



Specifying the Concept of Sadness in the Holy Qur'an: A Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

Introduction: Sadness is the most important natural emotion of human beings. The feeling of sadness is experienced throughout the private and public life of mankind. Therefore, the present study aimed to explain the concept of grief by referring to the Holy Qur'an.

Methods: This study was conducted through qualitative content analysis method. From among the Qur'anic concepts relevant to sadness, which were collected from the whole Qur'an, 60 concepts were selected via targeted sampling for analysis.

Results: From the analysis of the Qur'anic concepts of sadness, six main categories including "physiology", "psychology", "emotion", "spirituality", "remedy", and "consequences" emerged.

Conclusion: According to the results, it can be inferred that sadness in the Holy Qur'an is a multidimensional concept and various structures have been used to explain it. That is why all human beings, with respect to the high incidence of depression and sadness, have to pay more attention to this concept, and for being treated, they must accept that all things in the universe occur under God's lordship.

Keywords: Holy Qur'an, Sadness, Physiology, Psychology, Emotion

Introduction

Human is a multidimensional being made up of various dimensions including feelings and emotions. Human beings are sometimes happy and smiling, sometimes puzzled and confused, and at times overwhelmed by a strange feeling of sickness, distress, heartache, and grief. Among these unbearable feelings, sadness is an inevitable suffering which can be prevalently seen among many

human beings, and almost all humans have experienced it so many times throughout their lives (1). They have experienced this kind of emotional agitation because they have presumably lost somebody or something valuable in their own life. This emotion, rooted in the essence of all human beings, is the imaginative conception of oneself for now and future. These imageries are the results of the odds in human mind regarding possible losses. When human beings lose someone or something, these conceptions are



uncontrollable and some signs and symptoms of grief and sadness appear (2).

Sadness has many dimensions, one of which is physiological. Researches have shown that physiological reactions to sadness are "crying", "chest pain" and "weariness" (3). When participants in a study were asked to express themselves one week, one month, and six months after a tragic event, they all described losing a family member with a cry, but for other painful situations both signs of "chest pain" and "weariness" were reported (4). In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, sadness can increase and decrease the heart rate, increase and decrease the skin resistance (galvanic skin resistance), and increase diastolic blood pressure during "losing" relatives. It also became clear that the greater the arousal of sadness when confronted with a painful emotional phenomenon is, the greater the physical changes will be (5). On the other hand, the influence and impact of sadness on physiology will rise. In this way, the permanency of sadness can cause depression. This state of affairs has a profound effect on one's life and causes severe mental distress and internal collapse. Although sadness usually diminishes over time, it can become a painful and prolonged experience and can cause severe mental and emotional difficulties in an individual (6). Moreover, it has been emphasized that severe sadness is often regarded as a prerequisite for other symptoms such as autism and instability in interpersonal relationships (7). The World Health Organization (WHO) believes that more than 350 million people feel depressed in the world, based on the investigations done in 17 countries, more than one in every 20 people is depressed. The study also showed that in 2030, the most common pathogenic cause

of mood disorders will be depression (8). It was believed that deprivation of love and affection in specific and sensitive periods of life can lead to sadness, grief and depression; depriving children of the love and affection of their mothers creates a feeling of hostility in them and may cause the children to dream about harassing others (9). In other words, depriving the society of love will play an important role in depressing people.

One of the essentials of doing this research was making people aware of their inner characteristics. For example, when the Qur'an conceptualizes sadness as blindness, it means that one must become familiar with the physiological or physical effects of sadness and its feedback. Another necessity is that awareness of these physiological feedbacks will contribute to the health of our bodies and soul. Based on these delicate points, it is essential to understand sadness and the way it is conceptualized in order to get a more comprehensive view of the psychoanalysis of depression. Given that the Qur'an is our divine book, it is necessary to study it precisely to discover the depth of the concept of sadness.

The experience of sadness and depression is often subjective, and it seems that quantitative tools do not adequately reveal the nature of such experiences (10). Therefore, it is better to bring into consideration some abstract concepts. That is why the present study with the aim of explaining the concept of sadness has been based on Quranic verses. This is a qualitative and content analysis study that seeks to answer the question: How is sadness conceptualized based on Qur'anic verses?

Methods

This research used a content analysis method based on a qualitative approach. In qualitative content analysis, unlike quantitative content analysis, statistics are not used (11) and data are presented qualitatively based on texts. It is also necessary to mention that, paradigmatically, it is not an inductive approach (12). In other words, in this approach, the researchers categorize the subjects according to their theoretical and scientific research background, and then seek to qualitatively organize the data within the intended content in order to qualitatively fit the data. Finally, the relationships between the categories are explained (13). In this study, the Qur'anic verses that embody the concept of sadness were examined. Sadness was selected since it is one of the most complex problems related to mental health (6).

To analyze the data, content analysis method proposed by Graneheim and Lundman was used (14). This method has seven stages, in the first step of which transcription of the Qur'anic verses related to sorrow was performed meticulously. Secondly, the researchers reviewed the verses several times to deal with the data. In the third step, the data were broken down into semantic units (codes) not just pure forms of sentences, and then revised and reduced. The fourth and fifth steps involved the recording of views that had emerged in the researchers' minds during the first three steps. The sixth step was to put similar codes together and the seventh step was to discover the inside and connotative meanings (themes) which eventually resulted in the extraction of 6 main themes. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire. As analyzing the data

and their components, some religious experts in the Qur'anic fields helped researchers to get more valid data.

Results

In this study, the Qur'anic verses that embody the concept of sadness were looked into and the categorizations were examined carefully to find the main themes and sub-themes. It seems that sadness and depression are very close to each other. On this wise, one of the most complicated problems related to mental health might be made clear and understandable. It can also reveal how sadness should be controlled and treated (6).

The themes and concepts derived from the text of the Qur'an on sadness were more than 60 which led to the formation of six main themes including physiology, psychology, emotion, spirituality, remedy and consequences that are listed in the table (1).

A) Physiology

The Qur'anic concepts showed that human beings may use concrete experiences to conceptualize new ideas. God makes it clear in verse 84 of Surah Yusuf that the chronic pressure of grief can have very negative effects on a person's body and cause severe and fatal sadness and this pressure might incur great floods of tears and blindness. If the sick person is not healed, the chronic pressure of grief may lead to death (Yusuf: 85,86; Al-Kahf: 6 and Ash-Shu'ara: 2). It is also stated in the Qur'an that any disorders in sleep and appetite due to sadness, sorrow and mental pressure ruin the whole body and vividly result in bad condition of body (Yusuf, 84-86; Al-Muzzammil: 17).

Table 1. The results of analysis of the concept of sadness

Sub-themes	Main themes
Body goes into a bad condition Hands are slapped on each other Legs are twisted Eyes become whitened Face gets darkened Body is devastated Body is sunk into the whirlpool	Psychology
Feeling angry Feeling guilty Being frustrated and putting oneself to death Feeling sad Feeling devoured by sorrow Being Jealous Being immersed into grievance Covering face in dust Devastating spirit and self Being depressed	Psychology
Sadness is reflected via drops of tear on face Sadness is shown by floods of tears Sadness is jealousy Sadness is reflected via dusty grin on face Sadness is symbolized as being imprisoned Sadness is fire Sadness is something unusual in the heart	Emotion
Turning to non-God Revealing secrets The sadness of the fire Taking responsibilities Telling lies Being hypocrite Being dishonest Being stupid Being a spy	Spirituality
Everything is under the God's control God knows everything God is mighty The world has positive energy Everybody can absorb the positive energy If man thinks of God, sadness is vanished God is the owner of everything If man asks God to be forgiven, sadness is removed If man prays to God, sadness goes away	Remedy
Financial loss Abortion or giving birth to a dead child Giving birth to a disabled baby girl Divorce, homelessness and joblessness	Consequences

Other Qur'anic verses depict additional physical dimensions of grief by means of the following statements: Sadness can be

shown by hitting one hand on the back of the other hand (Al-Kahf: 42), the twisting of the legs (Al-Qiyamah: 29), and by flatly

refusing to do something (Ghafir: 5). Sadness leads to blindness (Yusef: 84), darkens the face (An-Nahl: 58; Az-Zukhruf: 17), ruins the souls (Ash-Shu'ara: 3), and Sadness is cumulative (Al-Imran: 153).

B) Psychology

Psychologically, all human beings have two dimensions: physical and spiritual. The physical entity, which includes all physical properties, changes continuously from birth to death, but the spiritual entity, which is comprised of concepts such as anger, sadness, and depression, constantly accompany all human beings.

If people feel guilty at losing and damaging something valuable or if they feel that there is a fault in their behavior, they will become angry (Al-Imran:2 and Hud: 2). The Holy Qur'an reports that when people experience severe discomfort, not only they lose confidence to cope with it, but they also become disappointed and desperate. Therefore, they may wish death and hope for release from this heavy pressure (Maryam: 16,23,24). It means that they cannot get rid of this pressure unless they die. Psychologically, it has been proved that the stronger the tendency toward something is in a person, the greater the sense of belonging to it will be. Automatically, the intensity of emotional reactions of human being depends on the intensity of his/her tendencies.

In aforementioned verses, God shows that chastity was so important to Saint Maryam. She could not bear the feeling of loss of chastity in society. Therefore, she expressed her longed-for death. These intensive and strong feelings can be controlled by believers in God and divine Qur'an, however, those who are weak in faith or in religion might be turned up as committing suicide. They are convinced to do that because they

believe it is the only way to escape from grief.

Jealousy is another psychological dimension of sadness mentioned in the Qur'an. There are people who are jealous of others and when they see something valuable in the hands of others, even if they themselves have access to it, they become jealous. This jealousy causes them to grieve (Al-Imran: 2).

C) Emotion

Sadness is an inner state that is usually easily recognizable and its symptoms are mental and physical. The indications include sighing, tearing, wheezing, moaning and being annoyed. The Qur'an says those who mourn the death of their own children suffer a lot of pain (Ta-Ha: 39,40; Yusuf: 84,86). The Qur'an has conceptualized the inflamed grief with fire and has considered it as an emotional dimension. Moreover, the Qur'an says, Sadness burns us all up (Al-Hajj: 22). Other Qur'anic verses also depict the emotional dimensions of sadness: sadness is reflected via drops of tear on face (At-Tawbah: 92), sadness is reflected via dusty grin on face (grumble) (At-Tawbah: 24; Abasa: 40). Sadness is whining and moaning (Al-Muddaththir: 22; Abasa: 1), sadness is turning away from someone (Yusef: 84), sadness penetrates into hearts (Az-Zumar: 61), sadness is symbolized as being imprisoned (As-Saaffaat: 76,115).

D) Spirituality

One aspect of sadness is spirituality. Humans hold themselves accountable for doing their duties, and this sense of responsibility causes one to become upset and embarrassed whenever they feel that they have failed or been unable to perform their duties properly. This has also been reported about our Prophet, Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him). That is why God says in the verse 4 of Surah

Hud that the Prophet (PBUH) became upset and disappointed when he had missed teaching and divulging religious thoughts and some Qur'anic verses to the people. Therefore, it shows that sorrow, depression, grief, and sadness are sometimes caused by lack of high ability in taking duties and responsibilities. God also mentions in the Qur'an that believers suffered severe sorrows after disobeying the Prophet's commands and consequently were defeated in the battle named "Uhud" due to ignoring and unfulfilling their responsibilities and duties (Al-Imran: 2).

In addition, emotions from grief and sorrow may cause people to reveal their own and others' secrets. It is due to the fact that severe stress disorders might reduce rational thinking, and people might be emotionally uncontrollable. If it happens, they lose their mind and logic and undoubtedly uncover their own and others' mysteries. That is why God in the verses 7 and 10 of Surah "Al-Qasas" warns all human beings of the fact that emotional distresses caused by grief and sorrow can prepare them to impart secrets. If these people are not externally administered and cured, they can cause serious harm to themselves, others and even the society.

E) Remedy

Regarding the ways of treating sadness and getting rid of sorrow, it is important to note that similar to other feelings like fear, sorrow is related to both mind and body. It means that all feelings lie at the root of spirit and physique. Therefore, they both have to be brought into consideration in therapeutic strategies. On one hand, Qur'anic thoughts have put emphasis on strategies that try to reconstruct and modify human beings' attitudes, dispositions and imaginations; on the other hand, Qur'an

helps people to accept realities as they are (Al-Hadeed: 22,23). It means that all people have to accept that all things in the universe occur under God's lordship. It also signifies that the things that happen to someone or something, especially unpleasant things are sometimes unavoidable. Meanwhile, listening to others carefully, having knowledge and being proud of one's own dignity and ability (Yunus: 65), believing in divine laws and traditions (Al-Imran: 137-140,176), and trusting divine invisible blessings (Fussilat: 30-31; At-Tawbah: 40) are meant as cures for sorrow, grief and sadness. These guidelines mentioned in Qur'an make human beings have different attitudes and impressions of themselves and of the things they love. They finally deduce that God is the owner of everything. They also conclude that all their belongings might be taken from them abruptly. Based on these illuminations, wise people do their best to return to the right path, forgive themselves and others (Faafir: 34), worship God (Al-Hijr: 97,98), and pray to God (Al-Anbiya: 76; As-Saaffaat: 75,76).

F) Consequences

The main consequences of sadness in the Holy Qur'an can be divided into two categories: financial and spiritual. It means the more you are depressed, the less you are financially and spiritually up. That is to say, sometimes the absence of a spiritual thing such as faith (Abasa: 40,42), blessing (Hadeed: 23), and finance may lead to sadness (Al-Qalam: 18-20, 26,31; Al-Imran: 130-140,153) and vice versa. In addition, Qur'an takes into account losing anything important in life as grief, especially the death of the beloved ones. In Qur'an, although abortion or giving birth to a dead child and in some people a baby girl (An-Nahl: 58; Az-Zukhruf: 16,17) are not as dreadful as the death of the beloved

ones, they are construed as sorrows for parents. Moreover, in Qur'an major changes in lifestyle, such as living alone, getting divorced, being defeated, missing home, having the house destroyed, losing a job, and losing the ability to pursue a professional career can also be considered as the main consequences of sadness and can bring up grief (Al-Imran: 153).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explain the concept of sadness based on Qur'anic verses. The results were categorized into six main themes including "physiology", "psychology", "emotion", "spirituality", "remedy", and "consequences". The first concept derived from data was the physical component. Based on the interpretations of the Qur'anic evidences, the human-body reactions and feedbacks obviously demonstrate the effects of sadness. It means physiological feedbacks help perceiving the implications of sadness in the Qur'an. Therefore, the organs of the body can be considered as the main part of the human cognition (15). As it seems, the Qur'an verses satisfactorily display physiological feedback of sadness. The Qur'an says when someone is sad his/her body goes into a bad condition, his/her hands are slapped on each other (Al-kahf: 42), his/her legs are twisted (Al-Qiyamah: 29), his/her eyes become whitened (Yusuf: 84) and his/her face gets darkened (An-Nahl: 58). These verses utterly represent the physical dimensions of sadness.

In addition, the emotional dimension of sadness has been dealt with in the Holy Qur'an. When losing something valuable in life, one might be mentally immersed in it. It unintentionally may have a profound effect on one's life and causes severe mental distress and internal collapse (16).

According to the Qur'an verses, the emotional dimensions of sadness are shown through drops of tear on face (At-Tawbah: 92), floods of tears (Al-Imran: 140), dusty grin on face (Al-Qiyamah: 24), signs of (As-Saaffaat: 76), and gloomy face (Al-Muddaththir: 22). Although sadness usually diminishes over time, it can turn into a painful and prolonged experience that can lead to severe emotional distress. As it has been mentioned in Qur'an, Wang, et al in investigating "the effects of low and high levels of sadness on scope of attention" also deduced that sadness is an inner state that makes human moan and drastically reduce the scope of attention (17). The consistency of Wang's findings with the Qur'anic outcomes is noticeable and shows that further research on human psychological and emotional aspects should be done.

Fortunately, the psychological dimension of sadness has been repeatedly addressed in the Qur'an. The analysis of the Qur'anic verses indicated that people who may experience disappointment, despair, anger, and depression will suffer from emotional pain. Thus, from the psychological effects, sadness may include feelings of despair (Maryam: 16), death wish (Maryam: 23), and jealousy (Al-Imran: 120). In line with this notion, Gotlib, as mentioned in Enjedani, believed that long-term immersion in grief i.e. having unresolved grief, endangers mental health (18). It is also believed that the experience of sadness is like being in the dark and in the midst of the wreckage and playing a terrible role (19). The Qur'an also takes into account sadness as being in the dark and illustrates the impact of sadness on the human spirit. Research done by Lynch et al. on meditational models has shown that individuals' responses to sadness are depression and hopelessness (20).

Moreover, the results of the content analysis of Qur'anic verses showed that the moral and spiritual dimension of sadness has both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect is that when a person fails to perform his/her duties and responsibilities, he/she becomes sad at that time and tries to compensate for not taking the responsibilities appropriately. As mentioned in Surah Al-Imran, verse 153, the believers became sad when they disobeyed the Prophet's command and failed in the battle of Uhud. The negative aspect of the moral dimension of sadness is the disclosure of the secrets of others due to disturbed emotions and extreme sadness. In verses 7 to 10 of Surah Al-Qasas, God warns human being not to uncover the secrets of others because of mental or physical suffering caused by extreme pain or worry. In this regard, Lynch's research results showed that sad people can cause serious harm to themselves, others, and even society due to the lack of ability to control themselves (21).

In addition, another concept taken from the results of analysis of sadness in the Qur'an was the treatment of sadness. The Qur'an's strategy in this regard is to reform and rebuild the mentality and attitudes as well as to show perceptions and find acceptance of divine fate, knowledge and wisdom (Hadeed: 22,23). Praying to God is another healing way the Qur'an has addressed in the 76th verse of Surah Al-Anbiya and the 75th and 76th verses of Surah As-Saaffaat. This finding is consistent with the results of Rudgar's research. The results of this study showed that one of the main sources of sorrow and grief is losing hope in everything, here is where one should trust God to reach the goals (22).

Finally, the analysis of sadness in the Holy Qur'an verses demonstrated that the

basic causes of sadness are rooted in materialistic and non-materialistic components. Materialistic aspects include losing beloved people, job, or properties and non-materialistic elements are losing faith or honesty or getting divorced (An- Nahl: 58; Al-Imran: 153). According to the Qur'anic thoughts, having divine lifestyle can help human beings to live in peace.

The present research had some limitations. There are different words in Qur'an that convey the meaning of sadness each one showing a specific degree and severity. Therefore, it would take time to study all aspects of sadness in the process of conceptualization. In addition, the qualitative findings do not usually establish generalizable cause-effect relations. However, due to the fact that Qur'anic verses are trustable, this drawback was covered. Moreover, one cannot understand Qur'anic concepts without understanding the framework within which concepts are interpreted. Although some reliable interpretations could compensate for this shortcoming, further research is necessary to know the framework completely.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explain the concept of sadness based on the Qur'an verses. The study showed that the concept of sadness has multidimensional meanings. These different meanings contain different structural variations which are important in the process of conceptualization. Therefore, it is deduced that the process of conceptualization should be examined not only based on religious dimensions but also with accordance to psychological and social ones. In addition, bearing in mind the prevalence of depression and sadness in many societies, the results make this point

clear that all people have to stick to Qur'anic verses in order to keep themselves away from depression and its emotional pain and suffering. It seems all human beings have to accept that all things in the universe occur under God's lordship.

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