



The Effectiveness of Contemplation on Conceptual Metaphor in Cognitive Spiritual Therapy

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Abstract

Contemplation (*tafakkur*) is a practice that fills the spiritual needs of a human's soul by linking the mind with the heart and soul. As there is an urgency in developing more effective therapies due to the worldwide rise of psychological disorders, this research analyses the effectiveness of contemplating on metaphors in the Qur'an. Although the therapeutic factors in metaphor have been amplified by cognitivist, related studies based on the Qur'an are scarce. Therefore, this research aims to reveal the effectiveness of Qur'anic contemplation for healing by focusing on the contemplation of metaphors. This interdisciplinary qualitative research analyses the spiritual effects of the Qur'an from the linguistic and psychological perspectives through an explanatory case study. The use of contemplation as a cognitive process is focused on conceptualisation that involves conceptual metaphor which is a metaphor that operates at the level of thinking. The conceptualisation of spiritual healing in terms of a journey to God that pervades throughout the Qur'an through metaphorical linguistic expressions such as 'path,' 'way' and 'travel' reveal the conceptual metaphor SPIRITUAL HEALING IS A JOURNEY. Contemplating this conceptual metaphor reveals the spiritual guiding principles in the healing journey and the effectiveness of religious discourse in influencing positive actions for psycho-spiritual well-being. Eventually, this research proposes contemplation on conceptual metaphor as a cognitive spiritual therapy for psychological disorders. This research contributes to the field of language, psychology, and religious studies by revealing the richness of persuasive language for effective therapy in mental health practices.

Keywords: The Qur'an, contemplation, conceptual metaphor, cognitive spiritual therapy

Abstrak

Tafakur adalah amalan yang pengisian keperluan rohani manusia dengan menghubungkan akal dengan hati dan jiwa. Memandangkan terdapat keperluan yang penting dalam membangunkan terapi yang lebih berkesan disebabkan oleh peningkatan gangguan psikologi di seluruh dunia, penyelidikan ini menganalisis keberkesanan metafora tafakur dalam Al-Quran. Walaupun faktor terapeutik dalam metafora telah diperkuatkan oleh ahli kognitif, kajian berkaitan berdasarkan Al-Quran adalah terhad. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendedahkan keberkesanan tafakur al-Quran untuk penyembuhan dengan memfokuskan kepada metafora tafakur. Penyelidikan kualitatif antara disiplin ini menganalisis kesan rohani al-Quran dari perspektif linguistik dan psikologi melalui kajian kes penjelasan. Penggunaan kontemplasi sebagai proses kognitif tertumpu kepada konseptualisasi yang melibatkan metafora konseptual iaitu metafora yang beroperasi pada peringkat pemikiran.

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Konseptualisasi penyembuhan rohani dari segi perjalanan menuju Tuhan yang merangkumi seluruh al-Quran melalui ungkapan linguistik metafora seperti 'lalan,' 'jalan' dan 'perjalanan' mendedahkan metafora konseptual *Penyembuhan Rohani Adalah Sebuah Perjalanan*. Tafakur dalam metafora konseptual ini mendedahkan prinsip panduan rohani dalam perjalanan

penyembuhan dan keberkesanan wacana agama dalam mempengaruhi tindakan positif untuk kesejahteraan psiko-spiritual. Akhirnya, penyelidikan ini mencadangkan takafur berkaitan dengan metafora konsep sebagai terapi rohani kognitif untuk gangguan psikologi. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada bidang bahasa, psikologi, dan pengajian agama dengan mendedahkan kekayaan bahasa persuasif untuk terapi berkesan dalam amalan kesihatan mental.

Kata kunci: Al-Quran, renungan, metafora konseptual, terapi rohani kognitif

Introduction

Contemplation is a meaningful psychological, cognitive and spiritual practice that directs and connects a human to His creator to heal from dire psychological and physiological disorders by reconnecting the spiritual needs of the human's soul. Contemplation is a practice that fills the spiritual needs of a human's soul by linking the mind with the heart and soul. Contemplative practices originally belonging to eastern religious traditions have expanded all over the world in a wide range of 'non-religious' areas (Albert & Hernández, 2014; Campos & Cebolla, 2016). In this study, contemplation refers to the psychological perspective which deals with the conscious inner cognitive thought and feelings of people as the aim is to have a deeper insightful knowledge of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Badri, 2018). The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasise on the significance of contemplation to make the heart feel, to feed the mind and fill the soul. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah says in "The Key to the House of Bliss" (*Miftah Dar al-Saadah*) "Deep thought or contemplation is the beginning of and the key to all good; it is the best function of the heart and the most useful to it." This deep-thinking process of contemplation is a practice that requires feeling and seeing the creations of God with the heart. Contemplation is a thinking process that directs man to the call of Allah and brings ease and peace to the minds and hearts because it gives spiritual comfort to the souls. *Surah Ar-Ra'd* verse 28 states "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest."

Contemplation is a powerful tool linking the mind with the heart and soul that can heal spiritual sickness as it is a spiritual exercise which is a guide to God and a guide to healing. As there is a call to develop more effective therapies due to the worldwide rise of psychological disorders, this study analyses the effectiveness of contemplating on metaphors in

the Qur'an. The use of contemplation as a cognitive process is narrowed down to the process of conceptualisation that involves conceptual metaphor which is a metaphor that operates at the level of thinking. Cognitive therapy helps to modify beliefs, identify distorted thinking, relate to others in different ways, and change behaviours; it is a type of psychotherapy that aims to help to overcome difficulties by identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking, behaviour, and emotional responses (Reber & Reber, 2001; Badri, 1996).

Conceptual metaphor has been described as a powerful mechanism to facilitate communication in contemplative practice, including meditation and enlightenment, as reported in several studies, however, the question on how metaphor is used in discourse about meditation within this perspective has not been addressed (Silvestre-López, 2020). Moreover, contemplative practices which are ingrained in great religions can help to develop desirable attitudes to progress on the spiritual path to be connected to the Divine (Silvestre-López, 2020). Although the therapeutic factors in metaphors have been amplified by cognitivist, related studies based on the Qur'an are scarce. Therefore, this research aims to reveal the effectiveness of Qur'anic contemplation for healing through cognitive therapy by focusing on the contemplation of metaphors in influencing meaningful actions that can lead to psycho-spiritual well-being.

Material and method:

This interdisciplinary qualitative research analyses the spiritual effects of the Qur'an from the linguistic and psychological perspectives through an explanatory case study based on (Yin, 2009). The English translation of the Qur'an (Saheeh International., 1997) is analysed to search for the metaphorical linguistic expressions. These expressions are identified using the Metaphorical Identification Procedures

by Pragglejaz (2007) as an analytical tool and the selected expressions were further analysed to identify the conceptual metaphor through metaphorical mapping using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff (1993). *Tafsir Ar-Rahman* by Basmeh and Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, (2007) and *Tafsir ibn Kathir* by Kathīr; & Mubārakfūrī, (2000) are used for the interpretation of the results. The use of contemplation as a cognitive process is focused on conceptualisation that involves conceptual metaphor which is a metaphor that operates at the level of thinking. Based on CMT, conceptual metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that allows one complex thing or area of experience to be understood in terms of another that is less complex.

Besides, conceptual metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon that is expressed in language through metaphorical expressions. CMT needs to be incorporated in the dimension of communication (Steen, 2011) as metaphors work as linguistic device (dimension of language) and cognitive mechanism (dimension of thought) as well as communicative tools used by speakers with a variety of social, discursive, and communicative purposes (dimension of communication) (Steen, 2015). Conceptual metaphor is a powerful mechanism proposed by Lakoff (1993) and it is able to facilitate the communication of first-person experience connected to religious and lay contemplative practice based on several studies (Silvestre-López, 2020). Thus, conceptual metaphors are metaphorical linguistic expressions that can be classified according to their textual/formal features as direct, indirect or implicit. Contemplative practices have also reached the field of linguistics, where some studies have analysed the discourse of mindfulness by practitioners in secular contexts, such as studying the language used in Buddhism (Silvestre-López, 2016, 2019; Silvestre-López & Navarro, 2017). Besides, Buddhist and Hindu religious discourse, Richardson & Mueller, (2019); Silvestre-López & Navarro, (2017) emphasise the use of metaphorical source domains related to the realms of nature, light/darkness, and motion to refer to mental and emotional processes and spiritual development, including contemplation.

Thus, the importance of metaphors to facilitate understanding and communication about the abstract diversity of concepts and practices related to contemplation was highlighted in these studies.

Results

The conceptualisation of spiritual healing in terms of a journey to God that pervades throughout the Qur'an through metaphorical linguistic expressions such as 'path,' 'way' and 'travel' reveal the conceptual metaphor SPIRITUAL HEALING IS A JOURNEY. The contemplation of the conceptualisation of spiritual healing which is viewed in terms of a journey to God reveals the spiritual guiding principles in the healing journey and the effectiveness of religious discourse in influencing positive actions for psycho-spiritual well-being. The expression of 'path' signifies the direction and destination while the expression of 'travel' implies the expedition on the journey to be healed. *Surah Al-Fatihah* verse 6 states 'Guide us to the straight path.' *Surah As Saffat* verse 118 states 'And We guided them on the straight path.' *Surah Yasin* verse 61: 'And that you worship [only] Me? This is a straight path.' *Surah Maryam* verse 36: '[Jesus said], "And indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path." The expression 'path' signifies the aim of the direction of man's spiritual healing which is to be healed through God's guidance. It is the 'straight path' as it directs to God. The 'straight path' is defined as the righteous path that receives God's support as it entails worshipping Him alone on our journey. The 'straight path' is the guided path as humans receive God's guidance through daily prayers by reciting and contemplating on *Surah Al Fatihah* as *duaa*. Along the 'path, one may face challenges that can cause loss of focus, but as one redirects the focus and holds firmly to God by taking efforts to do acts of worship such as performing five times prayers in a day consistently, there will be Divine guidance. *Surah Al Fatihah* directs humans to seek God and to declare that all power and strength comes from Him. It is also a call from God to return to Him, to His 'straight path,' to sincerely worship Him alone, singling Him out in His divinity, believing in His perfection, being

free from the need of any partners, having no rivals nor equals.

Thus, by reciting and contemplating on *Surah Al-Fatihah*, one is actually seeking God's help to be guided on the 'straight path.' *Surah Ash-Shura* verses 52-53 state 'And thus We have revealed to you an inspiration of Our command. You did not know what is the Book or [what is] faith, but We have made it a light by which We guide whom We will of Our servants. And indeed, [O Muhammad], you guide to a straight path (52) The path_of Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth....' (53). The 'path' refers to God's way which is a straight, guided way filled with guidelines from the Qur'an. Nursi mentions in his *Damascus Sermon* about the remedies of hope, courage, love, trust, solidarity and sincerity which are from the lessons he has learned from the pharmacy of the Qur'an that is like a faculty of medicine to cure men's spiritual sicknesses (Nursi, 2012).

The Qur'an is a spiritual guide for men's life as it has rules, guides, and instructions which are essential solutions that can heal the sicknesses of the soul. It contains a variety of solutions in the form of guidelines, counsel, caution, directions, guidance, advice, warnings, and promises and entails the different instructions, measurements, and treatments which are based on the verses of the Scripture to heal spiritual illnesses (Vahide, 2008). *Surah Al-Ma'ida* verse 16 states 'By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.' Although the journey of healing may have many obstacles, Allah provides assistance by commanding mankind to follow His guidance as it is light and He guides those who seek His pleasure by granting peace and light on the 'straight path'. Allah puts humans in this situation to make them learn profound lessons on the journey as they rely on Him. Eventually, humans will learn the lessons of life and will be able to make better decisions along the journey which can be rewarding as they can accelerate the healing process. As the Qur'an is the light, humans' journey will be lighted again when they read, contemplate and practice Allah's commands in it.

The knowledge can shield men from evilness and grant them the strength to face the obstacles as men 'travel' along the 'path' with wisdom, allowing them to manage themselves when they are exhausted mentally and emotionally.

'Travel' implies the expedition of the journey. *Surah Yusuf* verse 109 states 'And We sent not before you [as messengers] except men to whom We revealed from among the people of cities. So, have they not travelled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? And the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah; then will you not reason?' The expression 'travel' implies the purpose of men's expedition on their spiritual healing journey. As humans have weaknesses and limitations, there will be endless challenges along the journey as they 'travel.' Some things may distract men from their aims to reach the destination which is to be healed. However, by contemplating on these metaphorical expressions, humans are guided in their thoughts and emotions.

Contemplating on the stories of the Prophets Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and Noah (peace be upon them all) who travelled on the journey that leads to spiritual healing including the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) can be a source of inspiration to keep the momentum of 'travel' as men can learn how they went through challenging situations through reliance on God. There are also stories of Aad, Thamud, Midian, Lot, and others who have ruined their lives as they went astray and travelled on the wrong 'path' which can be a reminder for men not to deviate from the right direction. Inspirational stories of the prophets in the Qur'an and those who are very close to Allah can inspire men on their spiritual healing journey to be healed and remain on the straight 'path' for a healthy spiritual growth. *Surah Al-Fatihah* verse 7 states 'The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your eternal grace, not the path of those who invited Your wrath or of those who are astray.' *Surah Al-An'am* verse 153 states 'Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) path: thus doth He command you that ye may be righteous.'

The expression 'path' signifies the destination which is to arrive at the desired result that is recovery. It is the 'path' of those whom Allah bestowed eternal grace which is the 'path' of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah and those believers who have done righteous deeds which include educating people towards goodness and truth through the performance of good deeds as well as the willingness to serve Allah in the spirit of sincerity, forbearance, and God-consciousness. The other 'path' of those who invited Allah's wrath refers to the 'path' of disbelievers who hide religious matters that they knew of being right and true. It also refers to those who refuse to accept religious truths and its teaching which came to their knowledge through valid explanation due to several reasons which have influenced their souls such as fanaticism towards a certain school of thought, anxiety to safeguard certain interests, fame, or position. The 'path' of those who have gone astray refers to those who are ignorant of religious knowledge and have no desire to learn it. It also refers to those who possess misleading religious knowledge because they might have learned it without proper instructions or studied it through deviant sources. Nursi compares between the 'paths' of belief and unbelief stating that the 'path' of belief and the affirmation of Divine unity is extremely straight, while the 'paths' of unbelief and denial are extremely lengthy, difficult, and dangerous (Nursi, 2002). Thus, the way that is straight is the most comfortable, beneficial, the safest way in human morality and conduct and moderate as it is filled with wisdom and compassion.

According to Nursi, (2008) the way of the belief is filled with courage, modesty, comprehensive supplication, and wide-reaching worship, so it indicates a proof of Divine unity and instruction in wisdom while the other way, which is the way of the unbelief is injurious, oppressive fury and arrogance, immorality, suffers the torments of spiritual sickness, full of troubles, lengthy and harmful. *Surah Al-Fatihah* directs the believers to seek Allah to guide them to the straight 'path,' which is the true religion, and to help them remain on that 'path' in this life and to pass over the actual *Sirat* on the Day of Judgment. On that Day, the believers will be

directed to the gardens of comfort in the company of the Prophets, the truthful ones, the martyrs, and the righteous. *Surah Al-Fatihah* also encourages performing good deeds, so that the believers will be in the company of the good-doers on the Day of Resurrection. *Surah Al-Fatihah* also warns against following the 'paths' of misguidance, so that one does not end up being gathered with those who indulge in sin, on the Day of Resurrection, including those who have earned the anger and those who were led astray. Contemplating on SPIRITUAL HEALING IS A JOURNEY reveals the spiritual guiding principles in the healing journey and the effectiveness of religious discourse in influencing positive actions for psycho-spiritual well-being.

Eventually, this research proposes contemplation on conceptual metaphor as a cognitive spiritual therapy for psychological disorders. Cognitive therapy aims to overcome difficulties by identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking, behaviour, and emotional responses by developing skills for modifying beliefs, identifying distorted thinking, relating to others in different ways, and changing behaviours (Badri, 1996). Thus, the process of contemplating helps men to produce a healthy mind and pure heart when the intellect has a strong connection with the heart. The practice of contemplation is ingrained in great religions to develop desirable attitudes for the individual and their community, to help them make progress on the spiritual path, or 'simply' to connect with the Divine (Silvestre-López, 2020). Cognitive psychology, therefore, affirms that people's conscious thinking and inner dialogues influence their feelings and emotions, and form their attitudes and beliefs – in short, they can even shape their values and vision of life. If the discussion is transferred from the cognitive therapy of the emotionally disturbed to the cognitive activity of normal Muslims, one can clearly see the great influence of the cognitive processes involved in contemplation in remodelling the very psyche of individuals (Badri, 2018).

Furthermore, according to Badri, if the spiritual/faith factor is added – a factor which is a powerful cognitive force totally excluded from modern psychology – one can imagine the momentous change that Islamic contemplation

can achieve in purifying the souls and elevating the status of the worshippers. Through contemplation, Muslims can refine their own internal 'reward and punishment' psycho-spiritual strategies in their spiritual development; they do not need a worldly reward or an electric shock to change their unwanted habits and replace them with more worthy ones. By devoting their internal cognitive and spiritual aspirations to the contemplation of God's majesty and perfection in contrast to their laxity and unworthy behaviour, they will certainly develop the sentiment of love of God and the refined feelings of contentment, happiness, and tranquillity (Badri, 2018, p. 10).

Conclusion

This research contributes to the field of language, psychology, and religious studies by revealing the richness of persuasive language in mental health practices. Eventually, this research proposes contemplation on conceptual metaphor as a cognitive spiritual therapy for psychological disorders. SPIRITUAL HEALING IS A JOURNEY is a conceptual metaphor that can be used as a cognitive spiritual therapy as it creates awareness and ignites inspiration to 'travel' on the straight 'path' to be healed. Contemplating conceptual metaphor can be used as a therapy as the conceptualisation can influence one to feel, think and act in the right and safe way which can eventually transform and change a person's life through spiritual healing. *Surah Yunus* verses 25-26 state 'And Allah invites to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path' (25) '.... Those are companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally' (26).

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