

A Semantic-Psychological Analysis of the Expression *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* in the Qur'an and Its Educational-Social Applications

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ABSTRACT:

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One of the concepts in the Qur'an related to the human psyche is the expression *ḍayq al-ṣadr*, which describes the tightness of the chest experienced by the Prophet (PBUH) when faced with psychological and social pressures. The verse "*And We certainly know that your chest becomes constrained by what they say*" (Q. 15:97) not only reflects the challenges of the era of revelation but can also serve as a profound approach to emotion regulation in contemporary life. Previous research has mostly examined this concept in the context of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) of the verse, leaving a systematic psychological and pedagogical analysis largely unexplored. This study employs a descriptive-analytical method, using exegetical and psychological sources. The findings indicate that *ḍayq al-ṣadr*, as an emotional-physiological phenomenon, is comparable to situational stress constructs. Qur'anic strategies for addressing this condition—such as *tasbīḥ* (glorification of God), patience, and cognitive reappraisal of the prophetic mission—align with psychological findings on mindfulness, emotion regulation, resilience, and conflict management. The analysis further highlights four main interpretive perspectives: divine consolation of the Prophet's heart, recognition of the human limits of prophets, emphasis on the continuity of the prophetic mission, and provision

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of practical strategies for coping with distress. the paper demonstrates conceptual overlaps between Qur'anic guidance and modern psychology, suggesting directions for educational and counseling applications.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and Psychology, *ḍayq al-ṣadr*, *sharḥ al-ṣadr* Situational stress, Emotion regulation, Resilience.

1. Introduction

The Qur'an, as a comprehensive source of guidance, addresses not only matters of belief and law but also the psychological and emotional states of human beings. Concepts such as patience, stress, anxiety, and tightness of the chest are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'anic discourse, reflecting the divine attention to inner human experiences. One of the significant Qur'anic expressions in this regard is *ḍayq al-ṣadr* (tightness of the chest) in Q. 15:97, revealed in the context of the Prophet's confrontation with denial and mockery:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ (الحجر/ 97)

And We know that you, your chest (innermost) narrows/tightens because of what they say (Q. 15:97).

This verse acknowledges the Prophet's emotional distress caused by the hostile words of his opponents and, at the same time, serves as a divine recognition of human vulnerability to verbal and social pressures. Classical exegetes have generally interpreted *ḍayq al-ṣadr* here as an emotional reaction of grief, sadness, or anxiety resulting from persistent rejection. Such an interpretation highlights the Qur'an's sensitivity to psychological experiences, especially in contexts of stress and confrontation. The present study aims to conduct a semantic and psychological analysis of the expression *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an and examine its educational and social applications. Previous studies have primarily addressed the meaning of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in terms of its occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), but a comprehensive analysis from psychological and educational perspectives has received less attention.

The present study focuses on Qur'anic verses that refer to *ḍayq al-ṣadr* and its derivatives, examining them through a psychological lens with reference to theories such as Lazarus's Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (Gross, 1998). The significance of this inquiry lies in addressing a gap in interdisciplinary research between Qur'anic studies and psychology by highlighting indigenous strategies of emotion regulation and encouraging dialogue

between modern psychological sciences and Qur'anic teachings. The objectives of the research are threefold: first, to explicate the semantic dimensions of *dayq al-ṣadr*; second, to analyze the Qur'anic coping strategies related to this condition; and third, to explore their compatibility with contemporary stress-management techniques. Accordingly, the central research question asks: How can the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* and the Qur'anic coping strategies associated with it be interpreted within the framework of modern psychology? Subsidiary questions concern the semantic components of the term, its psychological interpretation, and the extent to which Qur'anic strategies may be compared with established psychotherapeutic models. Methodologically, the study adopts a descriptive–analytical approach, drawing on exegetical literature and psychological scholarship. The research proceeds in several stages: a semantic examination of the key term, the identification and analysis of relevant verses, and finally, a comparison of Qur'anic strategies with selected psychological theories. By following this approach, the paper aims to clarify the relevance of Qur'anic insights to contemporary discussions of emotional regulation and stress management.

2. Literature Review

Although the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* (Chest tightness) in the Qur'an has received attention in classical exegesis, it has been less extensively explored from psychological and educational perspectives in contemporary studies. Examination of existing sources reveals three main streams of research: First, traditional exegetical studies have primarily focused on the historical and lexical aspects of this concept (al-Ṭabrisī 1993; Tabataba'i 1973). While these studies are valuable for explaining the primary meaning of the verse, they have given limited attention to its psycho-social implications in contemporary life. Second, Studies on the opposite concept, *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest), have considered psychological aspects to some degree (Haji Abdolbaqi & Haji Alibeigi 2018; Shirzad & Khatib 2021). However, they have not succeeded in systematically linking these two Qur'anic concepts with the emotional challenges of modern humans. Third, an emerging body of comparative research has examined Qur'anic concepts in relation to psychological theory (Sanatnegar 2021). While these studies are valuable, they often approach the subject in a fragmented manner and have yet to establish a comprehensive theoretical framework. A review of the literature thus indicates insufficient attention to the psychological dimensions of *dayq al-ṣadr* within the context of established theories such as Lazarus's Stress Theory (1984) and Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory

(1998). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to contribute to Qur'anic scholarship by adopting an interdisciplinary perspective that combines exegetical analysis with insights from psychology.

3. Concepts and Terminology

This section presents a semantic analysis of the expression *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* in order to clarify its lexical, exegetical, and psychological dimensions. Examining the lexical roots of *Ḍayq* (tightness) and *al-ṣadr* (chest) and their relation to contemporary concepts provides a framework for understanding this Qur'anic expression.

3.1. *Ḍayq*

The term *Ḍayq* denotes narrowness, tightness, and difficulty, as opposed to *wusa'* (expanse) (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 10: 208; Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 513; al-Muṣṭafawī 1981, 7: 57). Ibn Fāris (1984, 3: 383) defines *Ḍayq* as poverty and hardship. Al-Zabīdī (1994, 13: 280) also records a figurative meaning, noting that *Ḍayq* can denote doubt in the heart, in a figurative sense. Derivatives of the root *Ḍayq* appear in twelve verses across ten Suras in the Qur'an, expressing diverse meanings. In two instances (Q. 9:25, 118), the expression refers to "the earth becoming constrained," which, from a social psychology perspective, may be compared to collective crises and environmental pressures. In three verses (Q. 15:97; 11:12; 26:13), the tightness of the chest of prophets is described—an evident example of psychological pressure resulting from challenging social interactions. These cases align with psychological findings on the effects of interpersonal stress on mental health (Kiecolt-Glaser et al. 2002). Furthermore, in Q. 65:6, the term is used in the context of "not imposing hardship on divorced women," suggesting that *Ḍayq* can also apply to behaviors stemming from emotional pressures, such as aggression or rigidity. The diversity of these usages confirms that the Qur'an attends to the roots of negative emotions at individual, interpersonal, and societal levels.

3.2. *Al-Ṣadr*

The term *al-ṣadr* literally means "chest" as a physical organ, with the plural *ṣuḍūr*. It has also been used metaphorically to denote the foremost or leading part of something, e.g., *ṣadr al-qanāh* (tip of the spear) (al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī 1991, 379). It is defined as the uppermost and foremost part of anything, including expressions such as *ṣadr al-nahār wa al-layl* (beginning of the day and night) and *ṣadr al-shitā' wa al-ṣayf* (beginning of winter and

summer) (Ibn Manzūr 1994, 4: 445; al-Zabīdī 1994, 7: 80). Ibn Fāris (1984, 3: 337) offers two meanings: opposite of arrival and the human chest. In the aforementioned Qur'anic verse, the intended meaning is clearly the latter. In psychology, the chest may serve as a symbolic locus of emotions and feelings. The Qur'anic notion of *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest) corresponds with constructs in positive psychology such as resilience and psychological well-being (Davidson et al. 2000).

The concept of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* (Chest tightness) contrasted with *sharḥ al-ṣadr* (expansion of the chest) that have been extensively addressed in Islamic narrations. Imam 'Alī (PBUH), in eloquent language, examined *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, describing it as an instrument of leadership: “Forbearance and the endurance of hardship are the tools of leadership” (al-Raḍī 1995). This statement underscores the importance of *sharḥ al-ṣadr* in governance and leadership, indicating a direct relationship between psychological well-being and social effectiveness. As is evident from the history of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad exemplifies remarkable forbearance in the face of hardship and the ill-treatment of others. The persecutions and abuses directed at the Prophet were unprecedented in the history of the prophets: “No prophet was ever harmed as I have been harmed” (al-Majlisī 1983, 39: 56). The polytheists relentlessly engaged in blaming, harassing, threatening, and humiliating him. They accused him of various falsehoods, and encouraged others (including children and slaves) to insult him (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2003, 1: 594; Davani 2011).

4. Exegetical Approach to *Ḍayq al-Ṣadr* with Psychological Reading

Sura al-Ḥijr, centered on monotheism and prophet hood, addresses the Prophet's emotional challenges in facing the denial and mockery of the polytheists. Verses 85–99, especially verse 97, which refers to the state of *ḍayq al-ṣadr*, present what could be called a “clinical case” of dealing with social stress. Historical evidence indicates that these verses were revealed at a time when the Prophet, after the passing of Lady Khadijah and Abū Ṭālib, faced escalating psychological pressure from the polytheists (Tabatabaʾī 1973, 12: 138). From the perspective of social psychology, this situation is a clear example of “chronic stress resulting from social rejection” (Cacioppo et al. 2011), accompanied by symptoms such as a sensation of pressure in the chest (described in the verse as *ḍayq al-ṣadr*). The concept of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in Q. 15:97 has been examined from multiple perspectives by classical Qur'anic exegetes and contemporary psychologists. Although these perspectives appear different at first glance, they all emphasize the practical

dimensions of this Qur'anic notion in managing emotions and addressing psycho-social challenges. Below is a synthesis of the main approaches, integrating exegetical findings with psychological insights.

4.1. Elucidation of the Prophet's Ḍayq al-Ṣadr in Facing Social Harassment

Exegetes maintain that the verse, “*And We certainly know that your chest is constrained by what they say*” (Q. 15:97), constitutes a divine response to the psychological pressures the Prophet endured at the hands of the polytheists. Such harassment included false accusations, intense mockery, and even physical attacks, such as placing the entrails of animals on him while he was in prostration (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 2003, 1: 594; al-Majlisī 1983, 39: 56). From a psychological standpoint, this verse aligns with the concepts of stress resulting from social humiliation (Lazarus & Folkman 1984) and emotional vulnerability (Barlow 2002). By acknowledging the Prophet's negative emotions (*naʿlamu*), the Qur'an employs an emotional validation technique, also used in modern psychotherapy approaches such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan 1993). This approach involves three key mechanisms: Cognitive restructuring with emphasis on divine knowledge; Emotion regulation through glorification (*tasbīḥ*), which has been shown to reduce amygdala activity (Newberg et al. 2010); Resilience building by reminding of the prophetic mission (Q. 15:94).

The Qur'anic recommendation of *tasbīḥ* functions similarly to mindfulness practices. Research indicates that religious recitation activates the prefrontal cortex, reducing anxiety (Newberg & Waldman 2010). This perspective is supported by the saying of Imam al-Ḥusayn: “Awareness of divine surveillance makes enduring suffering easier” (al-Majlisī 1983, 45: 46). Overall, these verses present a comprehensive model for managing negative emotions, addressing both the affective domain and offering practical strategies for coping with social stressors. Exegetes such as al-Ṭabrisī and Tabatabaʿi interpret this as a form of divine support that is both consolatory and therapeutic (al-Ṭabrisī 1993, 6: 534; Tabatabaʿi 1973, 12: 287; al-Mudarrisī 1998, 5: 493).

4.2. Humanity of Prophets

In this view, exegetes stress the human nature of the Prophet and the inherent limitations of human beings. Emotional reactions such as *ḍayq al-ṣadr* are considered part of human nature, and the Prophet was no exception (al-Mughnīyyah 2003, 4: 492; al-Marāghī n.d., 14: 48). This interpretation

corresponds with psychological theories on the limited capacity of humans to endure emotional stress (Lazarus & Folkman 1984). Scientifically, research shows that prolonged exposure to social stress can lead to symptoms such as shortness of breath and a feeling of chest tightness (Lazarus & Folkman 1984; McEwen 1998; Barlow 2002), which parallels the Qur'anic depiction of *ḍayq al-ṣadr*. This condition is due to the activation of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis and the limbic system, producing physiological symptoms similar to Qur'anic descriptions. Notably, the Qur'an's use of the present tense verb *na'lamu* signifies God's simultaneous awareness of the Prophet's emotions at the moment of occurrence (al-Khaṭīb 2003, 7: 265; al-Qāsimī 1998, 6: 347). This aligns with modern theories regarding individual differences in stress tolerance (Bonanno 2004) and emotional intelligence (Goleman 2005). Faḍlallāh (2018, 10: 195) considers the affective element central to these reactions, while Qara'ati (2009, 4: 484) regards it as evidence for the importance of emotional self-regulation within a religious framework. This view posits that *ḍayq al-ṣadr* is not a sign of weakness, but part of the intelligent design of the human psycho-physiological system. Research shows that even resilient individuals experience burnout under chronic stress (Southwick & Charney 2012), underscoring the naturalness of the Prophet's reactions. This perspective bridges religious concepts with health psychology findings.

4.3. *Managing the Pressures of Religious Mission*

According to this view, exegetes hold that the verse in Sura al-Hijr, by emphasizing the continuity of the Prophet's mission despite the polytheists' harassment, offers a comprehensive approach to managing psychological pressures. In other words, God strengthens the Prophet's spirit by reminding him of his duty to proclaim the faith, stressing that tightness of the chest should not hinder the fulfillment of the mission (Ṭayyib 1999, 8: 75; al-Zuhaylī 1987, 14: 74; Javadi Amoli 2017, 45: 301). This view corresponds with motivational models such as self-determination theory (Davidson et al. 2000), which suggest that focusing on meaningful goals enhances resistance to obstacles. From the perspective of emotion psychology, the divine command to be patient and continue the mission functions similarly to cognitive restructuring techniques used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Beck 2011). This reframing—from “these harassments are distressing” to “this is a test for the mission”—reduces cortisol levels (Pargament et al. 2001). Furthermore, the divine promise, “*Indeed, We are sufficient for you against the mockers*” (Q 15:95), operates as a mechanism of social support, mitigating the effects of stress (Cohen & Wills 1985). Neuroscientific findings corroborate this: activity in the brain's prefrontal cortex—linked to

decision-making and motivation—increases in individuals with meaningful goals (Davidson et al. 2003). This convergence between exegetical perspectives and psychological research demonstrates that the Qur’anic emphasis on mission continuity is not merely a religious exhortation but a scientifically grounded strategy for emotional management and maintaining performance under difficult conditions.

4.4. *Qur’anic Strategies in Facing Emotional Pressures*

Exegetes of the Qur’an have examined the practical strategies presented in its verses for coping with psychological pressures. In various passages, the Qur’an presents the behavioral patterns of the Prophet in facing harassment by disbelievers and polytheists. These include:

- Turning away (*i’rāḍ*): *So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the polytheists (Q. 15:94);*
- Reliance on God (*tawakkul*): *Lord of the east and the west, there is no god except Him, so take Him for your trustee (Q. 73:9);*
- Remembrance (*dhikr*) and glorification (*tasbīḥ*): *So be patient with what they say, and celebrate the praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before the sunset, and glorify Him in watches of the night and at the day’s ends, that you may be pleased (Q. 20:130);*
- Patience (*ṣabr*): *We certainly know that what they say grieves you... Apostles were certainly denied before you, yet they patiently bore being denied and tormented until Our help came to them (Q. 6:33–34).*

Some scholars maintain that God, by providing instructions such as *dhikr* and *tasbīḥ*, offered the Prophet a way to overcome grief and anxiety (Makarem Shirazi 1995, 11: 142; Quṭb 1991, 4: 2155). These strategies not only remove the negative effects of hurtful words but also strengthen morale and enhance resilience. From a psychological perspective, the concept of *dayq al-ṣadr* is comparable to the constructs of stress (Lazarus & Folkman 1984) and anxiety (Barlow 2002). In both cases, environmental stimuli lead to similar physiological symptoms, such as shortness of breath and a sensation of pressure in the chest. The key difference lies in the coping strategies: whereas modern psychology emphasizes techniques such as cognitive restructuring (Beck 2011), the Qur’an recommends *tasbīḥ* (glorification) and *ḥamd* (praise) of the Lord in the first place. Narratives indicating that the Prophet would resort to prayer in times of sorrow (al-Majlisī 1983) confirm the use of “religious–spiritual coping strategies” (Pargament 2011) in stress management. Furthermore, the Sura’s emphasis on patience (*wa-ṣbir* Q. 15:85) and turning away from the polytheists (*wa-*

a 'riḍ 'ani al-mushrikīn (Q. 15:94) provides an operational model for dealing with social stressors—one also validated in modern “conflict management” models (De Dreu 2007).

Recent research has shown that spiritual practices such as *dhikr*-recitation (Newberg & Waldman 2010) and mindfulness-based techniques (Kabat-Zinn 2003) can, by activating emotion-regulation areas in the brain and lowering cortisol levels, produce effects comparable to psychotherapeutic interventions. These findings are in notable harmony with the Qur'anic recommendation of *tasbīḥ* (Q. 15:98). Furthermore, some exegetes believe that these divine instructions transform *ḍayq al-ṣadr* from a passive reaction into an opportunity for spiritual growth (al-Ḥijāzī 1992, 2: 294). This perspective aligns with the psychological concept of finding meaning in suffering (Seligman 2011). Table 1 summarizes the correlations between exegetical approaches and psychological concepts concerning *ḍayq al-ṣadr*.

Table 1. Correlations between Exegetical Approaches and Psychological Concepts/Theories on *ḍayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an

Exegetical Perspective	Key Components	Corresponding Psychological Concepts	Empirical/Theoretical Evidence
First Approach: Consolation of the Prophet's heart	Divine validation of emotions (<i>na 'lamu</i>)	Emotional validation	Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan 1993)
	Provision of coping strategy (<i>tasbīḥ</i>)	Spirituality-based mindfulness	Reduced amygdala activity through spiritual practices (Newberg & Waldman 2010)
	Emphasis on divine support	Secure attachment theory	Role of social support in reducing stress (Cohen & Wills 1985)
Second Approach: Humanity of the Prophets	Naturalness of <i>ḍayq al-ṣadr</i>	Lazarus's stress theory	HPA axis activation in chronic stress (McEwen 1998)
	Physiological limitations	Emotional exhaustion	
	Not a sign of weakness	Individual differences in stress tolerance (Bonanno 2004)	
Third Approach: Emphasis on the Prophetic Mission	Cognitive reframing	Cognitive restructuring (CBT)	Increased prefrontal cortex activity in meaningful goal pursuit (Davidson et al. 2003)
		Self-Determination Theory (Davidson et al. 2003)	
	Perseverance in mission despite pressures	Meaning-based resilience (Seligman 2011)	
Fourth Approach: Practical strategies	<i>Tasbīḥ</i>	Mindfulness	Reduced cortisol through spiritual practices (Razali et al. 2002)
	<i>Ṣabr</i> (patience)	Distress tolerance	
	Turning away from polytheists	Conflict management (De Dreu 2007)	

The educational-social applications of *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an have high potential for the design of psychological interventions and educational programs. Empirical studies confirm that spiritual practices similar to *dhikr*, by lowering cortisol levels and activating the prefrontal cortex, enhance resilience in the face of interpersonal challenges (Newberg et al. 2010; Razali et al. 2002). In family counseling, reinterpreting *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* as a natural phenomenon (Q. 16:127) can help couples reframe the emotional pressures arising from conflict as part of the relational growth process. This view aligns with family psychology theories such as the "relational resilience" model (Walsh 2006), while adding a spiritual dimension that provides a more comprehensive framework. At the societal level, the Qur'anic emphasis on "turning away from the polytheists" (Q. 15:94) offers a model for conflict management that preserves human dignity while preventing the escalation of tensions (De Dreu 2007). Overall, the Qur'an, by anticipating the psychological mechanisms of *Ḍayq al-ṣadr*, offers strategies applicable both in the era of revelation and in contemporary times. This integrated approach addresses emotional dimensions while emphasizing spirituality, thus providing a comprehensive framework for managing psychological pressures.

5. Associated Concepts and Verses

With regard to the interpretation of the verse under discussion, it should be noted that there are other verses in the Qur'an that, in some way, align with the intended concept particularly with honoring, affirming, and providing special support for the Prophet.

5.1. Divine Appreciation for the Prophet's Exceptional Compassion

The Qur'an frequently acknowledges the Prophet's profound compassion and sensitivity toward his people, even when they rejected faith. His grief over their denial reflects the intensity of his mission and his selfless concern for their salvation. In this regard, several verses highlight the depth of the Prophet's emotional burden and God's consoling response.

You are liable to imperil your life for their sake, if they should not believe this discourse, out of grief (Q. 18:6).

According to Tabataba'i (1973, 13: 240), this verse and the following two verses aim to console and comfort the Messenger of God.

Indeed Allah leads astray whomever He wishes, and guides whomever He wishes. So do not fret yourself to death regretting for them. Indeed Allah knows best what they do (Q 35:8).

The term *ḥasarāt* is the plural of *ḥasrah*, meaning sorrow over something lost and regret for it. The expression “do not fret yourself to death regretting for them” means “do not destroy yourself out of grief over their refusal to believe” (Tabataba'i 1973, 17: 19).

5.2. Bestowal of Divine Tranquility (*Sakīnah*)

During moments of trial and collective hardship, the Qur'an emphasizes that divine tranquility (*sakīnah*) was bestowed upon the Prophet and the believers. This spiritual composure served as a stabilizing force, enabling them to persevere with strength and serenity. The concept of *sakīnah* thus reflects God's direct intervention in calming troubled hearts.

Then Allah sent down His composure upon His Apostle and upon the faithful, and He sent down hosts you did not see, and He punished the faithless, and that is the requital of the faithless (Q. 9:26)

If you do not help him, then Allah has already helped him when the faithless expelled him, as one of two [refugees], when the two of them were in the cave... Then Allah sent down His composure upon him ... (Q. 9:40).

According to Tabataba'i (1973, 9: 227), *sakīnah* is a mental state that brings calm to the soul and firmness to the heart, and, as inferred from the verses, it is accompanied by an increase in faith and is associated with *taqwā*, which inclines the heart toward avoiding what God has prohibited.

5.3. Granting of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr* (Expansion in the Chest)

The Qur'an also portrays the Prophet as the recipient of divine *sharḥ al-ṣadr*—the expansion and illumination of the chest. This gift symbolizes spiritual openness, inner light, and resilience, equipping the Messenger with the capacity to bear the heavy responsibility of revelation and guidance.

Did We not open your chest for you and relieve you of your burden? (Q. 94:1–2).

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1991, 449) explains that the term *sharḥ* originally means “to open flesh and the like,” and one of its figurative uses is *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, which means the expansion and illumination of the chest through divine light, tranquility from God, and a spirit from Him (Tabataba'i 1973, 20: 314). Table 2 presents the alignment of Qur'anic concepts (*ḍayq al-ṣadr*,

sharḥ al-ṣadr, dhikr and tasbīḥ) with psychological concepts/theories.

Table 2. Alignment of *Qur'anic concepts related to emotion regulation with psychological concepts and theories*

Qur'anic Concept	Psychological Equivalent	Key Commonalities	Evidence/Theories
<i>Ḍayq al-Ṣadr</i>	Psychological pressure; Situational stress; social anxiety	Sensation of constriction and psychosomatic tension when facing stress; Limited coping resources	Lazarus's Stress Theory (1984); Gross's Emotion Regulation Theory (1998); HPA axis activation (McEwen 1998)
<i>Dhikr and Tasbīḥ</i>	Mindfulness; Cognitive reappraisal	Reduced amygdala activity; Enhanced psychological calmness and concentration	Neuroscientific studies (Newberg et al. 2010); Mindfulness interventions (Kabat-Zinn 2003)
<i>Sharḥ al-Ṣadr</i>	Resilience; Psychological flexibility	Greater capacity for enduring pressure and psychological recovery	Positive Psychology (Seligman 2011); Prefrontal cortex activity in meaningful goal pursuit (Davidson 2003)

5.4. God's Awareness of the Prophet's Sorrow

The repeated rejection and ridicule of the disbelievers caused the Prophet grief and emotional strain. Yet the Qur'an assures him that God is fully aware of both his sorrow and the hidden intentions of his opponents. These verses serve as both comfort and a reminder of divine support in the face of hostility.

So be patient, and you cannot be patient except with Allah [‘s help]. And do not grieve for them, nor be upset by their guile (Q. 16:127);

So do not let their remarks grieve you. We indeed know whatever they hide and whatever they disclose (Q. 36:76);

Do not grieve at their remarks; indeed all might belong to Allah; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing (Q. 10:65).

The Almighty, in Q. 16:127, commands His Messenger to be patient, assuring him that the ability to endure such bitterness for God's sake is from Him. The statement “do not be in distress” apparently means “do not lose patience due to their plots” (Tabataba'i 1973, 12: 374).

5.5. Not Abandoning the Prophet and Divine Care

Opponents of the Prophet mocked him, suggesting that he had been forsaken when revelation was delayed. The Qur'an firmly rejects this

accusation, affirming instead that God's care and protection never waver.

Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor is He displeased with you, and the Hereafter shall be better for you than the world (Q. 93:3–4).

This expression is a reassurance and consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him), indicating that if the revelation is occasionally delayed, it is due to considerations known to God. It should never be taken as evidence—despite the assertions of His enemies—that God is displeased with him or intends to abandon him. He remains continually the recipient of God's special grace and care, and is always encompassed by His particular protection. Moreover the verse affirms that the worldly life of the Prophet, despite its honor and divine attention, is nothing compared to his afterlife, which is better than his worldly existence (Tabataba'i 1973, 20: 310; Makarem Shirazi 1995, 27:97).

6. Discussion

An examination of the concept of *ḍayq al-ṣadr* within the frameworks of other religions and philosophical systems indicates that this emotional phenomenon is reflected in different forms across numerous spiritual traditions. In Christianity, the concept of “sorrow of the spirit,” mentioned in the epistles of Saint Paul (Romans 8:26), bears similarities to *ḍayq al-ṣadr*: both encompass inner tensions arising from encounters with spiritual crises. However, in the Qur'anic model, emphasis is placed on the activating role of *tasbīḥ* and *ṣabr*, whereas in Christianity, the acceptance of suffering is regarded as participation in the sufferings of Christ (Pargament 2011).

In Buddhism, the concept of *dukkha*—existential suffering—highlights the non-material dimensions of psychological pain. Yet, unlike the Qur'an, which provides practical measures such as *tasbīḥ*, the path to liberation from *dukkha* is predominantly sought through meditation and release (Rahula 1974). These differences reveal that while the core emotional experience may be common, Qur'anic coping strategies are distinctive in their practicality and integration of spirituality into daily life.

Furthermore, a comparison of the Qur'anic model with Western psychological theories, such as Lazarus's stress model (1984) or Gross's emotion regulation theory (1998), exposes notable limitations in these frameworks. While Lazarus's model focuses on the cognitive appraisal of stress-inducing stimuli, the Qur'an introduces *tasbīḥ* as a metacognitive strategy that enables individuals to transcend mere interpretation of stimuli by altering their state of awareness, thus breaking the cycle of negative emotions. This perspective aligns with neuroscientific research indicating

that spiritual practices such as *dhikr* can directly modulate amygdala activity (Newberg et al. 2010). Similarly, although Gross's theory emphasizes the reappraisal of emotions, it overlooks the role of spirituality as a mechanism for emotion regulation; the Qur'an, by transforming *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* into an opportunity for divine closeness (Q. 15:98), imbues emotional states with meaning. This approach resonates with findings in positive psychology regarding the connection between meaning and resilience (Seligman 2011). These comparisons demonstrate that the Qur'anic model is not only theoretically richer but also supported by empirical evidence, making it a complementary framework to prevailing psychological theories.

7. Conclusion

The analysis and conclusions of the present study indicate that the concept of *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* in the Qur'an holds significance from multiple perspectives. Semantically, it denotes a state of emotional pressure and constriction of the chest resulting from confronting social stressors, as manifested in the life of the Prophet. A comparative examination with contemporary psychological theories reveals that *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* parallels constructs such as situational stress and generalized anxiety, yet it possesses a crucial distinction: the Qur'an's emphasis on the spiritual and divine dimensions of the phenomenon, which transforms it into an opportunity for character growth and enhanced resilience.

From a psychological standpoint, the Qur'anic prescription of *dhikr* and *tasbīḥ* is considered a mechanism for emotional regulation. Neuroscientific findings support this view, showing that such spiritual practices can lower cortisol levels and activate brain regions involved in emotional regulation, producing effects comparable to modern mindfulness techniques. This overlap between religious teachings and scientific findings creates a high potential for developing psychological interventions grounded in Qur'anic concepts. From an educational perspective, the Qur'an's three-stage approach to confronting *Ḍayq al-ṣadr*—acceptance of negative emotions, cognitive reappraisal, and meaningful action—aligns with the latest models of emotional education. This approach is applicable not only at the individual level but also in social interactions, serving as a framework for improving the quality of interpersonal communication.

Exegetical perspectives on *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* are generally concentrated on four main themes: its supportive and consolatory aspects, its naturalness as a human reaction, its connection to prophetic responsibilities, and the provision of practical strategies for its management. This diversity of perspectives reflects the conceptual richness of *Ḍayq al-ṣadr* and allows for

its application in various fields of psychology and education. Based on the context of the verses—which convey the great divine blessing of the Qur'an and present the Prophet as a warner—it appears that the intent is to remind the Prophet that such extensive disparagement is natural and predictable in light of the magnitude of his mission. Therefore, he should, with magnanimity, turn away from such ungodly and inhumane behaviors and immerse himself more deeply in spirituality and divine *tasbīḥ*. This is precisely the social and educational perspective that can illuminate the path for all who continue the mission of the Prophet. This approach demonstrates that *ḍayq al-ṣadr* is not a weakness but an integral part of the prophetic mission, and that Qur'anic strategies such as *tasbīḥ* constitute a divine mechanism for transforming this constriction into an opportunity for growth. It thus offers a practical model for confronting social challenges in all eras.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that a reinterpretation of Qur'anic concepts such as *ḍayq al-ṣadr* through an interdisciplinary lens can lead to the development of strategies in psychology and educational sciences. Such concepts not only possess religious and historical value but also, due to their alignment with contemporary scientific findings, have the potential to be transformed into practical strategies for counseling, education, and stress management. This research paves the way for future studies on integrating religious concepts with modern psychology, emphasizing the need for greater attention to these underexplored capacities.

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