

RESILIENCE REDEFINED: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE STORY OF YUSUF A.S.

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly known that the concept of resilience, even though familiar to the human brain, could be challenging to implement in daily life. This paper studies the conceptualisation of resilience from two disciplinary perspectives with an emphasis on the significance of the concept through the lens of Islam. This paper is based on chapter twelve of the Quran—Surah Yusuf, which manifested and set the roots for resiliency in Islamic history. In completing this study, the methods of discourse and textual analysis were incorporated to identify, evaluate, and extract lessons of resiliency from Yusuf (*Alayhissalam*)’s story. A systematic analysis of various journal articles, Quranic texts and tafsirs was employed by using keywords in examining data related to the topic. Findings indicate that Western ideology acknowledges the concept of resilience as the ability to bounce back after facing adversities. On the other hand, Islamic theology argues beyond that as adversities are regarded as a “system of tests” for mankind in attaining spiritual elevation where Islam provides guidance to overcoming them. Three main sub-concepts were found from the story of Yusuf (A.S.), which became the core findings of this research in explaining the concept of resilience: (i) *sabr*, (ii) *shukr*, and (iii) *taqwa*. The paper presents how the three sub-concepts were implied in the life of Yusuf (A.S.) and have been proven to aid the resiliency of an individual. Therefore, this research aims to accentuate and encourage the implementation of being resilient in the life of today’s society.

Keywords: Surah Yusuf, Resilience, *Sabr*, *Shukr*, *Taqwa*.

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1. Introduction

October 7th has significantly brought the Middle East to the centre of attention of the world in a newsflash. The issue opened the eyes of the world's population to the continuous conflict between Israel and Palestine with the ongoing death of over thirty-four thousand lives, including women and children, and the displacement of millions from their homes by using military force. Sixty per cent of residential buildings were destroyed, 267 places of worship were damaged, and 11 of 35 hospitals were partially functional.¹ However, even with the endless destruction and chaos, it is highly observable that the Palestinians remain resilient to protect and stand by their indigenous land. Inspired by the persistent act of perseverance, this research aims to study the notion of resilience as demonstrated by the Palestinians up to this moment. This study presents inputs regarding the conceptualisation of resilience from the Western perspective, Islamic theology, and through the concepts of *shukr* (thankfulness), *sabr* (patience), and *taqwa* (God-consciousness), which became the basis of the notion of resiliency. The aforementioned concepts are three of the main lessons that can be obtained from diving into the essence of Surah Yusuf. The story of Yusuf (A.S.) encompasses many major themes in life, including faith, law, sharia, politics, education, economy, social issues, conflict management, character development, and da'wah approaches. Highlighted in this study, the story of Yusuf (A.S.) sheds light on how to persevere through the trials in life exemplified through the narrative. Thus, Surah Yusuf has been selected to be the backbone of this research, as the lessons that could be extracted from the story of Yusuf (A.S.) are eternal, universal, and consistently valid.

2. Problem Statement

Adversities and tribulations have been customary to the life of humankind throughout history.² These include conflicts (internal and external conflicts), natural disasters, diseases, stress, etc. which have been a constant prevalence affecting development and civilisations. Ranging from ancient civilisations struggling with various natural disasters and wars to modern societies dealing with global crises, humankind has persevered, bounced back and advanced from the challenges they faced. Resilience recognised as “the process of adapting well and even growing in the face of adversity, stress or trauma”³ is what allows humankind to overcome challenging life events and thrive. Albeit the numerous literature on resilience, there remains a gap in research on this concept through an Islamic framework, particularly through divine narratives such as the Quranic story of Yusuf (A.S.). This research seeks to fill this gap by analysing resilience from both Western

¹ AJLabs, *Israel-Gaza War in Maps and Charts: Live Tracker*, accessed January 29, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>.

² Jack Tsai and Sandra B. Morissette, “Introduction to the Special Issue: Resilience and Perseverance for Human Flourishing,” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, vol. 14, no. S1, (2022), 1-3.

³ *Ibid.*

and Islamic perspectives with the Quranic values of *shukr* (thankfulness), *sabr* (patience), and *taqwa* (God-consciousness). By studying Surah Yusuf, this research highlights how the aforementioned values serve as foundational elements to foster resilience in contemporary society.

3. Literature Review

Researchers have conducted numerous studies on the importance of resilience in life. Among them is research conducted by Dehghani and Andishmand, which sheds light on the connection between religious orientation, spiritual health, and resilience among female students.⁴ Similar research was also carried out by Pourkord et al., which examined the relationship of happiness as an intrinsic variable, religious attitude, and attachment style with the resilience of students. Focusing on the religious aspect, the result of the research concluded that religious individuals strive for a meaningful existence by adhering to certain principles, thus contributing to their resilience in life.⁵ Lamoshi's study, on the other hand, amplifies how resilience can be obtained from practising Islamic teaching as a mechanism to support younger generations in facing difficulties. This study shows that Islamic teachings recognise that Muslims can develop resilience through empowering their inner strengths—the mind, consciousness, and thoughts.⁶ Similar to Van Dyke et al.'s research, daily spiritual supplication and presence of religion lead to positive effects and contentment in life.⁷ Thus, these studies further highlight the positive relationship between religion and the notion of resilience.

Some of the above studies have yet to explain resilience from a deeper Islamic perspective as a guide for perseverance for the Muslim community. Islam, constituting religious attitude and orientation, therefore, is highlighted in this study to examine the perspective and approaches it provides to its followers in light of the Holy Quran. Islam as a holistic religion teaches and encourages resilience to mankind when they are tested with problems and adversities, as it is part and parcel of life. The Quran highlights the characteristics of the resilient as those who are patient, optimistic, perseverant, and have clear consciousness.

⁴ Fatemeh Dehghani and Vida Andishmand, "The Relationship of Religious Orientation and Spiritual Health to Resilience among High School Sophomores in Kerman," *Journal of Research on Religion & Health*, vol. 3, no. 4 (October 2017), 66–67.

⁵ Mahdi Pourkord, Fazlollah Mirdrikvand, and Amir Karami, "Predicting Resilience in Students Based on Happiness, Attachment Style, and Religious Attitude," *Health, Spirituality and Medical Ethics*, vol. 7, no. 2 (June 2020): 27–34.

⁶ Abdulraouf Y. Lamoshi, "Religion as a Resilience Tool to Manage Stress in Adolescents: Islamic Approach," *Global Journal of HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: H Interdisciplinary*, vol. 15, no. 3 (United States: Global Journal Inc., 2015), 5-8.

⁷ Cydney J. Van Dyke, David S. Glenwick, John J. Cecero, and Se-Kang Kim, "The relationship of religious coping and spirituality to adjustment and psychological distress in urban early adolescents," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, vol. 12, no.4 (New York: Routledge, 2009), 369-383.

Islam, a religion that possesses substantial psychological values, needs to be acknowledged as a model reference for mankind. This proves the need for this study. It aims to clarify the concept of resilience from an Islamic perspective through the narratives of Surah Yusuf. This study challenges existing studies by analysing resilience from three significant elements that contribute to a resilient individual namely *sabr*, *shukr* and *taqwa*. Thus, it is expected to provide the approaches to resilience that have been illustrated through the verses of the Quran accompanied by elaborations from scholarly tafsirs.

4. Methodology

This study employs qualitative methods in analysing, evaluating and identifying past data consisting of various articles, reports, and Islamic literature surrounding the topic of resilience and Surah Yusuf. Although the discussion on Surah Yusuf was present years ago, this study sheds light on the notion of resilience through three main sub-concepts specifically *sabr*, *shukr* and *taqwa*. To ensure the relevance and validity of data, a systematic search on various academic databases was conducted using keywords—i.e. “Surah Yusuf”, “resilience”, “sabr”, “shukr” and “taqwa.” Focus is put on the content of literature found to analyse the essence of resilience present in the context of Surah Yusuf. The literature employed in conducting this research includes journal articles, tafsirs by known scholars, and Quranic texts. The paper applied the methods and techniques of discourse and textual analysis in this study to identify the lessons of resilience in light of Surah Yusuf, as well as evaluate certain Western and Islamic viewpoints.

5. Findings and Discussion

A. Resilience: The Western Perspective

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience is the process and result of the ability to successfully adjust to demanding or tough life situations—particularly by exhibiting mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility, and adjusting to both internal and external demands.⁸ From this, we can infer that resilience is the ability of an individual to adapt and regulate to pressing circumstances in life. Life events such as tragedies, tribulations, burdens, and adversities are typically interpreted and viewed through a negative perspective by society. This in turn will result in a worsening condition of the individual's emotional and mental health. Due to this reason, one frequently feels depressed, despair, and sadness, and experiences suicidal thoughts when they face difficulties beyond their control. With this, a consensus has been reached whereby difficulties unavoidably impact the everyday aspect of their life. According to Dzulkipli and Mahudin, people who go through hardships tend to be fragile and are subjected to the

⁸ American Psychological Association, *Resilience*, accessed January 29, 2025. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience#:~:text=Resilience%20is%20the%20process%20and>

damaging impacts that these situations might have on them.⁹ It may impose hopelessness upon an individual and lead to mental issues.

However, resilience in oneself can only emerge from situations where significant difficulties are faced. Having or creating positive outcomes from enduring hardships is what contributes to one's development of resilience. Nonetheless, upon facing struggles and calamities, the possible outcome of their well-being also depends heavily on their resilience, which may lead to favourable or unfavourable results. From these statements, it is observable that resilience and difficulties co-exist and, in a way, depend on one another as it act as a cycle. However, the existence of specific elements referred to as resilience resources has been demonstrated to lessen the adverse effects of stress factors, hence lowering the probability of unfavourable consequences.¹⁰ According to Rak and Patterson, resources that help people become more resilient include their personality, intelligence, and social support from friends, family, and significant others.¹¹

Thus, adhering to the discussion above, the Western perspective concludes resilience as the psychological adaptational ability of an individual in facing adversities, adjustments, and threats to the human development and well-being.

B. Resilience Redefined: Resilience and Adversity in Islamic Theology

Resilience, defined as the capability of an individual to adapt and bounce back from challenges and hardships¹² is an essential trait significant to be acquired for success in life. Islam as *ad-Din* (a way of life) acknowledges and urges Muslims to have and maintain resilience in facing difficulties in the *dunya* (current lifetime). Nevertheless, Islam offers a distinctive viewpoint on resilience in comparison to the Western world, highlighting the significance of patience, tenacity, and faith in Allah SWT to overcome life's obstacles.

In Islam, the concept of resilience is intertwined with faith, patience and trust in Allah when faced with adversity. Contrary to the Western perspective which focuses on psychological adaptability, resilience from an Islamic viewpoint can be expressed through **صمود** (*ṣumūd/sumood*) or steadfastness, in the face of trials. The term *sumood* connotes endurance of hardships and steadfastness when confronted with adversities. It expresses perseverance, strength, and the ability to cope with difficulties, which is often used to describe the Islamic concept of resilience as remaining firm in faith in facing challenges. With that being said, challenges and hardships are seen as divine tests in the life of Muslims

⁹ Mariam Adawiyah Dzulkifli, and Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin, *Contextualising Islam in Psychological Research: Theoretical Foundation Current Initiatives & Way Forward* (Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), p. 101.

¹⁰ Carl F. Rak, and Lewis E. Patterson, "Promoting Resilience in At-Risk Children," *Journal of Counselling & Development*, vol. 74, no. 4, (April 1996), 369-371.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Gill Windle, "What is resilience? A review and concept analysis," *Reviews in Clinical Gerontology*, vol. 21, no. 2 (May 2011), 2.

to strengthen their faith rather than obstacles to be avoided. This is due to the acknowledgement that these challenges serve a purpose in the existence of humankind.¹³

Islam highly encourage Muslims to turn to Allah in going through the phases of life for guidance. This includes times of joy, anger, fear, and especially in times of grief and difficulties. In Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah SWT mentioned:

﴿وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۖ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ﴾

And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah].¹⁴

This verse of the Quran emphasises how human beings should seek Allah's guidance in undergoing hardships because only by depending on Allah will things be eased. The verse accentuates the need for mankind to submit through acts of patience and prayers as a sign of reliance on the Almighty. It also justifies in certainty that hardships are made difficult, but the exception lies with those who rely on Allah SWT humbly and submissively.

The term resilience can be inferred from when one is capable of overcoming adversities with a positive outcome.¹⁵ In Islam, adversities, tribulations, and challenges can be regarded as the “system of tests” established by Allah SWT to ascertain the faith of His servants in Him. Allah will test each of the true believers based on their beliefs and acts to determine which of His servants have the most faith in Him before the day of judgement, where the destination of all humankind is either *al-Jannah* (paradise) or *an-Nar* (hell). To further justify, Allah mentioned in the Quran:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

Who has created death and life that He may test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving.¹⁶

This illustrates how Allah will test each of His servants to determine who among us performs good deeds in the life of the *dunya*. To rationalise, the Prophet SAW once justified that “best in deeds” mentioned above refers to one who is consistent in obeying Allah and refrains from doing what has been forbidden by Him.¹⁷ In addition, Islam also regards tests

¹³ Mariam Adawiyah Dzulkifli, and Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin, *Contextualising Islam in Psychological Research: Theoretical Foundation Current Initiatives & Way Forward* (Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), p. 101.

¹⁴ Al-Quran, 2:45

¹⁵ Mariam Adawiyah Dzulkifli, and Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin, *Contextualising Islam in Psychological Research: Theoretical Foundation Current Initiatives & Way Forward* (Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), p. 103.

¹⁶ Al-Quran, 67:2

¹⁷ Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi', *Ma'ariful Quran: A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran* (2012), 537-538.

as a pathway to a long-term reward in the hereafter, as mentioned in the Quran: “O believers! Patiently endure, persevere, stand on guard, and be mindful of Allah, so you may be successful”.¹⁸ This verse illustrates how Allah ensures the believers to keep persevering, as the reward will be granted to those who do with patience. In addition, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* mentioned that this verse emphasised to Muslims to have *taqwa*, be Allah-conscious and fear Allah in order to attain true success in this life and the Hereafter.¹⁹

In essence, adversities in Islam are viewed as the will of Allah to encourage His believers to keep patience and persevere. The reason for this is that it is a way of increasing their faith towards the All-Mighty in hopes of achieving the ultimate success—e.g., the *rida* (pleasure) of Allah SWT. Thus, Muslims must strive to foster resilience in their hearts and minds in combating adversities as a means to attain the *rida* of Allah SWT throughout their life, aside from its benefit to human well-being.

Resilience in Islam therefore, can be redefined as the state of endurance and steadfastness of the human character in faith when faced with adversities. It is not merely the ability to recover from hardships, but a spiritual journey of self-development guided by Quranic values. This study sheds light on these Quranic values, especially through *shukr*, *sabr* and *taqwa* which contribute to one's *tawakkul* (reliance on Allah) towards Allah SWT. This being said, enduring adversities in light of Islam brings spiritual elevation and inner peace for an individual to thrive in the life of the *dunya* and *akhirah*.

C. Western vs Islamic Perspective on Resilience

In understanding resilience, the Western and Islamic perspectives present a distinctive viewpoint on its conceptualisation. In definition, the Western world posits resilience as a psychological study focusing on the aptitude of adaptability to recover from hardships by self-reliance and coping mechanisms providing results of favourable outcomes in navigating life.²⁰ The Islamic perspective on the other hand, extends beyond the physical functions of current lifetime, seeing adversity in light of Quranic guidance as a means for one's spiritual development. This being said, the Western world views adversities differently as compared to Islamic theology as they are seen merely as struggles to be overcome in pursuit of success and growth of one's psychological versatility. Alternatively, Islamic theology views adversities to be not only a threshold for psychological growth but also a form of test and opportunity for oneself to elevate their faith and character.

<https://archive.org/details/English-MaarifulQuran/English-MaarifulQuran-MuftiShafiUsmaniRA-Vol-8/page/n1/mode/2up>

¹⁸ Al-Quran, 3:200

¹⁹ Ibn Kathir (abridged), *The Condition of Some of the People of the Scriptures and their Rewards*, accessed January 29, 2025. <https://quran.com/3:200/tafsirs/en-tafsir-ibn-kathir>

²⁰ Mariam Adawiyah Dzulkifli, and Nor Diana Mohd Mahudin, *Contextualising Islam in Psychological Research: Theoretical Foundation Current Initiatives & Way Forward* (Malaysia - Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), p. 102.

To add, resilience as viewed from a Western perspective derives strength in handling challenges through behaviours and attitudes that enhance psychological immunity, and a good social support system.²¹ However, strength in resilience from the Islamic perspective is deeply rooted in faith and reliance on Allah SWT, trusting divine wisdom cultivated through Quranic values (e.g., shukr, sabr, taqwa). On top of that, resilience through the Islamic lens emphasises the importance of a divine-centred approach which offers a holistic alternative in comparison to Western psychological-centred models which concentrate solely on mental benefits. Taking these distinctions into consideration, one can gain a better comprehension of the conceptualisation of resilience by noting the focus of each viewpoint.

D. Resilience: The Story of Yusuf (A.S.)

Surah Yusuf, also called "*Ahsan al-Qisas*"²²—the best of stories comprising 111 verses—is the twelfth chapter of the Quran. This chapter was revealed to Prophet Muhammad SAW during one of the toughest moments of his life as a consolation and comfort. Surah Yusuf holds the beautiful story of the life of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.).

In presenting resilience deduced from the *Ahsan al-Qisas*, the narrative begins when Yusuf (A.S.) was thrown down a well by his brothers as a child. This is due to their envy towards Yusuf as Ya'qub (A.S.), their father, favoured him more than the others albeit loving them all. Yusuf however, remained patient in the darkness of the well. Allah SWT then came to his aid as some of the people who passed by the well happened to take notice and pulled him out. Nevertheless, not long after being freed from the well, Yusuf (A.S.) was sold to Egypt's Minister of Finance as a slave.

Following that, Yusuf (A.S.) faced yet another severe trial when the minister's wife, Zulaykha, attempted to seduce him. Yusuf was called to her chamber, and her servant was instructed to lock the doors from outside. The mistress called him to herself, yet Yusuf tried to get away due to his fear of his Lord, which forbids him from committing a big sin (i.e., adultery). However, the back of Yusuf's shirt got ripped when the mistress tried to prevent him from leaving. When his master arrived home, Yusuf (A.S.) was accused by the mistress of raping her. However later, a member of their household received guidance from Allah and deduced that Yusuf (A.S.) shall be proven innocent if his shirt is torn from the back, while Zulaykha's accusation is correct if it is torn from the front.

Yusuf (A.S.) was then proven to be innocent. Moving on, in response to the efforts of other ladies persuading him to obey his mistress, Yusuf (A.S.) made du'a to Allah stating that he would prefer to be in prison than to comply with their demands. Yusuf ended up spending

²¹ Karen Brouhard, *Cultivating Resilience*, accessed February 13, 2025.
<https://www.bu.edu/wellness/files/2015/04/Cultivating-Resilience.pdf>

²² Radman Rasooli Mehrabani, and Mona Babayi, "Impressibility of Qul Ali from Bahr Al-Mahabbah and al-Settin al-Jame' in composing Qissa'i Yusuf," *Literary Research* (September 2022), pp.14.

several years in prison, yet he remained faithful to Allah SWT. Sometime later, the king had a dream that no one could interpret. Yusuf (A.S.) became the one who finally interpreted the dream by Allah's will and his knowledge which he attributed to the Almighty. Satisfied and amazed by Yusuf (A.S.)'s gift of knowledge, the king released him. In the end, Yusuf (A.S.) got elevated to a prominent status in Egypt as the minister and later met up with his father again.²³ By the synopsis of the story of Yusuf (A.S.), resilience in Surah Yusuf can be seen through the acts of *sabr*, *shukr*, and *taqwa*, which have been visibly modelled throughout the story. These values serving as an Islamic model for resilience will be discussed in the following sections.

E. Lesson of Sabr in Surah Yusuf

﴿قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا ۖ فَصَبِرْ ۖ جَمِيلٌ ۗ عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Meaning: [Jacob] said, “Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so **patience** is most fitting. Perhaps Allah will bring them to me all together. Indeed, it is He who is the Knowing, the Wise.²⁴

The lesson of *sabr* or patience is illustrated in the Quran from Surah Yusuf, verse 83. This verse (*ayat*) features the act of *sabr* through Prophet Ya’qub (A.S). According to *Tafsir Ma’ariful-Qur’an*, the *ayat* above depicts the situation after the detainment of young Benjamin—the sibling above Yusuf—in Egypt, where the other brothers returned home and told Prophet Ya’qub (A.S.) about what had happened there. Prophet Ya’qub (A.S.) refuses to believe them, for they have lied to him once before regarding what had happened to Yusuf (A.S.)²⁵—the brothers once lied about the death of Yusuf, stating that wolves had eaten him. Therefore, on this occasion as well, Ya’qub (A.S.) said the same thing he had said at the time of the disappearance of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.):

“And they brought upon his²⁶ shirt false blood. [Jacob] said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. And Allāh is the one sought for help against that which you describe.”²⁷

²³ Gayane Karen Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose “Best Story”?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4, (November 1997), pp. 488-490.

²⁴ Al-Quran, 12:83

²⁵ Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi’, *Ma’ariful Quran: A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran* (2012), p. 139-141. <https://archive.org/details/English-MaarifulQuran/English-MaarifulQuran-MuftiShafiUsmaniRA-Vol-5/page/n19/mode/2up>

²⁶ Prophet Yusuf (A.S.)

²⁷ Al-Quran, 12:18

It is evident, therefore, in this verse of Surah Yusuf how Prophet Ya'qub (A.S.) illustrates the act of *sabr* upon losing a loved one. This can be seen when he mentions that it is due to the brothers' desires (*nafs*) that they conducted a harmful act and that the act of patience is the best for him during that moment as he lost his beloved son, Yusuf (A.S.). Through this ayah, it is observable that he was able to remain patient, for he believes that in patience, Allah will return the best for him, as Allah is the All-Knower of all his distress. From this, we can infer that one is able to persevere with acts of patience in navigating through life's hardships. Thus, this has set an example for all mankind and teaches us as Muslims to always practise patience in our daily lives.

F. Lesson of Shukr in Surah Yusuf

﴿ رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

My Lord, You have given me [something] of sovereignty and taught me of the interpretation of dreams. Creator of the heavens and earth, You are my protector in this world and the Hereafter. Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous.²⁸

This verse of Surah Yusuf teaches us the lesson of remaining in a state of *shukr* (gratefulness) in every circumstance. This verse highlights the notion of gratefulness to the All-Mighty amidst the calamities we are facing as it previews how Yusuf (A.S.) handled the situation of being in hardship as he was put in prison during the time. The lesson of *shukr* can be extracted from the essence of this *ayat* through the illustrations of Prophet Yusuf's actions. In the first part of this *ayat*, it is shown how Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) attributed his knowledge of interpreting dreams to Allah SWT as the sole creator of the universe instead of taking the credit as his own. In addition, the element of gratefulness can also be observed through the prayer that Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) made where he asked Allah to allow him death as a Muslim and enjoin him among the righteous believers. It can be seen that Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) perseveres through the trials of being put into prison through acts of *shukr* as he believes that Allah SWT is his ultimate protector. To add, Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) did not only illustrate to mankind the blessings of perseverance granted through being in a state of *shukr*, but also demonstrated how the acts of gratefulness lead an individual towards the light of hope when he prayed:

﴿.. فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

²⁸ Al-Quran, 12:101

... Creator of the heavens and earth, You are my protector in this world and the Hereafter. **Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous.**²⁹

According to *Tazkir Al-Quran*, a believer perceives all things in relation to God, whereas a denier of truth views everything through a human-centered lens.³⁰ This sums up the act of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) in having *shukr* towards Allah as the one true God. Highlighting his thankfulness towards Allah SWT when he credited his gifts as a blessing of God, shows that all the sense of personal superiority in Yusuf (A.S.) had been destroyed by his understanding of God's magnificence. From this we can infer that practising the acts of *shukr* aids an individual in understanding that there is a divine power ruling all the circumstances of the world, thus providing the individual with a sense of comfort and consolation. Therefore, it is proven that being in a state of *shukr* accommodates us as Muslims to maintain resilient mentally and emotionally amidst life's hardships that are thrown upon us.

G. Lesson of Taqwa in Surah Yusuf

﴿وَرُوْدَتْهُ اَلَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَن نَّفْسِهٖۙ وَغَلَقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ؕ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗۙ رَبِّيْ اَحْسَنَ مَثْوٰىۙ اِنَّهٗۙ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ﴾

And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, "Come, you." He said, [I seek] the refuge of Allāh. Indeed, he³¹ is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed.³²

The lesson of *taqwa* can be observed in the Quran from verse 23 of Surah Yusuf. This verse underlines the virtue of *taqwa* (piety; God-fearing) portrayed through the actions of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) when he encountered a situation where Zulaykha, the wife of the nobleman, seduced him due to his enchanting beauty. *Taqwa* can be seen in this *ayat* as Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) demonstrated his fear of Allah SWT even though he was aware that no one was present during the time. Thus, Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) prayed and sought Allah's help, for he knew his *fitrah* (nature) as a man might lead him to do the unlawful if the situation persists. This is highlighted by *ayat*:

﴿...مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗۙ رَبِّيْ اَحْسَنَ مَثْوٰىۙ اِنَّهٗۙ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ﴾

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Quran Commentary: Understand the Spiritual Meaning of the Quran* (India: Goodwork Books, 2016), p.700. <https://openmaktaba.com/tazkir-ul-quran-english/#downloadbutton>

³¹ Al-Azeez, the husband of Zulaykha

³² Al-Quran, 12:23

He said, **[I seek] the refuge of Allāh.** Indeed, he³³ is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed.³⁴

In addition, according to *Tafsir Ma'ariful-Qur'an*, the statement “in whose house he was” implies that Prophet Yusuf's (A.S.) attempts to keep himself from falling into sin were made more difficult by the fact that he was living in her home and was therefore protected by her.³⁵ In due of that, it was hard for Yusuf (A.S.) to reject and refuse her orders as she was his master. However, Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) managed to overcome the seduction of Zulaykha out of fear and *taqwa* towards Allah SWT, which leads to an increase in his dependency on the Almighty.

Therefore, from the above instances, this verse of the Quran provides mankind with the significance of having *taqwa* as a shield for Muslim against temptations and evil. This in turn will lead us to be mindful of Allah SWT to protect ourselves from evil deeds and persevere and protect our *deen*.

H. Interrelation of Sabr, Shukr and Taqwa in Cultivating Resilience

Sabr, shukr and *taqwa* are three values deeply interconnected through *tawakkul* in Islam. These Quranic values form the foundation to guide Muslims on how to respond to life's hardships by contributing to one's *tawakkul* and thus, increasing one's resilience. As quoted in an article published by Yaqeen Institute, Ibn Taymiyya sums up *tawakkul* as: “reliance on Allah, in order for Him to help the person do what they are ordered to do, as well as reliance on Allah in giving the person what they cannot achieve.”³⁶ *Sabr, shukr* and *taqwa* go hand in hand as pillars of *tawakkul* enabling a Muslim to navigate life's trials and blessings with unwavering faith and resilience by putting trust in Allah SWT.

The concept of *sabr*, otherwise known as patience, serves as a necessary element of *tawakkul*. This is due to the reason that exercising patience in everyday life allows Muslims to endure hardships without despair by ultimate reliance on Allah SWT's wisdom.³⁷ *Sabr* as a manifestation of *tawakkul* in handling daily situations also demonstrates one's trust towards Allah's timing, acknowledging that trials exist as part of the divine decree. Likewise, *shukr* also known as thankfulness or gratitude, is an essential element of *tawakkul* as it aids mankind to depend on Allah and His authority wholeheartedly. Having gratitude evokes a positive outlook on life by recognising and acting upon thankfulness to

³³ Al-Azeez, the husband of Zulaykha.

³⁴ Al-Quran, 12:23

³⁵ Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi', *Ma'ariful Quran: A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran* (2012), p. 57.
<https://archive.org/details/English-MaarifulQuran/English-MaarifulQuran-MuftiShafiUsmaniRA-Vol-5/page/n19/mode/2up>

³⁶ Roohi Tahir, In Hardship and in Ease: How to Rely on God, accessed February 13, 2025.
<https://yaqeeninstitute.org/my/read/paper/in-hardship-and-in-ease-how-to-rely-on-god>

³⁷ Ibid.

the Almighty for the blessings that He has bestowed upon oneself.³⁸ It allows Muslims to shift their perspective from over-focusing on pessimism and doubting divine decree. Subsequently, *taqwa* (God-consciousness) serves as the underlying tie that binds *sabr* and *shukr* to *tawakkul*. Being aware of Allah's presence guides Muslims to understand that everything happens under the control of Allah SWT. Thus, allowing Muslims to find comfort in the realisation that Allah never burdens His servants more than what they are capable of.³⁹ By having *taqwa*, it simultaneously develops patience and gratitude in oneself leading to a higher sense of reliance on Allah SWT.

In short, alongside each other, having *sabr*, *shukr*, and *taqwa* in navigating life's adversities leads to a comprehension of the ultimate wisdom behind the divine decree. Hence, this realisation and appreciation of the concept of *tawakkul* cultivate a state of contentment and resilience in oneself for unwavering faith. Thus, Islamic teachings highlight the aforementioned Quranic values to ensure the tranquillity of one's soul by having full trust in the Almighty. This allows Muslims to maintain faithfulness in Islam regardless of trials woven into the life of the *dunya*.

6. Conclusion

This paper concludes that a study on the concept of resilience in light of divine revelation is crucial in motivating society in acts of perseverance to navigate life in the developing world of mechanical advancements today. The verses and story of Prophet Yusuf (A.S.) have inspired and highlighted meaningful values and virtues that accommodate Muslims to obtain and achieve resilience in facing life's struggles. Thus, this indicates how Islam truly encourages this notion to all its believers for the sake of their well-being in navigating the life of the *dunya*. From the study of this research, it has been discovered that the Quran, specifically in light of Surah Yusuf, has highlighted three main keys to developing resilience in an individual: (i) *sabr*—patience which increases one's trust in Allah SWT; (ii) *shukr*—gratefulness which leads mankind to be hopeful with the help of the Creator; and (iii) *taqwa*—piety or God-fearing, which contributes to the sense of dependency towards the Almighty. This paper also addressed the distinction between the Western and Islamic views on the concept of resilience. Throughout the study, verses from the Quran have been illustrated to emphasise the aforementioned key concepts that contribute to one's resilience in life. Therefore, the study concludes by accentuating the need for every member of society to practise these virtues in order to attain a prosperous life and success in both worldly life and the hereafter. This study recommends future researchers to dive deeper into the specific actions provided by the Islamic and Quranic teachings in guiding human beings to develop and achieve internal resilience. Moreover, this study encourages learners to take necessary actions in realising the teaching of Islam through implementing and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Al-Quran, 2:286

ensuring the widespread use of lessons obtained from studies of the Quran. In summary, resilience as a significant element which aids humanity in pushing through the obstacles of life is crucial to ensuring successful development and the good well-being of individuals.

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