

Integrating the Qur'an into Counseling Practice: Towards a Psychospiritual Model for Muslim Societies

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ABSTRACT

The use of the Qur'an in counseling services constitutes a psychospiritual innovation that enriches and broadens conventional intervention frameworks. While contemporary counseling approaches, such as cognitive-behavioral and humanistic models, provide effective techniques for addressing psychological concerns, they often lack emphasis on spiritual dimensions that are central to the lived experiences of many Muslims. This study aims to develop a psychospiritual counseling model that integrates Qur'anic guidance with the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) – Stages of Change, thereby addressing the emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs of Muslim clients in a holistic manner. Employing a qualitative textual analysis, the study selected twenty Qur'anic verses and systematically aligned them with the TTM framework. The verses were organized into three thematic categories corresponding to specific stages of change: calming the heart and acceptance (pre-contemplation and contemplation), providing strength and hope (preparation and action), and guidance with positive action (action and maintenance). The findings highlight that Qur'anic verses not only offer psychological relief and resilience but also provide spiritual motivation and practical guidance, thereby complementing the evidence-based structure of TTM. This integrative model demonstrates how counseling grounded in both psychology and spirituality can foster deeper healing, sustained transformation, and faith-based resilience in Muslim clients.

Keywords: acceptance, strength, TTM, mental health, finding, change, action

INTRODUCTION

Counseling that combines sacred religious texts with traditional counseling methods provides notable benefits, as these two elements enhance each other to create a more comprehensive intervention framework (Currier et al, 2023). According to Ukro et al (2024), sacred scriptures offer values, meaning, and spiritual fortitude that can engage the spiritual aspect of individuals and foster inner tranquility. In contrast, conventional counseling is based on contemporary psychological theories and offers empirical techniques for comprehending human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Devlin, Birkey & Smith, 2024)

Jastrzębski (2022) believes that the integration of these approaches results in a form of counseling that not only psychologically addresses emotional distress but also rejuvenates spiritual well-being and self-confidence through its spiritual elements. This synergistic method supports the idea that overall human wellness involves a harmonious balance among physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions (Jangha, 2023). Consequently, incorporating sacred texts alongside traditional counseling can yield interventions that are more effective and attuned to the cultural contexts and religious beliefs of clients. This study seeks to establish a psycho-spiritual counseling model rooted in the Qur'an that caters to the mental, emotional, and spiritual

requirements of Muslim communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative textual analysis with an integrative approach that merges the Qur'an as the main source with the psychological framework of the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) – Stages of Change, conceptualized by Prochaska and DiClemente's (Evers and Balestrieri, 2023). TTM is a behavior change model based on empirical research, which elucidates how individuals navigate through various stages of change in a sequential manner. In contrast to theories that focus on static personality traits or behaviors, TTM offers a developmental viewpoint, emphasizing gradual and progressive transformation (Nicoară, Tegzeşiu, & Popescu, 2024). Its key elements—the stages and processes of change—serve as a valuable framework for counseling interventions, especially when paired with spiritual guidance from the Qur'an.

As specified by Del Rio Szupszynski, & de Ávila, (2021), a significant aspect of TTM, which has garnered extensive support from researchers, is the fluid transition between stages of change. Progression typically follows an ordered pathway from Precontemplation → Contemplation → Preparation → Action → Maintenance; however, it can also entail regressions to earlier stages before moving forward again. This spiral-like advancement mirrors the complexities of client development, allowing for flexible application within counseling environments. By integrating this model with Qur'anic verses, the study facilitates a richer investigation into spiritual meanings while grounding them within an empirically validated psychological framework.

The primary tool employed in this research comprises 20 selected Qur'anic verses categorized according to three principal themes pertinent to counseling practice: (i) soothing the heart and confronting grief, (ii) providing courage and optimism, and (iii) offering direction and constructive action. The verses were organized based on brief tafsir (exegesis) and their contextual significance concerning clients' emotional and psychological needs. This classification enables systematic alignment of the verses with TTM's stages of change, effectively bridging spiritual guidance with psychological processes.

The methodology involved structuring the chosen verses into three thematic categories that align with distinct stages of TTM. Verses addressing Calmness and Acceptance were matched with both pre-contemplation and contemplation phases, aiding clients in emotional regulation and fostering initial awareness. Verses focused on Strength and Hope were correlated with preparation and action phases to reinforce motivation and resilience throughout the change process. Lastly, verses related to Guidance and Positive action were connected to action and maintenance phases, supporting clients in sustaining positive behaviors while incorporating them into everyday life.

Data analysis was conducted thematically, concentrating on how Qur'anic content aligns with clients' psychological needs across various stages of change. This analysis was bolstered by existing empirical studies on TTM demonstrating its efficacy in areas such as smoking cessation (Prochaska et al., 1992) and mental health (Norcross et al., 2011). Thus, merging Qur'anic verses within the TTM framework creates a comprehensive model for psychospiritual counseling that addresses both psychological well-being and spiritual dimensions for clients.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM), also known as the Stages of Change, was developed by Prochaska and DiClemente in 1983. This model outlines that behavioral transformation occurs gradually through five primary stages: pre-contemplation (unawareness), contemplation (beginning reflection), preparation (readiness), action (implementation), and maintenance (sustaining change). In the initial stage, clients may either be oblivious to their issues or in denial but begin to recognize the necessity for change over time. Subsequently, they advance to the preparation stage, during which they devise appropriate strategies prior to taking definitive actions aimed at improving their circumstances. The concluding stage focuses on preserving the changes made to avert relapse.

This framework aligns with three categories identified in this study. The Calmness & Acceptance section relates to both the pre-contemplation and contemplation stages, concentrating on assisting clients in emotional regulation and fostering initial awareness. The Strength & Hope section corresponds with the preparation and action stages, highlighting motivation, resilience, and support for progression. Lastly, the Guidance and Positive Action section reflects both the action and maintenance stages, where clients consistently engage in positive practices to uphold their advancements. This structure facilitates a more organized, incremental, and holistic approach to counseling.

In psychology and counseling domains, TTM – Stages of Change serves as an effective framework for comprehending client motivation and transformation processes. Early investigations by Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross (1992) regarding smoking cessation indicated that interventions based on stages were more successful than generic advice. This effectiveness stems from the ability of counseling strategies to be customized according to a client's readiness for change—whether they remain in denial, are beginning to contemplate change or are ready to take definitive steps.

Similarly, research conducted by Norcross, Krebs, and Prochaska (2011) related to mental health counseling demonstrated that TTM assists counselors in avoiding a “one-size-fits-all” methodology by gaining insight into their clients' stages of change. For instance, individuals in the pre-contemplation phase benefit from empathy and awareness enhancement while those actively making changes receive better support through practical strategies. This method improves psychological therapy's efficacy by aligning interventions with clients' specific needs.

In the research done by Elkadi (1984) and Badri (2018), their findings indicate that Qur’anic contemplation effectively cultivates patience among adolescents due to several key factors. Firstly, reciting Qur’anic verses offers psychological and physiological advantages such as stress reduction, enhanced relaxation, and increased tranquility—a conclusion supported by previous studies

Secondly, storytelling from the Qur’an serves as inspirational guidance for character building while reflecting a longstanding tradition of using narratives within educational contexts (Hussain & Khurshed, 2021). Thirdly, incorporating prayer into counseling sessions fosters spiritual connections and emotional healing; various forms, such as meditative or petitionary prayer, provide distinct benefits (Ahmad et al, 2025). Finally, counselor competence is vital; they must blend spiritual sensitivity with integrity and fundamental knowledge of the Qur’an to effectively guide their counselees (Vieten, 2013). Challenges can emerge when counselees express doubts about the Qur’an or face impairments or when counselors lack integrity or adequate Islamic knowledge.

FINDINGS

The analysis of existing literature on the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) and Qur’anic-based interventions reveals the advantages of merging psychological theories with spiritual insights. The TTM offers a systematic approach to understanding behavioral change through distinct stages, while the Qur’an imparts significant wisdom regarding emotional management, resilience, and intentional behavior. By integrating these viewpoints, this research creates a psychospiritual counseling model that is both evidence-based and relevant to the context of Muslim clients. The next section outlines selected Qur’anic verses, organized according to themes such as heart calming and acceptance, empowerment and hope, as well as direction for constructive actions, all corresponding with the stages of change outlined in TTM.

No	Surah & Verse	Text of the Qur’an	Stage
1	Ar-Ra’d 13:28	Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort.	Calming the Heart & Acceptance
2	Al-Inshirah 94:5-6	Indeed, with hardship comes ease. Indeed, with hardship comes ease.	

3	Al-Fath 48:4	He it is Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers so that they may increase in faith along with their present faith.	
4	Yunus 10:57	O mankind! There has come to you an instruction from your Lord, a healing for what is in the breasts, and guidance and mercy for the believers.	
5	Al-Isra' 17:82	And We send down in the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it increases the wrongdoers in nothing but loss.	
6	Al-Baqarah 2:152	Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you; and be grateful to Me and never deny Me.	
7	Al-Hadid 57:22-23	No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book before We bring it into being. Verily, that is easy for Allah. (We declare this) so that you may not despair over what has escaped you, nor exult over what He has granted you. And Allah does not love the arrogant and boastful.	
8	Al-Baqarah 2:286	Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. [They pray:] "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we forget or make a mistake. Our Lord, do not place upon us a burden like that which You placed upon those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us with what we cannot bear. Pardon us, forgive us, have mercy on us. You are our Protector, so help us against the disbelieving people."	Giving Strength & Hope
9	At-Talaq 65:2-3	Whoever fears Allah – He will make for him a way out. And He will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah – He will suffice him.	
10	Al-Baqarah 2:153	O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.	
11	Az-Zumar 39:53	Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."	
12	Al-Ankabut 29:69	And those who strive for Us – We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.	
13	Al-Baqarah 2:45	And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah].	
14	Al-Imran 3:139	So do not weaken and do not grieve, for you will be superior if you are [true] believers.	
15	Al-Baqarah 2:286 (closing supplication)	Our Lord, do not burden us with what we cannot bear. Pardon us, forgive us, have mercy on us. You are our Protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people.	Guidance & Positive Action
16	Al-Baqarah 2:286 (beginning of verse)	To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, Allah will bring you to account for it.	

17	Al-A'raf 7:199	Hold to forgiveness, enjoin what is right, and turn away from the ignorant.	
18	Ash-Sharh 94:7-8	So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing.	
19	Al-Anfal 8:46	And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.	
20	Al-Baqarah 2:286 (prayer not to bear heavy burden)	Our Lord, do not place upon us a burden like that which You placed upon those before us.	

Based on the 20 selected verses, the researcher divided them into three sections aligned with the stages of change in TTM: *Calming the Heart & Acceptance* (pre-contemplation and contemplation), *Giving Strength & Hope* (preparation and action), and *Guidance & Positive Action* (action and maintenance). This categorization provides a clear framework for integrating Qur'anic guidance with psychological change processes, forming the basis of the study's findings.

Section 1: Verses for Calming the Heart and Acceptance

The first section focuses on clients experiencing grief, loss, or emotional distress. Its primary emphasis is on instilling peace of mind by reminding that Allah is ever near, fully aware of all that occurs, and grants tranquility to His servants. Among the relevant verses are *Ar-Ra'd* (13:28), *Al-Inshirah* (94:5-6), and *Al-Fath* (48:4), which stress that true serenity of the heart can only be attained through a profound connection with Allah. In addition, *Yunus* (10:57) and *Al-Isra'* (17:82) highlight the Qur'an's role as a spiritual remedy and mercy for the believers. Meanwhile, *Al-Baqarah* (2:152) and *Al-Hadid* (57:22-23) remind believers that every calamity unfolds by Allah's permission and knowledge, so that people may not sink into excessive sorrow.

Section 2: Verses for Providing Strength and Hope

The second section addresses clients who have lost motivation, feel weakened, or are on the verge of despair. The selected verses emphasize that every trial is proportionate to the individual's capacity to endure it, as stated in *Al-Baqarah* (2:286). Moreover, Allah promises deliverance and sustenance for those who are mindful of Him, as in *At-Talaq* (65:2-3), while affirming His presence with those who remain patient in *Al-Baqarah* (2:153). Verses such as *Az-Zumar* (39:53) and *Ali Imran* (3:139) dispel hopelessness by underscoring the vastness of Allah's mercy and the elevated status of the believers. Additionally, *Al-Baqarah* (2:45) and *Al-Ankabut* (29:69) encourage perseverance even in the face of hardship, reigniting hope and determination to move forward.

Section 3: Verses for Guidance and Positive Action

The third section is intended for clients who have regained inner peace and strength but require direction in taking constructive steps forward. The main focus is on prayer, forgiveness, steadfastness, and consistent effort. *Al-Baqarah* (2:286) underscores the importance of supplication as a means to seek forgiveness, mercy, and protection from burdens beyond one's capacity. *Al-A'raf* (7:199) teaches the value of forgiveness and turning away from conflict, while *Al-Anfal* (8:46) warns that division weakens unity and strength. Furthermore, *Ash-Sharh* (94:7-8) emphasizes the spirit of continuous striving with full reliance upon Allah. Collectively, this section highlights how clients can transform grief and weakness into positive actions, thereby building a renewed life characterized by resilience, maturity, and perseverance.

CONCLUSION

The incorporation of specific Qur'anic verses within the context of the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) – Stages of Change offers a comprehensive approach to counseling that addresses both the psychological and spiritual aspects of clients. The three key themes—soothing the heart and managing grief, instilling strength and hope, and directing towards constructive actions—function as interconnected stages that correspond with the gradual

progression of behavioral change described in TTM. Collectively, they illustrate that emotional recovery, resilience, and enduring change necessitate not just psychological techniques but also a foundation in spirituality. This integrative framework ensures that clients transition from emotional turmoil to empowerment and sustained positive behavior, ultimately promoting well-being rooted in both faith and personal development.

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