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Anxiety and Its Alleviation in The Light of Sirah

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Abstract

Anxiety, the Global Burden Disease, is one of the most pressing psychological challenges of the modern age, affecting emotional, cognitive and physical health. Contemporary psychological offers therapeutic options such as cognitive behavioral therapy and pharmacological treatment, yet increasing attention are being directed towards holistic model that integrate spirituality with psychological insight. This study explores the prophetic sīrah (life of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam) as a framework for understanding and alleviating anxiety. Using qualitative thematic analysis, it examines pivotal events including the loss of near and dear ones, the persecution at Tā'if, the migration to Madinah, the Battle of Trench, to identify strategies employed in confronting distress, fear and uncertainty.

The analysis highlights central themes, tawakkul (trust in Allah), Sabr (patience), du'ā and dhikr, proactive approach, active problem solving, focus on probabilities, as anxiety coping mechanisms. Communal solidarity also emerges as a crucial element of the Prophetic psychotherapeutic approaches, while underscoring the unique comprehensiveness of the sīrah's paradigm.

The study concludes that the Prophetic legacy presents a robust, integrative model and framework for mental well-being, uniting faith, psychological understanding, and intelligent efforts and techniques to address the multidimensional nature of anxiety in contemporary context.

Keywords: Seerat, Anxiety, Global Burden Disease, Mental Disorders

Introduction

In contemporary times, anxiety is one of the most severe illnesses affecting humanity. The extent of its spread can be gauged by the fact that it is now recognized as GBD a global burden of disease. Anxiety disorder is defined by excess worry, hyperarousal and fear that is counter productive and debilitating, are some of the most common psychiatric conditions in the world. ¹Anxiety, a global burden disease (GBD), is a state of inner turmoil characterizes by excessive worry, nervousness and fear about future uncertainties, a state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen.² It is a condition of uneasiness, accompanied by dysphoria and somatic signs and symptoms of tension, focus on apprehension of possible failure, misfortune. ³ The experience of fear or apprehension about facing a distressing situation in the future may be based on ground realities or real threats that truly exist but in contemporary world it is the leading mental health disorder, a defining feature of an individual corresponding physiological response even in the absence of any actual or objective danger. In essence, the person with anxiety disorder perceives and reacts to threats that are vague, or unidentified.⁴ In fact anxiety is an inner emotional response that manifests under specific circumstances most notably when an individual perceives a threat, encounters harm, or experience, rooted in our attachment to individual possession and personal

wellbeing. The persist anticipation of loss or harm to these valued entities can, over time, predispose individuals to the developments of psychological disorders, such as restlessness, increased heart rate and various chronic and killing diseases.

In Islamic tradition or terminology, anxiety is often described using different terms like *ḍiḡ al-Ṣadr* (constriction of the chest), *hamm* (هم) distress or worry; *ḥuzn* (حزن) lingering sadness, sorrow; *khawf* (خوف) fear; *al-Qalaq* (القلق); restlessness, anxiety and *al-Waswasa* (Whispering doubts causing panic the term primarily used in the Qur'ān for anxiety, or uncertainty related to the future is *Khawf*, “fear”. As Allah Almighty says:

فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ⁵

“Those who follow my guidance, shall have no fear nor shall they grieve”.

Al-Khawf (fear) is the anxiety one feels in apprehending some trouble or pain in future⁶; Another term is *ham* (hum) anxiety, disquietude or trouble of mind; solicitude, distress or disquietude affecting the heart or annoyance that is expected to be happen. ⁷ *هم* refers to a state of inner distress, worry or emotional stress, burden, often caused by concerns about future. It represents a mental preoccupation or troubled state of mind; and is frequently associated with anxiety. The term *القلق* (*al-qalaq*) unsettled, unsteady, restless, disturbed, agitated, floured in a state of unrest or commotion, ⁸ refers to a psychological or emotional state marked by nervousness, tension or worry especially about something uncertain or threatening. *القلق* is used to describe anxious feeling due to fear, uncertainty or stress. It closely corresponds to the English terms: anxiety, panic, or obsessive worry.⁹ Likewise *(ḍiḡ)* ضيق distress or constriction, an emotional strain and internal pressure a key sign of anxiety.¹⁰ Allah Almighty says “And we know that your heart feels distressed for what they say”.¹¹ Another verse goes as.

وَلَمَّا أَن جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سَيِّئًا بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا¹²

“... And when our messengers came to Lūt, he grieved for them ...”

One more term is *ḥzn* (Ḥuzn) al-though it primarily relates to the worries of past, it is something used to convey a sense of anxiety as well, for example a verse goes as:¹³ “And we know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. Do not grieve Allah surely is with us”. This verse refers to Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad's stay in the cave of Thawr during his migration. When the disbelievers pursued them and reached the mouth of the cave, Abū Bakr R.A. become anxious and worried, fearing that they would be caught. This was, in fact, an expression of his anxiety, about the future. In response the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam said لا تحزن. Another term is *فزع* (Faza) signifies a shrinking and aversion that comes upon a man from a thing causing fear or fright.¹⁴ Likewise *وسوسة* (Waswasa), whispering, i.e. sometimes it is used to describe a condition when one is struggling with overthinking and anxiety disorders. Waswasa is deeply associated with the key features of anxiety. Al-Ghāzalī used another term *خواطر* *Khawāṭir* denotes the experience of anxiety.¹⁵ Another term *وحشه* (Wahshah) profound emotional intensity often blending fear, sadness, unease and uncertainty. It could be considered an indication of anxiety. These various terms are used for anxiety in Islamic literature, however the comprehensive term that encapsulates all the conditions characteristic of anxiety is *Khawf* (fear). The second one is *هم*. Both are found in Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and Islamic literature to express the feelings of anxiety.

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health condition worldwide. The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Project offers a comprehensive framework for assessing the relative impact of various diseases by integrating measures of incidence, mortality and disability. The initial GBD study conducted in 1990 highlighted that mental health disorder, particularly anxiety and depression, significantly contribute to the overall

global disease burden.¹⁶ Millions of people across the globe are effected by anxiety-related disorders, and the member continues to rise. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), anxiety is now recognized as one of the leading contributors to the global disease burden in 2023. The WHO fact sheet from 2019 reported approximately 301 million individuals living with anxiety disorder, a figure that surged to 405 millions by 2023. This sharp increase signals an alarming trend. In today's world, mental health challenges have become an increasingly pressing reality, across all the societies¹⁷. Systematic reviews have established that anxiety disorders affect our health in every aspect, and ruin overall wellbeing. Common medical conditions associated with anxiety are: Endocrine disorders as: diabetes mellitus, thyroid disease...; Gastrointestinal disorders as: peptic ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, celiac disease; Musculoskeletal disorders as: Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue syndrome, arthritis, Neurological disorders: migraine, epilepsy, degenerative illnesses; Cardiorespiratory diseases as: asthma, angina, pulmonary disease, chronic pains, cancers, burns, Infectious diseases etc.¹⁸ Anxiety disrupts sleep cycle, weakens immunity. Chronic worry and fear lower disease resistance, consequently a person becomes vulnerable to many diseases. Cognitive effects: over thinking and rumination, impaired concentration, catastrophizing, memory issues; emotional effects, chronic fear, irritability, emotional exhaustion, guilt, numbness, unable to relax and feeling drained all the time. Behavioral effects: avoidance (social events, opportunities, responsibilities), Mood swings; procrastination, paralysis from fear of failure and so on¹⁹. According to modern scientific research, individuals experiencing prolonged anxiety are more likely to develop phobias²⁰. In short anxiety can have profound and varied effects on human life, impacting physical, mental, emotional and social aspects. While a small amount of anxiety can be natural and even beneficial (such as preparing us to face danger), if it becomes persistent or severe it can significantly deteriorate one's quality of life. As al-Balkhī says: It is the root or core of all harmful symptoms. Anxiety can change the temperature of the body instigating it to be hotter or cooler and distorting its facial expressions. If remains unchecked, it can create extremely serious physical, mental, social, behavioral and spiritual consequences²¹. Anxiety impacts all areas of a person's life preventing them from functioning as a normal active and productive individual and destroys mental health. Mental Health is a condition in which a person is able to recognize and optimize his her potential, face the pressure of daily life, contribute productively to his or her work and play an active role. Mental health plays a crucial role in society. A healthy person is who fulfills his personal as well as social duties to the best of his ability but an anxious person loses one's ability to lead a normal, active and dynamic life.

Contemporary psychology provides several evidence-based techniques to understand, manage and reduce anxiety. These modern anxiety coping frameworks, can be outlined as follows: (a) Psychological interventions as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Mindfulness-based stress Reduction (MBSR), Acceptance and commitment therapy; (b) Behavioral Techniques like exposure therapy, Relaxation Techniques as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, journaling etc; (c) Pharmacological treatment comprises anti-anxiety medication SSRIS, SNRIs, Benzodiazepines; (d) Lifestyle modification coping strategies, i.e. regular exercise, sleep management, healthy diet, time management, social support; (e) Philosophical and humanistic perspective as stoicism, Existentialism, positive psychology²². These modern techniques are based on scientific, psychological or philosophical framework rather than religious or spiritual beliefs. Although all these methods are very useful, they provide only temporary and short term relief; they are not proving to be lasting or lifelong solutions. That is why anxiety continues to increase around the world.

Contemporary scientific research has proved that health is among the greatest blessings bestowed upon humanity. The foundation of a successful and fulfilling life is deeply rooted in physical and mental wellbeing. Islam, as a comprehensive and holistic way of life, places

significant emphasis on the preservation of health. Its teachings address human welfare in all dimensions: physical, psychological, spiritual and social. The commands of Allah Almighty and the guidance of His messenger pbuh aim to ensure the overall wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The life of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam provides profound insights into the importance of health, highlighting that its preservation is not merely a worldly concern but also a religious. Protecting one's health and preventing illness are necessary for the fulfillment of religious duties and for attaining success in both this world and the hereafter. A sound and healthy body is a divine trust and a precious blessing, which warrants gratitude, responsibility and conscious care. Allah Almighty says "... do not put yourself into destruction..."²³, and the Prophet pbuh says "Indeed your body has a right over you".²⁴ These divine teachings make it clear that maintaining health and avoiding harm are intrinsic responsibilities in Islam. The religion not only permits medical treatment but actively encourages it. In specific context, such as presence of contagious illness, seeking medical care becomes a communal and individual religious obligation, aimed at safeguarding life and society. Islam emphasizes practices conducive to health including cleanliness, moderation in diet, adequate rest, physical activity and mental serenity. The Prophet pbuh not only endorsed these values but embodied them, offering in his blessed lifestyle a model of balance, prevention and wellness. He stated "A strong believer is better and more favored by Allah than a weak believer".²⁵ This hadith is generally interpreted to strengthen both faith and physical or mental resilience.

As far as, the mental health is concerned, it is often overlooked in traditional health discussion hold a significant place within the Islamic worldview. Islam regards the mind and soul as integral to a person's overall wellbeing. Psychological stability is essential for fulfilling religious duties as prayers (ṣalāh), fasting, reflection (تفكير) and ethical conduct. Moreover the psychological symptoms may become severe and lead to bodily disorders.²⁶

Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam acknowledged emotional and mental states in his teachings and interactions. He provided companion, reassurance and spiritual counseling to those experiencing grief, anxiety or despair. The concept of Tawwakul (trust in Allah), Ṣabr (patience) and du'ā (supplication) are all deeply therapeutic practices that promote mental tranquility and resilience. Furthermore, Islamic Jurists have long recognized, psychological distress *dīq aṣ-Ṣadr*, *Waswās* in rulings related to worship, family life and personal responsibilities. This shows that mental health was not only acknowledged but was integrally accommodated within Islamic legal and ethical framework. In short Islam advocates for a holistic approach to health, one that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Ensuring emotional wellbeing is not a secondary concern but a part of fulfilling one's religious duties and achieving a balanced, God conscious life. So Islamic teachings not only emphasize the protection of mental health but also provide numerous golden principles and guidelines for its preservation.

Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam would regularly seek refuge from anxiety and grief as:

اللهم انى اعوذ بك من الهم والحزن²⁷

‘Ā’isha Ṣiddīqa Rā’i Allah ‘anhÉ said that whenever someone in our family passed away and the household was grieved, the Prophet would instruct that *Talbinah* be prepared and served to the bereaved after the people had left, as it helps relieve the burden from the heart. This indicates that a Muslim should not be living in a constant state of fear, worry or sorrow. Whispers (*Waswasah*) and fear of perceived dangers, or threatening situations have been described as a weapon of *Iblīs* which he uses to trouble, distract and discourage a believer. Therefore, Islam not only discourages falling into anxiety over imagined but also instructs its followers to face real threats, difficulties and challenges with courage and

determination, rather than succumbing to mental stress or illness. If a distressing or anxiety inducing situation does arise, one should make every possible effort to overcome it. Trust in Allah, supplications, strategies, thinking, planning and taking all practical steps are essential rather than sitting back in fear and helplessness.

When we look for techniques to protect ourselves from anxiety or to escape from its overwhelming grip, the most profound and effective source of guidance in this vast universe is none other than the blessed life of the holy Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam. His noble life not only offers spiritual solace but also presents the most practical and action oriented approach to dealing with anxiety.

Unlike theoretical models or temporary coping strategies of our modern world the Prophetic sīrah serves as a living, dynamic framework, filled with real life examples where he faced immense psychological pressure, fear uncertainty and emotional distress. Yet he responded with unmatched resilience, unwavering trust in Allah, and wise, proactive strategies.

Anxiety or fear of future result in form of terror or panic what terrorizes a person and agitates his soul is something that quick threatening to him, that he thinks about or hears or sees. To cause terror or panic, the alarming object or frightening situation must be either directly perceived or expected to turn up or occur in a short time. A fearful object or occurrence that is expected to take place often a long time would not cause fear but rather distress and worry.²⁸ But the most remarkable and inspiring aspect of the life of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam, is his unwavering composure and inner tranquility, even in the face of most perilous and terrifying circumstances. Throughout his life he encountered numerous life threatening situations, ranging from brutal persecution to assassination attempts and hostile battles, yet never once he was seen as fearful, panicked or overwhelmed by anxiety. Rather than succumbing fear or despair the Prophet pbh consistently served as a beacon of hope, strength and resilience for his companions and followers. There is not a single authentic incident in the records of sīrah that the Prophet pbuh was anxious or mentally disturbed due to worldly threats or psychological pressure. His unshakable trust in Allah, calm demeanor and emotional stability exemplify a model of psychological resilience and spiritual strength. This extra ordinary emotional equilibrium rooted in deep faith and divine connection, renders his sīrah a valuable and effective source for understanding, managing and ultimately alleviating anxiety in human life. By studying the sīrah through the lens of mental health and emotional wellbeing, modern individual especially those grappling with anxiety, can draw guidance, comfort and actionable strategies to navigate life's challenges with greater inner peace and confidence.

We see that sīrah is a rich repository of psycho-spiritual coping strategies for anxiety deeply rooted in faith and emotional intelligence. He managed anxiety through cognitive reframing, worship, routine, and community service, supported by social relationship like those with his wife Khadīja Rā'ī Allah 'anhÉ and close friend Abū Bakr RA. He faced fear inducing situations with calm presence, similar to modern exposure therapy and emphasized physical self-care, balance and moderation. His frequent reflection on divine and moderation. His frequent strengthened resilience and emotional stability. These strategies highlight a timeless model for coping with anxiety, blending spiritual and psychological approaches, including recalling positive memories, gratitude and learning from past Prophets. In every distressing situation, he employed the best possible strategy with wisdom and patience. He would take proactive measures, utilizing all available resources to prepare himself for the challenges ahead, rather than succumbing to anxiety and remaining passive and relying on antidepressants. At times, he used gentle humor and a light tone to reduce tension, making

social space more emotionally safe and balanced. The Prophet's model teaches us that anxiety is not a weakness but a part of human experiences. His response, marked by spirituality, strategy, emotional awareness and trust serves as a timeless blueprint for managing anxiety stress and adversity with dignity and faith. So, as anxiety has become a recognized Global Burden of Disease (GBD), there is an urgent need to explore and adopt coping strategies inspired by the Prophetic *sīrah*.

Background, History Review of Literature and Methodology

The term "anxiety" in the light of Qur'ān and hadith, has been discussed earlier. The supplication for seeking refuge from them, and the methods for their treatment has already been presented. Among classical Muslim Scholars, various renowned figures also addressed this important subject. A pioneering Muslim Scholar, geographer physician, psychologist and scientist abu Zayd Ahmed bin Sahl al-Balkhī (850-934 CE)²⁹, offered one of the earliest detailed discussion regarding mental disorder especially anxiety in his *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa al-Anfus*. He distinguished between emotional disorders caused by external events and those stemming from internal psychological distress that could affect both mind and body. He recommended cognitive strategies, social support and spiritual practices such as prayer and trust in God, as part of a balanced therapeutic approach, making him a forerunner of cognitive behavioral methods in Islamic Psychology.³⁰ Famous Persian Muslim Scholar Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030 CE)³¹, discussed "Khawf" (fear) as a disease of soul and as an ethical flaw. In his view fear is not merely a state but if left uncontrolled, becomes ingrained in one's personality. His treatment of fear includes: power of thought and understanding, treating the source of emotions like fear, cultivating the habit of virtue, self talk therapy and to be courageous etc. According to his anxiety coping mechanism, the anxiety disappears and life becomes pleasant and one attaining wellbeing through good expectations, strong hope and by avoiding thinking about all the unpleasant things that may occur. We should guard ourselves against them by abstaining from sins and misdeeds.³² Ibn Sīnā Abī 'Alī al-Ḥusayn bin 'Abdullah, (980-1037 CE)³³ prominent philosopher, physician and theologian known as Avicenna in West, recognized anxiety as a psychological and physiological condition. In his seminal work *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb*, he described symptoms of emotional disturbances like fear, worry and restlessness, which align with modern understandings of anxiety. He emphasized the connection between mind and body, suggesting that emotional distress could lead to physical ailments. Ibn Sīnā advocated for a holistic treatment approach including diet, lifestyle regulation, therapeutic music and spiritual practices showing his deep understanding of mental health centuries ahead of his time.³⁴ Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064 CE) well-known Andalusian scholar of 5th century³⁵ also discussed anxiety. In his *al-Akhlaq wa al-Siyar* he states "I sought a universal goal that all of humanity would agree to pursue with excellence and I found none other than the eradication of anxiety."³⁶ He has also suggested that alleviation and elimination of anxiety lies in submitting oneself to God.³⁷

Ghazālī abū Ḥāmid (1058-1111 CE)³⁸ eminent Muslim Scholar, theologian, jurist, mystic, known for his profound impact on Muslim thought, discussed anxiety in his *Iḥyā' ul 'Ulūm*. He used the term *Waswasa* which is overthinking and the anxiety disorders of our times. He suggest that we have to protect our hearts to get rid of anxiety that is only possible through following Allah's will and spending more time in religious practices.³⁹ Ibn Qayyim Shams ul-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad ibn abī Bakr, eminent Muslim Scholar, prolific writer, teacher and mentor of various notable scholars of Mamlūk period⁴⁰, in his *al-Ṭibb un-Nabawī* devoted a chapter on treatment of *hamm wa huzn* i.e. anxiety and stress.⁴¹

Several Muslim Scholars and researchers, in recent decades, have explored the intersection of Islamic teachings regarding mental health especially focusing on anxiety alleviation. In general, their work consist upon Qur'ān, Sunnah and *Sīrah* to draw spiritually grounded anxiety coping frameworks. These Scholars aimed to contextualize mental health

within an Islamic Worldview, moving beyond purely biomedical or Western psychological models criticizing them for their secular, individualistic, materialistic assumptions.

For instance: Mālik Badrī (1932-2021)⁴², emphasized to dwell on the rich heritage the Muslim Psychologist have in the form of Qur'ān and Sunnah⁴³ and the therapeutic potential of dhikr, du'a and Tawakkal in treating anxiety. Dr. 'Ā'isha Utz⁴⁴, whose work bridges between Islamic spirituality with clinical psychology while emphasizing integrating Qur'ānic principles and Prophetic methods of coping with distress.⁴⁵ Likewise Dr. 'Abdullah Rothman⁴⁶ promotes holistic healing through alignment with nature and following the Islamic methods in dealing with challenges of life instead of succumbing to anxiety.⁴⁷ Dr. Rania Awwad⁴⁸ also worked on integrated Islamic tradition with evidence based psychiatric practices highlighting the Prophet's approach toward mental and emotional challenges.⁴⁹

All of them and many other Muslim psychologists, have extensively worked on finding solutions to mental and psychological issues in the light of Qur'ān and Sunnah. They have grounded mental health problems on Islamic foundations. Their contributions are undoubtedly invaluable. However, their primary focus has been on dhikr, du'ā, tawakkul, ṣabr and turning to Allah which are indeed fundamental remedies for problems like anxiety. But the many golden principles that can be derived from the life of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam and through which we can effectively overcome our fear and anxiety, have not been worked upon as they truly deserve. For example making excellent plans, utilizing all possible resources, maintaining composure instead of losing one's senses and rather than laying down arms, reflecting on what can be done in the given situation and so on.

While sīrah is a rich source of guidance, full of actionable strategies to navigate life's challenges with innerpeace and confidence despite its immense relevance, regrettably, no focused scholarly effort has yet been undertaken to systematically explore and extract the specific methods and strategies employed by the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam to cope with anxiety and psychological pressure. There remains a significant gap in research regarding how he consistently maintained a state of calm confidence, alertness and dynamism even amidst the most threatening and fear-inducing situations. What was the inner mindset that enabled him to remain composed and proactive in the face of adversity?

This unexplored dimension of the Prophet's life hold immense potential for addressing one of the most pressing mental health challenges of our time, anxiety, now recognized as a global burden disease. It is imperative that we study the sīrah not only as a historical or religious account but as a timeless guide for emotional resilience and mental wellbeing in the modern world. The object of this research is to unveil the secret behind the unique mental state of the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam, how he remained not only calmed but also dealt effectively with difficult and threatening situations with remarkable ease. Studying and following the footsteps of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam in this regard can prove to be highly beneficial in addressing and treating the ailment called anxiety. Therefore, this research will serve as a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on this subject and may offer a valuable solution to one of the major challenges faced by the humanity today.

This research adopts a thematic qualitative approach. Primary sources include Qur'ān, authentic Ḥadīth and classical Islamic and especially sīrah literature. Secondary sources comprise academic journals, psychological studies and recent works on mental health by Muslim and non Muslim scholars. Through thematic analysis, the study aims to draw connections between historical experiences from the life of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad

Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam and present day therapeutic needs.

Phases of research:

1. Selection of some Anxiety inducing incidents from sīrah: five events have been selected for this purpose.
2. Textual narration of each event.
3. Extraction of coping mechanism: (What we learn from the steps he took)
4. Conclusion and Key Findings.

Although everyday of Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad's Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam blessed life brought a new challenge and was usually anxiety inducing, in this paper a selection of certain events has been made. So five events have been selected. In this section, after narrating each event, his response to it and his coping mechanism along with dhikr, du'ā etc. have been described.

(i) The first Revelation:

At the age of 40, while meditating in the cave of Ḥirā', the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam received his first revelation. The Angel Jibrīl 'Alaih As-SlaĒM appeared and commanded him forcefully "Iqrā" (read), physically embracing him. The overwhelming and unprecedented nature of this event filled the Prophet with intense fear and distress. His body was trembling, breathing rapidly, fearing and feeling uncertainty. Anxiously, he hurried home, crying out زملونی، زملونی (cover me, cover me). His wife Syeda Khadīja Rāli Allah 'anhĒ covered him with a cloak consoled him, comforted him and after a while he became calm.⁵⁰

Coping mechanism Strong-Social Bonding: In this event we see that Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam immediately went to his wife (family), shared his fear and his feelings openly instead of suppressing them, sought emotional comfort at home.⁵¹ This narrative teaches us that strong family ties and reliable social support play a vital role in alleviating anxiety.

(ii) Loss of Two confidant loved ones:

In the 10th year of Prophethood, the Prophet pbuh faced a deep personal loss: the death of his beloved uncle and protector Abū Ṭālib. Deeply grieved, the Prophet pbuh withdrew from public life for several days.⁵² Abū Ṭālib had been his shield against the disbelievers' aggression and his death emboldened them to increase their persecution.⁵³ Soon after, the Prophet pbuh suffered another heartbreaking loss, the death of his wife, Khadīja RA, his confidant and supporter through all trials. Her demise left him with no one at home to console him. For nearly three months, the Prophet pbuh was rarely seen smiling spending most of his time in seclusion.⁵⁴

The grief of parting from these two close beloved ones was already profound but alongside it stood a grave and imminent threat, after the passing of Abū Ṭālib, Abu Lahab became the chief of Quraysh and openly withdrew his protection for the Prophet pbuh, in other words, the tribe's support was lifted from over him, leaving him alone to face the oppression and persecution of the disbelievers. Surrounded by enemies on all side, Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam did not choose to remain anxiously hidden at home, instead after a certain time, he began to consider finding a new center for the adqauceincent of his mission. This search eventually led him to Tā'if, and thus he set out on a journey towards it.

Coping mechanism: Purpose of life copes with anxiety.⁵⁵ The Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam, rather than yielding to the paralyzing effects of fear or withdrawing into concealment, engaged in active

problem-solving, seeking an alternative base for mission. By cognitively reframing the crisis, not mentally as a threat but as an opportunity for expansion, he transformed potential despair into purposeful action. His decision to journey towards Ṭā'if illustrates strategic, goal-directed planning and teaches us that a purpose driven life possess a greater capacity to combat anxiety.

(iii) Journey to Ṭā'if:

Amidst the escalating hostility in Makkah and the loss of his protectors⁵⁶, the Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam sought refuge and support outside Makkah. Accompanied by his servant Zayd bin Ḥārithah RA, he journeyed to Ṭā'if, hoping its leaders would embrace Islam and provide sanctuary. However the prominent leaders, 'Abd Yālīl, Mas'ūd and Ḥabīb, mocked and rejected him. Fearing the youth might be influenced, the people of Ṭā'if incited mobs against him. These ruffians followed him hurling stones and abuses. His feet bled profusely, and his sandals became soaked with blood. Despite Zayd's Rā'ī Allah 'anhu effects to shield him he too was severely injured. Seeking refuge, they entered the orchard of 'Utbah and Shayba, where the Prophet rested under a grape wine. Overcome with grief, he raised his hands in supplication uttering the well-known Du'ā of oppressed:

“O Allah, to you Alone I present my complaint about my weakness, my lack of means, and the humiliation I face among people. You are the Lord of worlds and my only Lord. To whom do you abandon me? To a distant stranger who will mistreat me, or to an enemy who has power over me? If you are not displeased with me, then I do not mind whatever befalls me. Yet your mercy and pardon are more comforting to me. I seek refuge in the light of your noble face, which illuminates the darkness and brings order to both this world and the hereafter, from ever incurring your anger or displeasure. It is your right to hold me accountable until you are pleased with me. Truly, there is no strength or power except through you”.⁵⁷

The Prophet stayed there for a few days, continuing to call people towards the truth. However, when no positive outcome emerged, he resolved to return to Makkah, as no new center for his mission could be established. It was indeed a terrifying situation: the people of Makkah were his fiercest opponents, and yet he had no choice but to return there. At this moment we see him as a firm and determined man who, instead of surrendering to the dangers before him, acted with wisdom and sought a way forward. Zayd Rā'ī Allah 'anhu asked: “O Messenger of Allah, the people of Makkah have expelled you, how will you return there? With complete conviction, the Prophet replied “Zayd you will see how Allah will open the way”.⁵⁸ When they both approached the outskirts of Makkah he sent messages to several influential men of the city, seeking their protection. Muṭ'im ibn 'Adī granted him protection and his armed sons escorted the Prophet pbuh back into Makkah.⁵⁹ Muṭ'im publicly declared his protection over him, and thus the Prophet pbuh was once again able to resume the fulfillment of his mission.⁶⁰

Coping Mechanism:

- a. His unshakable trust in Allah: despite the real danger, the Prophet reassured Zayd “Allah will open the way”.
- b. Courage and Determination: Instead of giving in to despair or danger, he chose to move forward firmly with his mission. Anxiety was countered by focusing on long-term purpose rather than immediate threats.
- c. Practical problem solving: He sought protection from influential leaders in Makkah rather than entering recklessly. This shows his strategic thinking on: “What can I do now?”

- d. Seeking social support: He sought and then accepted Muṭ‘im ibn ‘Adī’s protection and the help of his sons. This highlights importance of leaning on available social structures. So he neither acted rashly nor passively, but he trusted Allah and also planned carefully.⁶¹

(iv) Migration to Medina:

As the hostility in Makkah intensified and the Quraysh became increasingly unyielding towards the message of Islam, Makkah turned into a barren land for the Prophet’s pbuh mission. The city that once nurtured him, where he was born and raised, and where he received the first revelation, had now become a place of suffocating opposition. Every effort to call people towards the oneness of Allah was met with ridicule, persecution and plot against his life. It was in this difficult context that divine permission was finally granted for Prophet pbuh and his followers to migrate to Madinah.

The Quraysh, aware of the Prophet’s growing influence and determined to put an end to his mission, devised a plot to assassinate him by selecting young men. From each tribe so that responsibility for his blood would be shared. This plan, however was failed by divine intervention. The Prophet (fully conscious of the imminent danger, calmly and wisely prepared for his departure. He entrusted ‘Alī ibn Ṭālib to remain at Makkah temporarily in order to return all the valuables, trusts and deposits that the Quraysh had placed with the Prophet pbuh.⁶²

Then, under the cover of night, when the conspirators lay in wait outside his house, the Prophet slipped away, reciting verses of Qur’ān assured him of Allah’s protection. Before leaving, however, his heart turned one last time towards his beloved city. Standing at edge of Makkah, he cast a tender and longing gaze over its scared valleys, hills and familiar landmarks, memories of his childhood and family intertwined with every corner. With a heavy yet resolute heart, he declared words that remain etched in history:

“O Makkah, by Allah, you are the most beloved land of Allah and the most beloved to me. Had your people not forced me out, I would never have left you”.⁶³

These words were not merely a farewell but an expression of the deep connection between the Prophet and his homeland. They reflected both his deep love for Makkah and his submission to Allah’s decree. His migration was not out of personal desire or worldly ambition, but solely to safeguard the message of Islam and secure a place where it could flourish freely.

Coping Mechanism: We see that, the grief of being separated from his city on one hand, and the uncertainty of setting in a new place on the other-despite all this, instead of being fearful or anxious, he took wise and thoughtful measures. Even in the face of real danger, he left his city with full preparation. He took several important proactive steps, to ensure the success and safety to the migration as:

- (a) Secret planning and success: knowing the Quraysh tribe opposed him and posed a threat, the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam planned the migration quietly to avoid being discovered. He decided to leave at night to reduce the chances of being caught.
- (b) Hiring a trusted, skilled guide: The Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam chose ‘Abdullah ibn Urayqit, a skilled and trusted person to guide him through the journey.
- (c) Choosing unfamiliar way for travel: Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam chose a difficult mountainous route for the migration instead of the well known path so that his enemies would not be able to capture him.

- (d) Building alliances in Madinah: Prior to the Hijrah, he ensured a welcoming reception of Muslim at Madinah.
- (e) Spiritual preparation: He sought Allah's guidance and protection through prayer, placing his trust in God for the success of the journey.
- (f) The entire account of his migration indicates that despite facing extreme uncertainty and being compelled to leave his homeland, he did not allow his emotions to overwhelm him. Instead he acted with full composure, making every possible preparation and adopting the best possible strategy.⁶⁴
- (v) **The battle of Trench: (Ghazwa-al-Aḥzāb)**

This battle was a critical, real life threatening occasion _ on one side stood the newly established Islamic state, still in its formative phase, and surrounded by hostile forces and hypocrites. On the other side were the combined forces of almost the entire Arabian Peninsula, consisting of powerful, well armed tribal confederations determined to annihilate Islam and its followers.⁶⁵

This was not a distant or hypothetical threat _ it was an imminent existential danger. The survival of the Muslim community itself was at stake. "Allah described it as a fear that caused hearts to leap into the throats".⁶⁶ The situation demanded exceptional leadership, strategic foresight, and unwavering resolve. Allah Almighty has depicted that critical situation in the Qur'ān as:

إِذْ جَاءَ وَكُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا⁶⁷

"[Recall] when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes were distracted and the hearts reached the throats and you were thinking about all sorts of thought."

In response, the Prophet puh employed every possible strategy, leaving no available resource untapped. He convened councils with his companions, seeking collective wisdom, upon the suggestion of Salmān al-Fārsī RA, a novel and unprecedented tactic was adopted for Arabia at that time, the digging of a defensive trench around the unusable parts of Madinah. This strategy, inspired by Persian warfare techniques, effectively neutralized the advantage of the numerically superior enemy cavalry.⁶⁸

The Prophet did not merely issue commands from a distance; he personally participated in the digging of the trench, laboring alongside his companions, sharing in their hunger and hardships, thereby boosting their morale and uniting them in purpose. Moreover, despite extreme danger the Prophet puh continuously reminded his companions of Allah's help, reciting prayers and giving glad tidings of future victories as, the conquest of Persia and Byzantium.⁶⁹

Beyond military preparation, the Prophet puh used a powerful trick, i.e. diplomatic maneuvering to weaken the enemy alliance. He successfully exploited internal divisions among the confederate tribes and their Jewish allies, sowing distrust and dissension within their ranks. This psychological and political strategy proved crucial in breaking the cohesion of the coalition.⁷⁰

After siege of some weeks, extreme hardship, and unrelenting faith and perseverance from the Muslims, Allah sent a fierce windstorm and unseen forces that scattered the enemy, turning what seemed to be certain defeat into a decisive moral and strategic victory of Islam.⁷¹

Coping Techniques:

- a. Realistic Assessment and proactive approach: Instead of succumbing to panic in the face of an existential threat, the Prophet puh, assessed the danger realistically and adopted a practical strategy digging a trench.

- b. Seek support and do not isolate yourself: The Prophet pbuh consulted his companions and worked with them. Sharing the burden and seeking advice reduces anxiety.⁷²
- c. Maintain spiritual connection: He strengthened hearts with prayers, dhikr and hope in Allah's help. Faith and prayers provides inner calmness.
- d. Focus on what you can do: The Prophet worked with his followers. Active participation in problem-solving reduces helplessness and boost morale.⁷³
- e. Psychological intelligence: He weakened the enemy alliance by creating internal distrust, showing that strength is not only physical but also psychological. Reframing the situation and challenge is part of coping with anxiety. It makes the situation more manageable and under control.⁷⁴
- f. Patience and endurance in anxiety inducing situations: The siege lasted weeks with severe hunger and cold, yet the Prophet pbuh and his followers endured.⁷⁵

As a reward for this patience and perseverance, the enemy alliance collapsed, they grew weary, lost their composure and scattered in disarray. The Prophet pbuh then declared "From now on, they will never launch an attack against us again."⁷⁶

Conclusion

a. A summary of key findings:

This research examines the intersection between contemporary understanding of anxiety and the timeless guidance of sirah of the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam. While anxiety is medically recognized as a complex psychological and physiological condition, it is also deeply connected to spiritual and emotional dimensions of human experiences. The sirah reveals that even individuals of highest spiritual resilience, including the Prophet himself, faced profound trials that elicited emotional distress. His responses characterized by unwavering faith, proactive problem solving, emotional regulation, and reliance on community and strong social bonds, offer timeless strategies for managing the GBD Anxiety, which, despite the use of all current therapies, techniques, and medications, continues to increase day by day.

b. Contributions of the study

This study establishes the sirah not only as a historical narrative but as a vital source of psychological insight. The objective facts presented in this paper demonstrate that the sirah of the Prophet pbuh offers a comprehensive and effective remedy for the modern epidemic of anxiety. It not only rescues individuals from this psychological whirlpool but also transforms them into active, dynamic and healthy members of society. Encompassing all contemporary techniques and surpassing them it provides profoundly practical, lasting, and far-reaching solutions that modern psychology has yet to attain. Incorporating these Prophetic principles and practices, enriching the healing process for entire humanity.

c. Suggestion

- To advance the field, subsequent investigations should prioritize the following avenues:
- The empirical validation of sirah-derived interventions within clinical populations.
- The development of formalized theoretical models for an Islamic psychotherapy rooted in the Prophetic tradition.
- A comparative analysis of the principles underpinning emotional resilience within Islamic, other religious, and secular humanistic paradigm.
- An examination of how community bases initiatives, modeled on the Prophet's examples, can effectively address collective psychological distress.

- Such scholarly efforts would significantly enrich the integration of traditional wisdom into contemporary therapeutic context.

d. Final reflection:

In an era marked by rising anxiety and emotional distress, the exemplary life of the Prophet Hazrat Muḥammad Rasullah Khatam un Nabiyyen Sallallahu Alihi Wa Aleihi Wa Sallam serves as a profound source of hope, strength and equilibrium. His sīrah teaches that anxiety, while an inherent part of human condition, can be met with faith, purposeful action and compassion. Ultimately, by intertwining empirical knowledge with Prophetic wisdom, we can forge a more comprehensive paradigm of healing that nurtures both the mind and the soul.

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