
Quranic Insights of Emotion Regulation from Surah Al- Anbiya

Mahnoor Saif

PhD Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, LCWU Lahore

Email: Mahnoorsaif32@gmail.com

Dr Zill-e-Huma

Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, LCWU Lahore

Email: huma_ahsan77@yahoo.com

Dr Amina Obaid Khawaja

Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, LCWU Lahore

Email: Amina.o.khawaja@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the psychological dimensions of *Surah Al-Anbiya* by examining the foundational beliefs (core Islamic beliefs) that shape cognitive patterns, the resulting emotional states, and their combined impact on human behavior. Drawing from Qur'anic narratives, particularly the stories of the prophets, the article identifies core beliefs such as faith in divine wisdom, the inevitability of trials, accountability in the Hereafter, and trust in Allah's mercy. These beliefs construct cognitive frameworks that influence perception, decision-making, and emotional responses. Emotions such as fear (rahbah), hope (rajā'), longing (rughbah), humility (khushū'), and distress (kurb) are examined as natural outcomes of these beliefs, playing a critical role in emotion regulation and behavioral motivation. The prophets' stories are presented as living models of these belief-emotion-cognition systems in action, demonstrating how these inner constructs lead to resilient, purpose-driven, and morally upright behavior. The study underscores the Qur'an's contribution to cognitive and behavioral psychology by offering spiritually grounded models for emotional and behavioral development, which are both therapeutically relevant and theologically profound.

Keywords: Cognitive patterns, Emotion Regulation, Islamic Psychology, Surah Al Anbiyah

Introduction:

Surah Al-Anbiya provides a comprehensive account of the multifaceted roles of the prophets, highlighting the challenges they faced, the supplications they made, and the strategic actions they undertook during various trials and stages of their lives. Allah presents the prophets as human beings to establish them as exemplary models for humanity to

follow. Various insights from Tafasir explore different concepts from multiple dimensions. In this study, these insights are examined through the lens of cognitive processes, with particular emphasis on their role in emotional regulation and behavioral modification.

Cognition Shaped by Qur'anic Beliefs:

First and foremost, the Prophets were appointed as exemplary role models for humanity, and their human characteristics were emphasized so that individuals could realistically relate to them and effectively emulate their conduct in practical life.

All prophets were human; they ate and drank like other people, and they also faced death. They were not granted immortality.¹

Cognitive reframing plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior and in interpreting life events, as it determines how an individual perceives situations. According to the Qur'an, beliefs are central in forming cognitive patterns, and among these, the belief in the Hereafter holds a particularly significant influence.

The Surah, overall, explains that the reason for the misdirection of emotions and the failure to change behaviors is people's denial of the Day of Judgment, the Prophets, and the Divine Book.

The second key aspect of cognitive reframing is the recognition that life is inherently marked by fluctuations—periods of ease and hardship. This understanding is deeply connected to the belief in the Hereafter, wherein all circumstances are perceived as part of a divine trajectory leading toward the Day of Judgment. This belief fosters a cognition that is both reality-based and purpose-driven, encouraging proactive behavior and resilience rather than passivity or hopelessness.

وَنَبَلُوكُمْ بِالْأَسْرَىٰ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً²

Prominent Emotions discussed in Surah:

This section will examine the most prominent and compelling emotions, as well as those that ought to be regulated or avoided, in light of the teachings found in Surah Al-Anbiya.

Alkibar:

الكِبْر (al-kibr): Arrogance or pride.

The terms الكِبْر, التَكْبَر, الاستكبار (arrogance, self-exaltation) are closely related. Kibr refers to a state where a person considers themselves superior to others. The most severe form is arrogance against Allah, which is rejecting truth and refusing to submit to Him.³ Allah has described this as a characteristic of His righteous servants in Surah Al-Anbiya.

وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ - وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ⁴

To Him belong all (creatures) in the heavens and on earth: Even those who are in His (very) Presence are not too proud to serve Him, nor are they (ever) weary (of His service)

الشَّفَقُ

الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِمَّنْ أَسَاءَ مَشْفِقُونَ ٥٤٩⁵

Those who fear their Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of Judgment) in awe.

The second emotion discussed in Surah Al-Anbiya is al-shafaq, which is presented as one of the most constructive and beneficial emotional states influencing human behavior and moral functioning.

"الشَّفَقُ: الخوف، وهو مُشْفِقٌ أَي خائف." الشَّفَقُ mean fear or apprehension.

الشفقة and الشَّفَقُ: The term means careful concern or fear for someone's well-being. It describes a situation where the one advising is concerned or fearful for the person being advised. The verse from the Quran " إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي " (Indeed, we were previously among our people fearful of this day) refers to the concept of being fearful or concerned about the fate of others.⁶ Usage of " مشفقون " in the Quran: When Allah describes people as مشفقون (those who are in a state of fear and care), it shows a combination of **both concern and fear**. In Surah Al-Anbiya (21:49), it is said that people were مشفقون (fearing) from the hour of reckoning.⁷

قال تعالى: وَهُمْ مِمَّنْ أَسَاءَ مَشْفِقُونَ⁸

الْخَشْيَةُ :

الخَشْيَةُ (al-khashya) means fear or awe. The verb form is خَشِيَ يَخْشَى (khashiya yakhsha), which means "to fear" or "to be in awe." الخَشْيَةُ conveys a deep sense of reverence mixed with fear, often in a context where one is aware of a greater power or presence.⁹ الخَشْيَةُ is often based on knowledge of what one fears. The term is used in various contexts to express **fear grounded in awareness**¹⁰

"11- وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى وَهُوَ يَخْشَى "

And as for the one who came to you striving while he fears [Allah]

Al-Farah explains the verse from the Quran, " فَخَشِينَا أَن يَرَهُمَا طَغْيَانَا " {¹² stating that " فَخَشِينَا " means "we knew" or "we were aware." Al-Zajjaj adds that " فَخَشِينَا " relates to the story of Al-Khidr, emphasizing that fear from God signifies a form of aversion.¹³

Modelling Behaviour through Qur'anic Narratives:

After addressing specific emotions and beliefs, the Qur'an presents exemplary models that illustrate how these internal states translate into

action. These narratives provide a clear conceptual foundation for understanding the process of modeling in human behavior.

In Surah Al-Anbiya, the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) is presented as an example of enduring severe trials and emotional challenges. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) introduced a new belief system before his society and openly challenged the prevailing traditional beliefs and practices. In the course of this mission, he experienced numerous intense emotional states, including humiliation and ridicule from his people, social isolation, and the abandonment of close familial relationships. Ibrahim (AS) questions the irrational idol-worship of his people, showing the psychological principle of cognitive dissonance—when individuals are confronted with contradictions in their beliefs¹⁴. He encourages critical thinking, Challenging deeply rooted yet false beliefs can lead to transformative change. Ibrahim A.S takes action to challenge the belief system of his nation by leaving the biggest idol intact, Ibrahim (AS) forces his people to question their own assumptions. This aligns with Socratic questioning, a method used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to help people challenge faulty beliefs.¹⁵

He used strong faith, clear vision and tawakkul to reduce stress. In Psychologically, faith and spiritual trust are correlated with stress reduction, optimism, and inner peace in difficult times.

Prophet Nuh عليه السلام

In the story of Prophet Nuh (peace be upon him), the mention of *kurb al-'azīm* (great distress) is directly connected to the foundational belief expressed earlier in the Surah—that human beings will be tested through both ease and adversity. The challenges highlighted in this narrative particularly revolve around the purity of character and the experience of societal rejection, both of which have profound emotional and behavioral impacts. Such experiences often lead individuals toward negativity and psychological trauma. However, through the example of Nuh (AS), the Qur'an offers a model of resilience. Analyzing this narrative from a psychological perspective allows us to explore the cognitive patterns that enabled him to maintain emotional stability and demonstrate steadfast action in the face of immense trials

The phrase "مِنَ الْكُرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ" (from the great distress) refers to the **hardship, rejection, and suffering** that Prophet Nuh (A.S.) endured. He remained among his people for **a thousand years minus fifty** (i.e., 950 years), calling them to Allah, yet only a few believed in him. His people **persistently harmed him** and **passed down their opposition** to him from one generation to the next, advising each other to remain against him.¹⁶

In the story of **Prophet Dawood (A.S.) and his son Prophet Suleman (A.S.)**, the **human state of receiving blessings** is highlighted. This phase of life often challenges a person’s emotional regulation, as overwhelming prosperity can lead to **negligence, arrogance, or forgetfulness of moral conduct**. The Quran emphasizes the **appropriate behavioral response** in such moments, guiding individuals to **maintain humility, gratitude, and righteousness**. It underscores the psychological reality that **blessings can test one’s emotional stability**, and without conscious effort, one may lose sight of **ethical values and disciplined behavior**.

فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ ۝ ١٧٨

will ye then be grateful?

Also there is dua of Suleman AS in Surah Al Namal on which Sayed Qutub writes:

O Lord! This is directly the supplication of a **God-inspired** person. "**أَوْزِعْنِي**" (**Ouzi'ni**) means: *Keep me composed—keep my consciousness and my faculties gathered, keep my heart and my tongue under control. Regulate my thoughts and inner disturbances, unify my words and my acts of worship. Organize my deeds and my engagements. Gather and regulate all my strengths. Align my inner self from beginning to end* into a singular focus. All these meanings are included in "**أَوْزِعْنِي**" so that I may become a **complete embodiment of gratitude** for the blessings that have been bestowed upon me and upon my parents.¹⁸

This manner of expression indicates that Prophet **Suleman (A.S.)** deeply felt the impact of these blessings on his heart. The nature of this **impression** is also evident from this supplication. His **being and his spiritual consciousness** were **saturated with the downpour of Allah’s grace and kindness**. He realized that **Allah’s hand of mercy was constantly extended over him and his parents**, showering them with **blessings, compassion, and divine grace**.

"O my Lord, keep me in control so that I may always express gratitude for Your favor upon me and my parents."

"وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ"¹⁹

– "And enable me to perform righteous deeds that please You."

Even **righteous actions (عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ)** are, in reality, a **gift of Allah’s grace**. It is bestowed upon the one who remains **grateful to Allah**. Prophet **Suleman (A.S.)** was so deeply grateful that he sought Allah’s assistance in gratitude itself—**for even gratitude is impossible without divine help, and the ability to do righteous deeds is itself a blessing from Allah**. Prophet **Suleman (A.S.)** had a deep understanding of this reality.²⁰

The next example presented is that of Prophet Ayyub (Job), who was subjected to a severe physical trial and prolonged bodily suffering.

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾²¹

And (remember) Job, when He cried to his Lord, "Truly distress has seized me, but Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful."

Ibn Abbas said: "**Ayyub was named so because he always turned back to Allah in every situation.**"²²

with a **ḍammah** (ضُرٌّ), it is specific to afflictions of the self, such as illness or emaciation²³

So We answered him and removed the adversity that was upon him,"—by healing him from his illness.

"And We restored his family to him and the like thereof with them,"—meaning that either **he was given twice what he had** in offspring, or **his children were revived, and from them, new descendants were born.**

"As a mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers,"—a mercy for Ayyub and a lesson for others among the worshippers, so that they may endure with patience as he did and be rewarded as he was. Or, meaning: **as part of Our mercy towards the worshippers, for We remember them with kindness and do not forget them.**²⁴

In the Quranic narrative of Prophet Ayyub (AS), several key principles of emotion regulation are highlighted. **Patience (ṣabr)** emerges as a fundamental strategy, as Ayyub (AS) endured severe trials yet remained steadfast, demonstrating resilience in the face of hardship. Additionally, **worship and supplication** serve as means to attract divine mercy, reinforcing emotional stability through a deep connection with Allah. The verse emphasizes Allah's attributes **Al-Raḥmān (The Most Compassionate)** and **Al-Raḥīm (The Most Merciful)**, indicating that conscious awareness of these divine qualities can enhance emotional regulation by fostering trust in divine wisdom and cultivating inner peace. This story highlights Allah's mercy upon His servants, His kindness towards them, and His support during trials. When Prophet Ayyub (peace be upon him) made his supplication, he simply presented his condition before Allah and, after mentioning the attribute *Arham ar-Rahimeen* (the Most Merciful of the Merciful), entrusted the entire matter to Him. This reflects his deep trust in his Lord and his respectful way of turning to Him.²⁵ It also illustrates his thought process—his trial of illness did not lead him to despair but rather directed his attention towards contemplating Allah's mercy. In contrast, most people in such circumstances tend to react with panic, complaints, or resentment towards their afflictions. However, in reality, every hardship or illness is temporary and fades away in its due time.

Research shows the effect of reading the dhikr of Asma ul Husna Ya Rahman and Ya Rahim reduce the level of anxiety in the elderly.²⁶

"As a mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers"—a mercy upon Ayyub and a reminder for others among the worshippers, so that they may exercise patience as he did and be rewarded as he was rewarded. Or, it means that due to Our mercy for the worshippers, We remind them through acts of kindness and do not forget them.²⁷

While Impatience (*jaz'*) occurs when complaints are directed toward people, not when they are presented to Allah. Moreover, supplication does not contradict contentment (*rida*).²⁸

(And a reminder for the worshippers)"—meaning, a lesson for the servants of Allah.

When they remember the trial of Ayyub, his patience in enduring it, and the hardship he faced—despite being the most virtuous person of his time—they will prepare themselves to endure the difficulties of this world as Ayyub did. This serves as an encouragement for them to persist in worship and to bear hardships with patience.²⁹

After this, Surah Al-Anbiya mentions Dhul-Kifl, Prophet Ismail (Ishmael), and Prophet Idris (Enoch), highlighting their defining characteristic that all of them were among those who practiced patience (*ṣabr*). Patience is presented as a profound quality that exerts a deep influence on emotional regulation and psychological stability.

The meaning of sabar **"Of the patient ones"**—those who endure the hardships of obligations and the difficulties of trials.³⁰

According To Qurtabi:

(كُلُّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ) أَي عَلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ وَالْقِيَامِ بِطَاعَتِهِ وَاجْتِنَابِ مَعْاصِيهِ³¹

“Each of them was among the patient ones,” meaning patient in obeying the commands of Allah, steadfast in carrying out His obedience, and abstaining from disobedience to Him.

Definition of Sabar:

Patience means **restraining oneself in a difficult situation**.

Patience is **restraining oneself** according to what reason and religion require, or from what they require one to abstain from. The term "**الصَّبْرُ**" is general, but its name changes based on its situation:

- If it is endurance in **calamities**, it is called "**صبر**", and its opposite is "**الجزع**" (impatience).
- If it is in **battle**, it is called "**شجاعة**" (courage), and its opposite is "**الجبن**" (cowardice).
- If it is in **annoying difficulties**, it is called "**رحب الصّدر**" (broad-mindedness), and its opposite is "**الضّجر**" (irritation).

- If it is in **restraining speech**, it is called "كتمان" (concealment), and its opposite is "المدل" (disclosure).

Waiting is also a type of patience because **true waiting requires patience**. Allah says:

"فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ" (At-Tur: 48) – "Be patient for the decree of your Lord." This means **to wait for Allah's judgment upon the disbelievers**.³²

Patience in the Quran is linked to faith, hope, peace, and submission, but these abstract qualities are understood subjectively. Using vivid, action-based imagery from Quranic verses helps illustrate these concepts, making them more relatable. Analyzing such imagery clarifies patience as a distinct Quranic concept, bridging abstract ideas with tangible understanding.³³ Patience plays a key role in both types of well-being: **hedonic** (focused on pleasure and happiness) and **eudaimonic** (focused on personal growth and virtue). It helps in managing stress, improving relationships, and achieving goals, which boosts happiness. Additionally, patience supports deeper well-being by helping people develop their potential, maintain integrity, and fulfill personal needs like autonomy and competence.³⁴

The story of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) is presented, describing how he left his community due to frustration with their condition and subsequently became trapped in a severe hardship. In this situation, he experienced emotional distress and psychological constriction due to both inner and external pressures. The narrative illustrates how Allah provided him with divine emotional guidance and spiritual direction in response to this state of distress.

وَذَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا³⁵

مُغَاضِبًا (mughāḍiban) is used for Contending or opposing (context from the Quran).

The word "مُغَاضِبًا" is derived from a form indicating **mutual intensification (mubalagha)**, meaning **he was deeply angered**—or it could imply that he **angered his people** by leaving them, as they feared that divine punishment might descend upon them after his departure. He had become **weary of their prolonged rejection of his call**, their **intense stubbornness**, and their **persistent defiance**, so he **migrated away from them before receiving a divine command to do so**.

A true believer becomes **angry for the sake of Allah** when He is disobeyed.

Allah described the state of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) as one of distress and grief, and stated that He delivered him from that state of sorrow and emotional anguish.

The "distress" (الغم) is interpreted as either:

- The distress of being swallowed by the whale.
- Or the anguish of realizing his mistake.

And thus We save the believers" (وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ)

Meaning: Just as Allah saved Yunus (PBUH), He saves all believers who call upon Him sincerely in times of distress.³⁷ "And thus We save the believers"—meaning, We deliver them from their distress due to the righteous deeds they have done previously.³⁸ That is, when they are in hardships and call upon Us, turning to Us in repentance—especially when they supplicate with this prayer during times of affliction.³⁹

The psychological insights derived from the story of Prophet Yunus (peace be upon him) are both profound and multifaceted. His act of repentance and supplication can be understood as a therapeutic mechanism that facilitates the resolution of guilt and emotional turmoil. As noted by Ahmad, Ramli, and Rahman (2016), the process of admitting one’s faults and actively seeking forgiveness contributes to emotional relief and cognitive clarity—paralleling Freud’s psychoanalytic concept of catharsis. Additionally, the Qur’anic emphasis on divine mercy in this narrative instills a sense of hope and psychological safety, both of which are critical to fostering resilience. The belief in a compassionate and forgiving deity reinforces optimism and motivates individuals to endure and overcome adversity. From a clinical perspective, the narrative of Yunus (AS) offers valuable material for therapeutic application. Mental health professionals can employ this story within the framework of narrative therapy to help clients reconstruct meaning, navigate feelings of despair, and build a renewed sense of identity rooted in faith, resilience, and redemption.⁴⁰

وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۗ وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ⁴¹

They seek refuge in Us and supplicate to Us in times of ease and hardship.

It is also said that the meaning is that they supplicate during their acts of worship while being in a state of longing, hope, fear, and apprehension, because longing (رغبة) and fear (رهبة) are inseparable. It is further said that رغب (longing) is expressed by raising the palms of the hands toward the sky, while رهب (fear) is shown by raising the backs of the hands. This was stated by Khusayf. Ibn ‘Atiyyah said: The essence of this is that it is the habit of every supplicant among humans to use their hands in their plea. Since longing (رغب) involves seeking something, it is fitting to direct the inner palms toward the one from whom the request is made, as the palm is the place of receiving or

possessing. As for fear (رهب), since it involves repelling harm, it is appropriate to cast it away and gesture toward its removal, as in shaking the hands or similar gestures.⁴²

"And they were humbly submissive to Us," meaning they were modest and obedient.⁴³ They used to hasten toward good deeds," meaning they would eagerly pursue all avenues of righteousness. either longing for reward and hoping for their prayers to be answered, or eager in obedience while fearing punishment or sin The meaning is that they attained their status with Allah through these virtues.⁴⁴

أَيُّ مُصَدِّقِينَ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ، خَائِفِينَ، الْخُشُوعُ هُوَ الْخَوْفُ الْأَلَزَمُ لِلْقَلْبِ، لَا يُفَارِقُهُ

أَبَدًا، مُتَوَاضِعِينَ، مُتَذَلِّلِينَ لِلَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ⁴⁵;

"Meaning, they were believers in what Allah had revealed, fearing Him. Humility (*khushū'*) is a fear that remains firmly rooted in the heart and never leaves it. They were humble and submissive, fully yielding themselves before Allah, the Almighty and Majestic."

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ - وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ ٩٤ ٩٤

"(فَلَا كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ)" – Meaning: There is no denial or ingratitude for his deeds, i.e., his reward will not be lost nor concealed. The word "kufir" (كفر) is the opposite of "faith" (إيمان), and it also means **denial of blessings**, which is the opposite of gratitude (شكر). The verb "كَفَرَهُ" can mean **to deny or be ungrateful** (expressed as كُفْرَانًا or كُفُورًا).

"(وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ)" – Meaning: **We are recording his deeds and preserving them.** This is similar to the verse: "Indeed, I do not let the deeds of any doer among you—whether male or female—go to waste." (Aal 'Imran 3:195), meaning that **everything is preserved to be rewarded accordingly.**⁴⁷

Conclusion:

Surah Al-Anbiya presents the stories of various prophets, each illustrating key psychological principles related to cognitive and behavioral modification. Emotions such as longing (رغبة), fear (رهبة), and humility (خشوع) are shown to influence not only internal belief systems but also outward actions. These narratives reflect deeply embedded cognitive patterns—such as trust in divine wisdom, the association of hardship with spiritual growth, and the expectation of reward in the Hereafter—which shaped the prophets' responses to adversity. The assurance that no good deed is lost (21:94) reinforces a purpose-driven mindset, fostering resilience, hope, and consistent righteous behavior. Thus, the Surah offers a powerful model for emotional regulation and belief-based behavioral transformation.

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- ³⁵ Al-Anbiyah:87
- ³⁶ Al-Anbiyah:88
- ³⁷ Anwar Ul Tanzil, Vol:4, pg:59
- ³⁸ Tafseer Qurutbi, Vol:11, pg:334
- ³⁹ Tafsir Ibn e Kasir, Vol:5, pg:368
- ⁴⁰ Karimian R. A Mystical Study of the Story of Yunus (PBUH) in the Holy Quran and an Analysis of Its Psychological Impacts. Imqv 2022; 2 (3) :6-17 URL: <http://imqv-journal.com/article-1-101-en.html>
- ⁴¹ Al-Anbiya:90
- ⁴² Qurtubi, Vol:11, pg:336
- ⁴³ Ibid, Vol:11, pg:337
- ⁴⁴ Anwar Ul Tanzil, Vol:4 pg:59
- ⁴⁵ Tafsir Ibn e Kasir, Vol:5, pg:370
- ⁴⁶ Al- Anbiya, 94
- ⁴⁷ Ibn e Kasir, Vol:11, pg:339