islamic concepts into modern psychological terminology.
4. To propose a Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework for future interdisciplinary research.
5. To recommend directions for further theoretical, qualitative, and empirical investigation.

Research Methodology

In this paper we have taken a qualitative literature based analytical strategy. We will use selected classical and contemporary writings on Islamic psychology and discuss Qur'anic verses alongside scholarly articles in contemporary psychology. When citing Qur'anic verses they will be cited using the Sahih International English version for consistency. Readers should consider each verse together with the tafsir literature as opposed to simply reading its translation.

There are four ways in which we plan to analyze our data:

Textual/Conceptual Analysis: We will examine specific Qur'an passages relevant to aspects of humanity such as; human nature, moral responsibility, contemplation/reflection, coping, and spiritual well-being. However when analyzing these concepts we will be doing so from an Islamic perspective as opposed to seeing them as equivalent to modern psychological constructs.

Critical Literature Review: In addition to examining selected Qur'an passages we will also critically evaluate selected writing from both classic Muslim authors and contemporary authors

relative to their conceptual emphasis and how it relates to the construct of Islamic Psychology. Our goal here is to identify primary contributions and challenges related to conceptualizing Islamic Psychology as opposed to providing a comprehensive overview of all areas related to Islamic Psychology.

Comparative Analysis: A third component of our analysis involves comparing selected questions studied in contemporary psychology (cognition, self-regulation, coping mechanisms, behavioral change) and identifying similarities/differences relative to the Qur’anic and Islamic discussion of the same questions. Here again we do not assume that there is one unified theory of Islamic thought or that there is one unified theory of contemporary psychology.

Framework Development: Finally, based upon our conceptual analysis, we will provide a framework for developing researchable psychological questions from Qur’anic interpretations.

This is a conceptual literature-based study and therefore it is not a systematic review of all works in the area nor is it an empirical clinical study designed to demonstrate the efficacy of some form of psychological treatment/intervention. Therefore it cannot be concluded that a specific Qur’anic practice was causally associated with a clinical outcome. All conclusions drawn from this study are interpretive and should be evaluated against the body of literature selected and limitations of methodology.

The Qur’anic Understanding of Human Nature

The Nafs: The Self, Moral Awareness, and Personal Development

An essential element in the Islamic viewpoint on the nature of man is the nafs. In the Quran, “nafs” has multiple meanings based upon both the subject matter at hand and the specific usage of the word. For example, in one sense, “nafs” refers to the self. In another sense, it is referred to as desire. The term “nafs,” therefore, cannot be limited by a single psychological interpretation.

Surah Al-Shams states:

“And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness.” (Quran 91:7-8)

In Surah Al-Shams, the ability for humans to know right from wrong, and to have some degree of moral awareness are placed within the Quranic view of the self. As such, human existence consists of much more than just a series of impulses or physical behaviors. Furthermore, in addition to the behavior itself, there is also importance in the morality behind the behavior.

In this regard, researchers today in psychology are studying self-regulation. Self-regulation is defined by psychologists as an individual’s capacity to observe his own behavior, inhibit his impulses, assess the consequences of his actions, and continue to perform behaviors that will ultimately help him reach long-range objectives. Although the Quranic explanation of the Nafs contains many similarities to contemporary views of self-regulation, they differ significantly in terms of their emphasis. That is, while contemporary psychologists focus primarily on an individual’s ability to regulate his impulses and actions, the Quran emphasizes the ethical/moral implications of these impulses and actions. Thus, rather than focusing solely on whether an individual can restrain himself from acting out an impulse he experiences, the Quran focuses on

whether or not he acts out that impulse in a manner consistent with what he believes to be morally correct.

Finally, Al-Ghazali's explanations of developing good character and achieving spiritual purification offer additional insight into issues related to motivation and behavioral regulation. According to Al-Ghazali, developing good character requires a process of examining one's thoughts and desires, as well as developing good habits. Developing good character also requires cultivating positive virtues, and correcting negative patterns of behavior.

The main issue here is that while the Quranic view of the Nafs can certainly inform certain aspects of issues regarding motivation and behavioral regulation, the Quranic view cannot be used as equivalent to a singular psychological view. Therefore, researchers must determine which aspect(s) of the Nafs they are attempting to compare/contrast with contemporary psychological theories and provide justification for making such comparisons.

The Qalb: Understanding, Inner Orientation, and Moral Awareness

There are several areas of discussion regarding the qalb within the Qur'anic context of human understanding; however, its role extends beyond the physical nature. In many aspects of Islamic discourse, it is equated with internal orientation, perceptual abilities, moral awareness, receptivity and consciousness.

Surah Al Hajj illustrates this view when referencing the "hearts" through which we perceive (Quran 22:46) and encourages further examination into the correlation between inward perceptions and our experiences on earth.

Psychology today examines emotional awareness, judgment, belief systems and interpretations of events among other topics. Many of these topics may have potential comparisons to the study of the qalb. Although the qalb relates to more than one aspect of human experience such as emotion, cognitive processes and neurological activity, its significance in Islamic thought includes additional theological/moral attributes that cannot be quantified using a single measurement tool from psychology.

Understanding how beliefs and values can influence reactions to life events may serve as a starting point for researching how a religious perspective influences the way humans define/understand their experience of hardships, responsibilities and hope.

Therefore, the qalb may be a valuable conceptual framework for Islamic Psychology. The application of the qalb in academia necessitates a clear separation between theological meaning, philosophical interpretation, comparative psychology and empirical data.

The Ruh: Spiritual Identity and the Limits of Human Knowledge

Human existence in Islam has a basic aspect: the ruh. The ruh cannot be reduced to its manifestations (observable behavior) nor to feelings (emotional experience).

The Quran says:

“And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say, ‘The soul is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little.’” (Quran 17:85, Sahih International)

This verse limits man’s knowledge concerning the ruh and warns against substituting speculation for certainty.

Research in contemporary psychology can examine aspects of religious experience through questions pertaining to meaning, religious coping, identity and lived experience. This type of research can look at how believers express themselves regarding their experiences; and also determine if there is a relationship between certain religious practices and measurable outcomes. However, this research will never be able to demonstrate an understanding of the metaphysical reality of the ruh.

Therefore, the difference is crucial for developing an Islamic Psychology. An Islamic Psychology can investigate experiences related to spirituality, whereas theological claims about the ruh are not empirical hypotheses.

The ‘Aql: Reasoning, Reflection, and Judgement

The ‘aql (reason) is connected to reasoning, consideration and comprehension. The Qur’an frequently invites individuals to think carefully and reflect on what they experience in the world. These invitations are directed towards thoughtfully considered judgments; as opposed to uncritical acceptance of things based upon belief or assumption.

Modern psychologists seek to understand how individuals process information, assess beliefs, arrive at decisions, and resolve problems. For example, cognitive psychologists investigate the role of interpretation within an individual’s emotional response to their environment and behavior.

It appears there may be some similarity in this comparison, however these similarities should not be taken as being equivalent. In the broader context of the Islamic view of the universe, reasoning occurs in conjunction with divine revelation, an obligation to act ethically, and accountability to God. Psychological theories of cognition have different presumptions concerning knowledge, motivation for humans’ actions, and the goals of reasoning.

Thus, the emphasis on reflection from the Qur’an could be applied to research regarding critical thinking and decision making, if investigators maintain the larger religious and moral context of the concept of reflection.

An Integrated View of the Human Person

The nafs, qalb, ruh, and ‘aql provide different but related ways of discussing human existence. They direct attention towards the self, moral awareness, spiritual identity, and reasoning. Their meanings and relationships have been discussed differently across Islamic intellectual traditions; they should not be presented as four universally agreed psychological mechanisms.

Taken together, these concepts support an understanding of the human person that includes thought, emotion, desire, spiritual identity, ethical conduct, and purpose. This perspective is

relevant to the study of well-being because it resists explanations that isolate a single dimension of human life from the wider context in which people understand themselves.

The strength of this perspective lies not in claiming that every modern psychological concept already exists in identical form in the Qur'an, but in recognising that the Qur'an addresses fundamental questions about human nature within a religious and moral worldview.

Critical Analysis of Selected Literature on Islamic Psychology

Contributions of Classical Muslim Scholarship

The body of literature of classical Muslim scholarship provides a framework to assess human nature and how people develop. The treatments of character by Al-Ghazali, the role of desire in shaping behavior, and the process of spiritual purification all relate to the question of what it means to act morally and achieve personal development. Similarly, Ibn Sina's philosophical explanations of the soul and its faculties also provide an alternative view. In addition, Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's work (al-Balkhi 2013) represents one of the most historically significant bodies of research to address the relationship between psychological distress and physical manifestations of distress.

The study of these contributions needs to be placed in both their historical and philosophical contexts. It would be incorrect to think that classical scholars used the same clinical categories we use today or that they presented a single unified psychology. Rather, their value exists in terms of the questions they asked and the intellectual tools they have provided to contemporary scholars. A close reading of the primary texts can aid contemporary researchers in avoiding the tendency to present Islamic psychology as nothing more than a recent effort to add religious language to an existing complete modern discipline. The Islamic intellectual tradition has its own history of scholarly examination of the self, character, suffering, and human flourishing.

Contemporary Contributions and Conceptual Challenges

Writers today are contributing to a dialogue between modern academic and clinical psychological theory and Islamic thinking about the nature of man. In his book *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists*, Badri (1979) questioned the assumption that Western psychologists' assumptions about man could simply be adopted by Muslims without questioning them. He argued that the beliefs held by most western psychologists are incompatible with many Islamic beliefs about human beings.

In his review of the contributions of early Muslim scholars, Haque (2004) identifies several challenges for contemporary Muslim psychologists. Keshavarzi and Haque (2013) propose a psychotherapeutic approach which takes into account Islamic views of humans, their relationship to God, and culturally responsive practice. These studies and others have contributed significantly to establishing Islamic Psychology as a discipline worth serious academic study. Additionally, they raise many important questions regarding what types of ideas we want to develop and test as researchable concepts; how we evaluate theoretical models developed from those concepts; and how we can utilize our own perspective on religion to improve professional practice.

Methodological Limitations

Islamic psychology includes different forms of scholarship. Some studies interpret religious texts, some examine classical writings, others develop theoretical models, and some investigate mental health outcomes. These approaches can complement one another, but their findings must be evaluated according to their methods.

Textual interpretation can clarify the meaning of a Qur'anic passage. Philosophical analysis can examine the coherence of an argument. Interviews can explore how Muslim individuals understand and experience religious practices. Quantitative studies can investigate associations between defined variables. Clinical trials may be appropriate when researchers seek to evaluate a specific intervention.

None of these methods can automatically replace the others.

A theological principle may provide the foundation for a research question, but it does not, by itself, establish the outcome of a psychological experiment. Likewise, a statistical association does not settle a theological question. A rigorous Islamic psychology must distinguish these forms of inquiry while allowing them to inform a broader discussion of human well-being.

The Relationship Between Qur'anic Principles and Contemporary Psychology

The relationship between the Qur'an and contemporary psychology should not be framed as a simple contest in which one must replace the other. Nor should the Qur'an be treated merely as a source of religious quotations used to support theories developed elsewhere.

The Qur'an provides its own account of human nature, moral responsibility, spiritual purpose, and the consequences of action. Contemporary psychology offers methods for investigating particular aspects of human experience. A careful comparison begins by identifying the question being examined and clarifying the different assumptions and methods involved.

For example, the Qur'an discusses moral awareness and the purification of the self. Contemporary psychology investigates self-regulation and the development of habits. The connection is relevant, but the concepts are not interchangeable. Similarly, the Qur'anic association between remembrance of Allah and the tranquillity of the heart may inform questions about religious coping and emotional experience, while empirical studies can investigate how individuals experience and use such practices.

This approach gives Qur'anic principles an active role in shaping research questions. It also prevents claims from exceeding the available evidence.

Spirituality and Mental Well-Being

For many Muslims, prayer, remembrance of Allah, supplication, patience, gratitude, and trust in Allah are important dimensions of daily life. These practices can shape how individuals interpret hardship, understand responsibility, and seek support.

Research on religious coping and mental well-being provides a relevant area of inquiry. Owens et al. (2023) conducted a systematic scoping review of interventions using the Qur'an to promote mental health. Their review identified a developing body of research involving Qur'anic

practices and mental health, while also highlighting limitations and the need for further investigation.

This literature supports continued research; it does not establish that every practice will have the same effect for every person or that a particular religious practice alone can treat all psychological difficulties.

Spiritual sensitivity must also be accompanied by clinical responsibility. Psychological distress should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of weak faith or inadequate worship. Anxiety, depression, trauma, and other difficulties can involve psychological, social, biological, and environmental factors. Religious support may be meaningful, but it should not discourage appropriate professional assessment or treatment.

Islamic psychology can contribute by taking religious meaning seriously while recognising the complexity of mental health.

The Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework

Purpose and Scope

The preceding analysis suggests the need for a framework that begins with the Qur'anic text and then identifies questions that may be examined through psychological research.

The Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework proposed in this article is a conceptual proposal, not an established or empirically validated psychological model. Its purpose is to organise the relationship between textual interpretation, Islamic concepts, psychological questions, and future research.

The framework consists of five stages:

Stage 1: Qur'anic foundation. Identify the relevant verse and examine its meaning within its textual context, using an identified translation and appropriate tafsir sources.

Stage 2: Islamic conceptual meaning. Identify the relevant principle or concept, such as moral awareness, remembrance of Allah, patience, self-reflection, or personal responsibility.

Stage 3: Psychological question. Formulate a precise question about human experience, such as how individuals regulate impulses, interpret hardship, or use religious practices when coping with stress.

Stage 4: Critical comparison. Explain the relationship between the Qur'anic principle and the psychological question without assuming that they are identical or that one automatically proves the other.

Stage 5: Research implications. Identify suitable methods for further investigation and specify what evidence would be needed to support a psychological claim.

The framework keeps the Qur'anic source at the beginning of the analysis while allowing contemporary research to investigate particular aspects of human experience.

Remembrance of Allah and the Tranquillity of the Heart

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Ra'd 13:28.

The verse associates the remembrance of Allah with the tranquillity of hearts. Within the Islamic worldview, dhikr is an act of worship and a means of maintaining awareness of Allah.

The verse can inform research into how believers experience remembrance during periods of stress, uncertainty, or hardship. Possible questions include how individuals describe the role of dhikr in their coping practices and whether particular patterns of religious practice are associated with defined aspects of well-being.

Such questions require careful definitions and appropriate research methods. The verse should not be presented as experimental proof that dhikr alone prevents or treats every form of anxiety or depression.

Analytical contribution: The Qur'anic principle provides a religious foundation for studying remembrance, reassurance, and religious coping while leaving specific empirical questions open to investigation.

The Self and Moral Regulation

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Shams 91:7-10.

These verses discuss the self and the distinction between moral corruption and righteousness. They provide a basis for reflecting on moral awareness, responsibility, and the possibility of self-purification.

A psychological investigation could examine how individuals recognise impulses, evaluate actions against their values, and attempt to change recurring behaviours. These questions relate to self-regulation, but the Qur'anic concept includes an ethical and spiritual dimension that cannot be reduced to impulse control alone.

Analytical contribution: The verses can inform the study of moral awareness and behavioural regulation, provided that the distinction between the Qur'anic concept and contemporary psychological measures remains explicit.

Self-Reflection and Accountability

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Hashr 59:18.

The verse calls believers to consider what they have sent forward for tomorrow. It establishes an important principle of reflection on one's actions and their consequences.

This principle may inform questions about reflective practice, personal accountability, and goal review. A researcher could investigate how individuals use structured reflection to identify behavioural patterns, recognise mistakes, and plan constructive changes.

Reflection should not be confused with harsh self-condemnation. A balanced process of accountability can include recognition of wrongdoing, responsibility, repentance, and practical steps towards improvement.

Analytical contribution: The verse provides a basis for studying purposeful self-reflection and accountability. Further research would be needed to establish which forms of reflective practice are helpful in particular circumstances.

Human Capacity and Coping With Difficulty

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Baqarah 2:286.

The verse affirms that Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Within the Islamic worldview, it is significant for understanding divine mercy, responsibility, and human limitation.

The verse may inform research into how believers understand their capacity to cope with difficulty, interpret personal responsibility, and decide when to seek assistance. It can also prompt discussion about the difference between accepting responsibility and expecting oneself to manage every difficulty without support.

The verse should not be used to dismiss suffering or imply that individuals should be able to overcome every psychological difficulty through personal effort alone. People's circumstances and support needs differ, and professional care may be necessary.

Analytical contribution: The verse can inform research on religious meaning-making and perceived coping capacity, while avoiding unsupported assumptions about resilience or individual responsibility.

Hope Amid Hardship

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Inshirah 94:5-6.

These verses affirm that ease accompanies hardship. They provide a basis for hope within the Islamic understanding of difficult experiences.

Contemporary psychological research may explore how religious hope influences the way individuals interpret adversity, maintain goals, and seek support. Such investigation should distinguish hope from denial. A person can acknowledge a difficult reality, seek appropriate help, and take practical steps while retaining trust in Allah.

The verses should not be used to promise that every difficulty will end immediately or in the way an individual expects.

Analytical contribution: The passage provides a religious basis for studying hope and meaning-making, while specific psychological outcomes remain questions for research.

Personal Agency and Change

Qur'anic reference: Surah al-Ra'd 13:11.

This verse is often discussed in relation to change and responsibility. Its interpretation should take account of its full context and should not be reduced to the claim that every hardship results from an individual's personal failure.

The verse may inform questions about personal agency, habits, decision-making, and purposeful action. For example, a study could explore how religious beliefs shape a person's willingness to examine recurring behaviour, set realistic goals, and seek support.

Analytical contribution: The verse can provide a starting point for research on agency and behavioural change, provided that personal responsibility is distinguished from blaming people for circumstances beyond their control.

Summary of the Framework

Qur'anic reference	Central theme	Qur'anic	Possible psychological area	Example research question
Al-Ra'd 13:28	Remembrance of Allah and tranquillity of the heart	of	Religious coping and perceived reassurance	How do believers describe the role of dhikr in responding to stressful experiences?
Al-Shams 91:7-10	Moral awareness and self-purification		Self-regulation and moral decision-making	How do Muslims understand the relationship between moral self-awareness and behavioural choices?
Al-Hashr 59:18	Self-examination and accountability		Reflective practice and goal review	How do religious practices of self-examination influence the evaluation of actions and future goals?
Al-Baqarah 2:286	Divine mercy, responsibility, and human capacity		Perceived coping capacity and responses to hardship	How do believers interpret the relationship between personal responsibility and perceived limits during hardship?
Al-Inshirah 94:5-6	Hope alongside hardship		Hope and meaning-making	How do believers interpret these verses when facing difficult circumstances?
Al-Ra'd 13:11	Change and responsibility		Personal agency and motivation	How do Muslims interpret this verse in relation to personal responsibility and efforts towards change?

The table identifies possible areas of inquiry; it does not establish that the cited verses directly produce the listed psychological outcomes. Any future study should define its population, research methods, measures, ethical safeguards, and limitations.

Discussion

The analysis indicates that the Qur'anic understanding of human nature offers an important foundation for Islamic psychology. Its discussion of the self, heart, spirit, reasoning, moral responsibility, and spiritual purpose addresses questions that remain relevant to the study of human behaviour and well-being.

The central contribution of this perspective is not simply that some Qur'anic themes resemble modern psychological concepts. Rather, the Qur'an places human behaviour within a wider

account of existence that includes belief, ethical responsibility, worship, and accountability before Allah. This broader context affects how human development and well-being are understood.

The Quran contains verses which provide examples of ways people cope with their emotions, self-regulate and think about issues and how they change their behaviour. While contemporary psychology has much to offer in understanding these aspects, we cannot use its approaches (methods) to create a new definition of all Qur'anic principles and terms.

We also cannot assume that simply because a verse of the Quran is accepted as authoritative by Muslims, it will have been shown through research to produce an identifiable therapeutic result.

Our proposed model provides a methodological way to avoid both pitfalls. First, we begin with the Quranic text. Then, we define the appropriate Islamic term/definition; next formulate a psychological question related to the term/concept; then compare the two definitions/criteria critically; finally identify what type(s) of data are required to support further research on the relationship.

A stronger Islamic psychology should develop its own conceptual vocabulary while remaining open to critical dialogue with contemporary scholarship. It should explain its theological foundations, distinguish its forms of evidence, and investigate practical questions through suitable research methods.

The relationship between the Qur'an and contemporary psychology is therefore best examined through careful, question-specific analysis rather than broad claims of complete equivalence. This approach respects the Qur'an's distinctive account of humanity and supports a more rigorous study of Muslim experiences.

Implications for Future Research

Several priorities follow from this analysis.

Clearer Definitions of Islamic Psychological Concepts

Future research should define the *nafs*, *qalb*, *ruh*, and *'aql* with reference to the specific Qur'anic passages, classical sources, and interpretive traditions under consideration. Researchers should explain both the usefulness and the limits of comparisons with modern psychological terminology.

Research on Religious Coping

Qualitative studies could explore how Muslim individuals understand *dhikr*, supplication, patience, gratitude, repentance, and trust in Allah during difficult experiences. Quantitative studies could investigate clearly defined associations between religious coping and selected well-being measures.

Such research should recognise differences in individual experience, religious interpretation, and social circumstances.

Evaluation of Proposed Psychological Models

Models developed within Islamic psychology should specify their theoretical foundations, intended populations, practical components, and aims. If a model is intended for clinical use, its feasibility, safety, and effectiveness should be assessed through appropriate research.

Engagement With Contemporary Psychological Findings

Islamic psychology should examine relevant findings from cognitive, behavioural, developmental, social, and clinical psychology. The purpose should be critical engagement rather than automatic acceptance or rejection of theories because of their intellectual origin.

Integration of Qur'anic Interpretation and Empirical Inquiry

Interdisciplinary research should distinguish the interpretation of religious texts from the investigation of psychological outcomes. Qur'anic principles may shape research questions and ethical commitments, while empirical methods can investigate how people understand and apply those principles in their lives.

Ethical and Clinical Responsibility

Research and practice should avoid blaming individuals for psychological distress, equating mental illness with weak faith, or discouraging appropriate treatment. A responsible Islamic psychology should combine religious sensitivity with professional competence and compassion.

Limitations of the Article

This article examines selected literature rather than providing an exhaustive systematic review of Islamic psychology. Its findings are therefore interpretive and should not be regarded as a complete assessment of the field.

The Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework is a conceptual proposal developed for this article. It has not been empirically validated. The psychological areas identified in the framework are possible subjects for future investigation rather than established causal effects of the cited verses.

Furthermore, classical and contemporary Muslim scholars have interpreted key concepts in different ways. The article identifies broad areas of relevance but does not claim that all scholars share a single interpretation of the nafs, qalb, ruh, or 'aql.

Further research should examine primary texts and relevant tafsir sources in greater detail, compare selected scholarly works systematically, and investigate specific psychological questions using appropriate methods.

Conclusion

The Quran has established a broad view of humanity, and this includes the person (self), the awareness of what is right/wrong, the ability to think rationally, belief/faith, accountability/responsibility, contemplation/thought, hope, and humans' relationships with God. These elements are central to establishing a base for the advancement of Islamic Psychology.

It was determined by the authors of this article that the primary benefit of developing an Islamic psychology is to utilize a frame of reference to study human behavior that maintains the Islamic view's philosophical, theological, and spiritual components. Contemporary psychological studies can assist in identifying specific aspects of human experience that are addressed within the Quran. For example, research on self-regulation, emotional coping strategies, reflective processes, hope, and religious practices could all be useful in illustrating how people understand and implement these concepts. In addition, the connection between a Quranic concept or principle and a psychological finding must be carefully discussed as opposed to assumed.

One method to move forward in utilizing the Quran as a means to better understand psychology is to use the proposed Qur'anic-Psychological Analytical Framework. This framework outlines five stages: the Qur'anic foundation (the process of analyzing the Quran); Islamic conceptual meaning (the Islamic perspective or world view); the psychological question (questions related to psychological theory); critical comparison; and research implications (the empirical evidence needed).

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