

INTEGRATING QURANIC INSIGHTS WITH  
COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT FOR  
ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION:  
A SPIRITUAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the approaches and frameworks found in the Qur'ān for addressing the growing issue of adolescent depression. A qualitative research method was adopted utilizing textual analysis to explore the Qur'ān, various tafsirs and scholarly interpretations, and existing research papers to identify relevant verses related to the depression issue. The study employed thematic coding, comparative and contextual analysis, and integration of perspectives. The research emphasizes three key strategies and supportive frameworks presented in the Qur'ān for managing adolescent depression: promoting positive behavioral change, spiritual enhancement and fostering supportive relationships. This study serves as a source of motivation for individuals and society to stay resilient, drawing strength from the Qur'anic wisdom. The paper also situates this integration within a broader Islamic civilizational perspective, arguing that the Qur'anic worldview offers therapeutic support and a holistic epistemology rooted in divine purpose and metaphysical coherence.*

**Keywords:** Adolescent Depression, Behavioral Activation, Qur'anic Guidance, *Tadabbur*, Supportive Relationships.

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## 1. Introduction

In today's post-modern era, moral decline is unfortunately not uncommon. Even with the rapid increase in higher education, this problem has not yet been overcome. The advancement of technology and how it is increasingly becoming a part of people's daily lives may also be a significant contributing factor to the above problem. In the current situation globally, several pressing issues, such as the fear of death or losing loved ones, social isolation, media misinformation, and panic-inducing situations, significantly impact individuals' mental well-being. These factors exert a considerable influence on the psychological state of modern individuals living in dynamic environments.<sup>2</sup> This adds to the alarming state of the individual's detachment from society, religion and public reality. In turn, today's society is deprived of good virtues and a sense of humanity. A survey done on the state of moral values in the U.S. was marked by a four-percentage-point increase since 2022 where 54% of adults rated moral values in the country as "poor".<sup>3</sup>

Adolescence is an important stage in every individual's life and a critical phase for achieving human potential. It is characterized by rapid brain development in which the interaction with the social environment shapes the capabilities an individual takes forward into adult life.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the moral and spiritual values embedded at this stage will last a lifetime and will be reflected in their mental well-being. The current situations have pushed teens away from society and those with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma (affecting readiness to seek help), educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, physical ill-

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<sup>2</sup> Liana Spytka, "Anxiety and Depressive Personality Disorders in the Modern World," *Acta Psychologica* 246 (June 1, 2024): 104285–85, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104285>.

<sup>3</sup> Megan Brenan, "Views of State of Moral Values in U.S. At New Low," Gallup.com, June 9, 2023, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/506960/views-state-moral-values-new-low.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> George C Patton et al., "Our Future: A Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing," *Lancet (London, England)* 387, no. 10036 (2016): 2423–78, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)00579-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00579-1).

health and human rights violations.<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization data also indicates that the number of deaths due to suicide every year reaches more than 700 thousand people.<sup>6</sup> This proves how the crisis of attitude and mental weakness has been an unmanaged predicament in society.

Every human being faces problems in their daily life. The difference lies in how he reacts and resolves these problems. This in turn is related to the concept of resilience or psychological resistance. Resilience is widely viewed as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even high levels of stress and remain positive. Resilience, as seen through an Islamic lens, is explored in Qur'ān, *Sūrah al-Ra'd*: 11 and *al-Baqarah*: 155-156. It is characterized as the capacity and fortitude of an individual to endure and adapt amid challenging circumstances, while maintaining patience and surrendering to God, even in the face of disasters or hardships.<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, Islam has made it abundantly clear how to remain positive in the face of life's struggles. Islam highlights the Holy Qur'ān as a primary source of guidance in dealing with the human experience as its wisdom encompasses all aspects of life.<sup>8</sup> Thus, those who suffer from emotional distress can find guidance in the Holy Qur'ān.<sup>9</sup>

Depression, the main argument of this study, refers to a mental health disorder characterized by a decreased level of interest in daily activities, as well as a disturbed and depressed mood and excessive

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<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, "Mental Health of Adolescents," World Health Organization, October 10, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization, "Suicide," World Health Organization, March 25, 2025, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>.

<sup>7</sup> Fauzi Rochman et al., "Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Kemuhammadiyah (JASIKA) Concept of Resilience in Islamic Perspective," April 25, 2025, <https://jasika.ums.ac.id/index.php/jasika>.

<sup>8</sup> Steven M. Southwick et al., "Why Are Some Individuals More Resilient than Others: The Role of Social Support," *World Psychiatry* 15, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 77-79, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20282>.

<sup>9</sup> Frankie Samah, "The Qur'an and Mental Health - the British Psychological Society," [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk), May 14, 2018, <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/quran-and-mental-health>.

anxiety. Depression may be caused by internal and external factors including bullying, severe problems and violence. As depression worsens, this study explores the coping mechanisms and support system provided in the Holy Qur'ān to help with the issue of depression among adolescents through three main arguments. The three main arguments presented in this study include spiritual development through meditation and contemplation (*tafakkur*), behavioral activation, and building supportive relationships.

Beyond its therapeutic insights, this paper contends that the Qur'ān provides a civilizational framework for understanding and addressing human well-being—one that is rooted in *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity), the *fitrah* (primordial nature), and the ethical-metaphysical order of life. In doing so, it challenges the secular fragmentation of modern psychology by offering a unified, purpose-driven vision of mental health grounded in revelation, reason, and spiritual consciousness. This vision resonates with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's argument that the desacralization of knowledge in modernity has led to existential dislocation, and that true healing must return to a sacred cosmology where the human soul is anchored in divine truth. Similarly, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas contends that the crisis of contemporary knowledge stems from the loss of *adab* and the misplacement of meaning, both of which must be restored through a worldview rooted in Islamic metaphysics and ethics.<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Framing the Crisis: Moral Dislocation and Adolescent Vulnerability**

The worsening state of moral decadence, coupled with the rapid development of technology, has led society to a state of destructive behaviors and morals. As a result, teenagers these days are finding it difficult to maintain healthy relationships and connections, which negatively affects their mental and psychological well-being. We can see this from data collected by the American Mental Health Association which shows that more than 2.7 million people are

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<sup>10</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 5–6.

suffering from major depression in 2023.<sup>11</sup> The devastating outcome of this data urges us to take action to create a better society for future generations.

A study conducted on the deterioration of mental health in children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that factors such as prior mental health status, change in daily routine, reduced physical activity, excessive screen time, overuse of electronic devices, and reduced social support have been reported to have a significant effect.<sup>12</sup> The decline in mental health however has not only been limited to the COVID-19 time but has also continued after it to the present. This has influenced the lives of teenagers and poses concerns that are linked to other significant health and developmental concerns, such as educational achievements, substance use and abuse, violence, and reproductive and sexual health.<sup>13</sup>

From an Islamic civilizational perspective, this crisis is not merely the result of social and biological disruption, but also a deeper rupture in the human soul's orientation toward the divine. The loss of moral grounding and purpose reflects a disconnection from *fitrah*—the innate nature inclined to truth and balance—and reveals the consequences of a worldview that neglects spiritual well-being. Hence, any comprehensive response to adolescent mental health must also address this spiritual vacuum through meaningful reconnection with divine guidance and part of a broader disintegration of value-based living in the postmodern condition.

Thus, poor mental health can hinder life chances, impacting both lifespan and quality of life. Therefore, improving young people's mental health by addressing modifiable social risk factors

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<sup>11</sup> Mental Health America, "Youth Data 2023," Mental Health America, 2023, <https://mhanational.org/issues/2023/mental-health-america-youth-data>.

<sup>12</sup> Eunkyung Jo et al., "Deterioration of Mental Health in Children and Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of the Korean Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 21–29, <https://doi.org/10.5765/jkacap.220041>.

<sup>13</sup> Jean M. Twenge et al., "Age, Period, and Cohort Trends in Mood Disorder Indicators and Suicide-Related Outcomes in a Nationally Representative Dataset, 2005–2017.," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 128, no. 3 (April 2019): 185–99.

through effective prevention strategies is a critical social justice issue and should be addressed at the earliest.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. Civilizational Relevance and Transformative Potential of the Study**

Adolescents play a major role in determining the future of society and civilization; hence it is of utmost importance for the public to help reduce and improve the condition of youth. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the methods in combating the growing problem of depression among adolescents through insights and guidelines from the Holy Qur'ān which is not restricted to being applied for the Muslim community but a holistic approach for the global communities regardless of their faith background.

By integrating Qur'anic wisdom into mental health discourse, this research aspires to revive a model of care rooted in spiritual ethics, communal responsibility, and metaphysical coherence—values central to Islamic civilization and universally relevant in addressing modern crises.

### **4. Methodological Pathways: Bridging Revelation and Psychology**

This study employs a qualitative research design for a text analysis of the Qur'anic perspective on confrontation mechanisms and support systems for depression among adolescents. The methodological approach includes thematic coding, comparative and contextual analysis, and integration of perspectives that ensures a comprehensive exploration of religious, psychological and societal factors. The primary source of data is the Qur'ān, with an accurate choice of verses related to emotional well-being, resilience, and social support. Secondary sources include scholarly interpretations, current psychological research, and academic discussions on mental health and faith-based coping strategies.

To systematically analyze the text, thematic coding framework

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick McGorry et al., “The Youth Mental Health Crisis: Analysis and Solutions,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 15 (January 21, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2024.1517533>.

is applied by identifying the core themes from the Qur'anic verses related to emotional wellbeing, divine support and resilience. Contextual analysis ensures the historical, cultural, and theological significance of Qur'anic verses is appropriately considered and is done with identification of relevant verses from Qur'ān as well as the modern psychological scholarly literature to find a holistic framework that aligns and complements each other. To assess the alignment between Qur'anic insights and modern psychology, a comparative approach is employed in which Qur'anic references to emotional regulation are analyzed alongside psychological techniques such as 'cognitive restructuring and behavioral activation',<sup>15</sup> teenagers' personal experiences with faith and mental health are incorporated from empirical data to ensure relevance. This methodology bridges the prophetic model of inner healing with modern therapeutic tools, recognizing that spiritual insight and empirical evidence are not mutually exclusive but mutually enriching. Ethical considerations, restrictions related to interpretations, and the inclusion of various academic speeches are recognized.

## **5. Reclaiming Wholeness: Insights and Outcomes in the Age of Fragmentation**

The prevalence of depression among adolescents is a significant concern globally. According to the World Health Organization, approximately one in seven 10-19-year-olds experiences a mental disorder, with depression being a leading cause of illness and disability in this age group.<sup>16</sup> Self-esteem can affect an individual's confidence and will reflect their performance. With the increased use of technology and the internet, a study found that self-esteem and internet use were significantly associated with depression among

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<sup>15</sup> Feldhaus, Claudia G., Rachel H. Jacobs, Edward R. Watkins, Amy T. Peters, Katie L. Bessette, and Scott A. Langenecker. "Rumination-focused cognitive behavioral therapy decreases anxiety and increases behavioral activation among remitted adolescents." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 29 (2020): 1982-1991.

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization, "Mental Health of Adolescents," World Health Organization, October 10, 2024, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>.

adolescents. Low self-esteem was associated with 47.5% of depression, whereas high self-esteem was associated with only 2% of depression among adolescents.<sup>17</sup> It is hence important to ensure that the self-esteem of teens is taken care of to improve depressive symptoms. In Malaysia, a study reported that 19% of young adolescents exhibited depressive symptoms, with a higher prevalence among females.<sup>18</sup> Another study also shows that there are chances for females to experience depression twice as often as men.<sup>19</sup>

Over time, there have been notable trends in the rates of adolescent depression. Research indicates that rates of emotional problems, including depression, have increased among adolescents over the past few decades.<sup>20</sup> In the Malaysian context, according to the Malaysian Health and Morbidity Survey 2017, one in five teenagers in Malaysia are depressed, two in five suffer from anxiety and one in 10 are stressed.<sup>21</sup> In the United States, depressive symptoms among adolescents have shown a marked increase from 1991 to 2018, particularly among girls.<sup>22</sup>

Another study highlighted that between 2009 and 2017, rates of depression among kids ages 14 to 17 increased by more than

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<sup>17</sup> Shahril Nizam Zulkipli et al., “Understanding the Rise of Teenage Depression in Malaysia: Trends, Causes, and Societal Impact,” *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences* 11, no. 3 (March 1, 2024): 265–73, <https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2024.03.025>.

<sup>18</sup> Sarbhan Singh et al., “Prevalence and Determinants of Depressive Symptoms among Young Adolescents in Malaysia: A Cross-Sectional Study,” *Children* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 141, <https://doi.org/10.3390/children10010141>.

<sup>19</sup> Office on Women's Health, “Depression | Office on Women's Health,” OASH | Office on Women's Health, 2018, <https://womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/depression#references>.

<sup>20</sup> Markham Heid, “Depression and Suicide Rates Are Rising Sharply in Young Americans, New Report Says. This May Be One Reason Why,” *Time* (Time, March 14, 2019), <https://time.com/5550803/depression-suicide-rates-youth/>.

<sup>21</sup> Dr Azhar, “Vital to Get Help Early in Treating Depression in Teens,” *NST Online* (New Straits Times, June 27, 2022), <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2022/06/808590/vital-get-help-early-treating-depression-teens>.

<sup>22</sup> Matthijs Oud et al., “Effectiveness of CBT for Children and Adolescents with Depression: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression Analysis,” *European Psychiatry* 57, no. 1 (January 16, 2019): 33–45, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2018.12.008>.

60%.<sup>23</sup> This hence points to the alarming need for solutions or treatments to address this globally affected mental health condition.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is recognized as an effective treatment for adolescent depression. It has proven effective in the treatment of depression<sup>24</sup> and is a form of psychotherapy that helps individuals learn how to identify and change destructive or disturbing thought patterns that negatively influence behavior and emotions. It combines cognitive therapy, which focuses on modifying the way individuals think, with behavior therapy, which concentrates on changing the way individuals act. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses have found moderate-quality evidence for CBT reducing depressive symptoms at the end of treatment and at follow-up. Moreover, CBT interventions that include a combination of behavioral activation and challenging thoughts, or involve caregivers in the intervention, have been associated with better long-term outcomes for youth.<sup>25</sup> Also, CBT is the most proven form of talk therapy, also called psychotherapy. It sometimes works as well as antidepressant drugs for some types of depression. Some research suggests that people who get CBT may be half as likely as those on medication alone to have depression again within a year.<sup>26</sup>

Although CBT originated in a secular psychological framework, its therapeutic principles—such as behavioral activation, cognitive reframing, and emotional regulation—are not inherently antithetical to Islamic values. Islam, as a comprehensive religion, encourages introspection (*tafakkur*), behavioral transformation (*islāh al-nafs*), and spiritual discipline (*tazkiyah*), which align with many aspects of CBT. Recognizing the empirical success of CBT does not

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Friedberg PhD, “CBT for Youth with Depression,” Beck Institute, May 22, 2020, <https://beckinstitute.org/blog/cbt-for-youth-with-depression/>.

<sup>24</sup> See Butler, Chapman, Forman, & Beck, 2006; Cuijpers et al., 2013

<sup>25</sup> Kristine Trettø Sverre et al., “Comparing the Efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Depression in Head-To-Head Randomized Controlled Trials: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Equivalence,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 100, no. 102234 (December 5, 2022): 102234, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2022.102234>.

<sup>26</sup> Camille Noe Pagán, “Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression: Does It Work?,” WebMD, November 28, 2022, <https://www.webmd.com/depression/cognitive-behavioral-therapy-for-depression>.

imply an acceptance of its philosophical assumptions; instead, it allows for an integration that situates such techniques within a holistic, God-oriented worldview. As Nasr affirms, the desacralization of knowledge in the modern world must be countered by a return to sacred meanings, where healing is part of the soul's journey toward God.<sup>27</sup>

In the framework of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), the implementation will encompass three strategic interventions: behavioral activation, spiritual development and supportive relationships. Thus, the therapeutic encounter becomes not only a means of coping but a means of returning to one's primordial nature (fitrah), fulfilling the Qur'anic vision of well-being as a sacred responsibility.

### **5.1 Behavioral Activation**

Recent research highlights a compelling intersection between the principles of the Qur'ān and the techniques of Behavioral Activation (BA) within Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Behavioral Activation is a specific CBT skill. It can be a treatment all by itself, or can be used alongside other CBT skills such as cognitive restructuring. Behavioral activation helps us understand how behaviors influence emotions, just like cognitive work helps us understand the connection between thoughts and emotions.<sup>28</sup> It is a therapeutic strategy that promotes participation in fulfilling and rewarding activities. Notably, the Qur'ān highlights the importance of charitable deeds, aiding others, and fostering positive relationships. This congruence offers a significant avenue for adolescents dealing with depression to improve their well-being. Behavioral activation is a technique in mental health care where actions are used to positively impact one's emotional state, advocating for involvement in activities that provide pleasure and a feeling of achievement.

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<sup>27</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>28</sup> Pim Cuijpers et al., "Individual Behavioral Activation in the Treatment of Depression: A Meta Analysis," *Psychotherapy Research* 33, no. 7 (April 17, 2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2197630>.

Behavioral Activation is predicated on the concept that deliberate actions can positively influence one's emotional state. It motivates individuals to partake in fulfilling activities to cultivate joy and a feeling of success. This approach can be a vital tool in the management of mental health. In the Islamic worldview, such deliberate actions are not only instruments of psychological transformation but also vehicles for spiritual elevation. The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes the significance of *'amal ṣāliḥ* (righteous deeds) as both ethical imperatives and means to inner peace. Islamic teachings recognize that external behavior, when guided by divine intent, reinforces the soul's alignment with truth. As al-Attas notes, the proper integration of knowledge and action (*'ilm* and *'amal*) forms the essence of *adab*, ensuring both personal well-being and metaphysical balance.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, when integrated within an Islamic framework, behavioral activation does more than alleviate depression—it reorients the self toward its sacred purpose.

## 5.2 Fundamental Concepts of Behavioral Activation

Behavioral Activation operates on several underlying fundamentals to address depression effectively. It is an extensively examined treatment for depression which is relatively simple to apply when compared to other psychotherapies. BA aims to increase positive interactions between a person and the environment.<sup>30</sup> One critical concept is the cycle of depression, where reduced activity levels lead to decreased enjoyment and a sense of helplessness, reinforcing withdrawal and inactivity. BA aims to break this cycle by initially increasing activity levels. Engaging in pleasurable activities provides positive reinforcement, strengthening the connection between the activity and positive emotions, which, over time, naturally boosts motivation and enjoyment.

Additionally, BA helps individuals identify activities that foster a sense of mastery and competence, enhancing self-confidence

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<sup>29</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 35.

<sup>30</sup> Pim Cuijpers et al., "Individual Behavioral Activation in the Treatment of Depression: A Meta Analysis," *Psychotherapy Research* 33, no. 7 (April 17, 2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2197630>.

and a sense of accomplishment, thereby improving mood. The concept of behavioral momentum is also integral to BA; as individuals engage in more activities, they gain momentum and are more likely to continue participating. This snowball effect helps them overcome the initial resistance to engaging in activities when depressed. Since there will be initial struggles when starting an activity, it could be made easier by setting the SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound). The clarity about what, where, when, and how will help in actually doing it and continuing as well.<sup>31</sup>

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of behavioral activation aligns deeply with the emphasis on righteous action (*'amal ṣāliḥ*) as a transformative force. The Qur'ān repeatedly reminds believers that purposeful action, grounded in sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and divine consciousness (*taqwā*), leads not only to psychological relief but also to spiritual elevation. Engaging in beneficial and intentional behavior is seen not as mechanical, but as an act of worship, especially when driven by a noble *niyyah* (intention). As such, the motivation to overcome depressive inertia is not only personal or therapeutic, but a sacred duty to nurture the soul's resilience and fulfil its divinely-ordained purpose. Islamic teachings also reinforce the role of *tawakkul* (trust in Allah (ﷻ)) and *ṣabr* (patience) in maintaining momentum during moments of struggle, making behavioral activation both a psychological and spiritual intervention.

### 5.3 Qur'anic Perspectives on Behavioral Activation

The Holy Qur'ān, the sacred book of Islam, offers a treasure trove of guidance that surprisingly complements modern psychological approaches to behavioral activation. The principles of behavioral activation align with the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān in many ways. The Qur'ān emphasizes the importance of action and encourages initiative and the pursuit of good in this world. Allah (ﷻ) says:

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and

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<sup>31</sup> Amy Mezulis, "Behavioral Activation Yields Positive Mental Health Benefits," [www.joon.com](https://www.joon.com/blog/behavioral-activation), June 29, 2023, <https://www.joon.com/blog/behavioral-activation>.

We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.<sup>32</sup>

This aligns with BA's focus on increasing participation in activities that bring enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment. Furthermore, although the Qur'ān does not directly address cognitive restructuring, it encourages a positive outlook and trust in Allah (ﷻ) will and destiny, as explained in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 286:

God does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity.<sup>33</sup>

This positive outlook can help counteract negative thought patterns that contribute to depression, a core concept of BA. Furthermore, the Qur'ān emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong social ties and participating in the Muslim community. In *Sūrah al-Hujurat*, verse 10 says:

The believers are but brothers, so make a settlement between your two brothers.<sup>34</sup>

What differentiates the Qur'anic framework from secular BA, however, is its teleological nature—action is not only healing, but an act of servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*) and moral striving. The intent (*niyyah*) behind one's actions, the remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and the cultivation of inner sincerity (*ikhhlās*) turn ordinary behavior into spiritual purification. This embeds behavioral activation into a civilizational paradigm where therapy is simultaneously worship, meaning-making, and soul realignment.

This aligns with BA's focus on promoting social interaction, which is crucial for improving mood and reducing feelings of isolation. These examples highlight the potential for integrating Qur'anic and secular approaches to treatment, demonstrating how it can be tailored to meet the needs of Muslim adolescents with depression and the importance of such integration in providing comprehensive care.

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<sup>32</sup> al-Qur'ān, 16:97

<sup>33</sup> al-Qur'ān, 2:286

<sup>34</sup> al-Qur'ān, 49:10

#### 5.4 Positive Effects of Behavioral Activation

Behavioral activation offers numerous benefits for individuals suffering from depression. One of the most important benefits is improved mood. Increased participation in pleasurable activities leads to increased positive emotions and decreased depressive symptoms. The positive effects of these activities also boost motivation and energy. Another major benefit is improved social functioning, as participation in social activities helps reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen social bonds. Depression can make the individual feel isolated and avoid doing things but it is important to actually start the activities first even if it is uncomfortable because firstly, activating changes our brain state and can make us feel better, right away. For example, exercise can produce “good chemicals” in the brain that lift mood while they are in the bloodstream. Secondly, the more we activate, the more situations we find ourselves in that can give us positive experiences. The technical term for this is “reinforcing positive context contingencies.” Keeping technicalities aside, we need to “get out there” and give ourselves the best chance of feeling better, even if we don’t feel like it at the time.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, when individuals achieve mastery and accomplishment through these activities, they develop a greater sense of self-worth and confidence, which enhances their self-esteem. Studies show that BA can improve depressed mood, reduce anxiety and increase energy levels of individuals.<sup>36</sup>

In conclusion, BA is an effective, evidence-based technique designed to help individuals, including adolescents, who are experiencing depression break out of a cycle of inactivity and passivity. By encouraging participation in meaningful activities, BA aligns with the Qur’ān’s teachings on the importance of work, maintaining a positive outlook, and fostering strong social bonds. This approach promotes positive emotions, boosts motivation and

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<sup>35</sup> Dan DeSena et al., “Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Group Program for Depression Adult Patient Manual Behavioral Activation Department of Psychiatry,” n.d., <https://psych.med.umich.edu/anxiety-program/pdf/Behavioral-Activation-for-Depression.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Amy Mezulis, “Behavioral Activation Yields Positive Mental Health Benefits,” [www.joon.com](http://www.joon.com), June 29, 2023, <https://www.joon.com/blog/behavioral-activation>.

energy, improves social functioning, and enhances self-esteem. For adolescents, who are more prone to feelings of isolation and self-doubt, CBT can be particularly helpful in building resilience and self-confidence during a critical developmental period.

More importantly, from an Islamic perspective, behavioral activation becomes not merely a therapeutic tool but a spiritual discipline. When grounded in sincere intention (*niyyah*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), and remembrance (*dhikr*), these actions contribute not only to psychological recovery but to the soul's return to balance and harmony with the divine order. As the Qur'an emphasizes, well-being (*ḥayātan ṭayyibah*) is promised to those who act righteously with faith.<sup>37</sup> Hence, BA, when situated within the Islamic framework, supports the cultivation of inner strength, gratitude, and meaning, restoring the self not just functionally but spiritually.

From the standpoint of Islamic intellectual tradition, the efficacy of BA is not only psychological but deeply spiritual and civilizational. In Islam, actions (*'amal*) are not valued merely for their outcomes but for their alignment with divine purpose and moral order. al-Attas emphasizes that meaningful action must be governed by *adab*—a proper recognition of one's place within the cosmos and in relation to divine truth.<sup>38</sup> This spiritual intentionality (*niyyah*) transforms habitual practices into acts of *'ubūdiyyah* (servitude). Nasr further critiques the desacralization of modern therapeutic approaches, arguing that human well-being cannot be understood apart from the metaphysical structure of reality.<sup>39</sup> In this view, restoring sacred meaning to action is essential for true healing. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, drawing on Qur'anic psychology, affirms that continuous righteous habits purify the soul, soften the heart, and bring about deep emotional resilience.<sup>40</sup> When BA is grounded in such a framework, it becomes a form of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), enabling adolescents not just to cope, but to flourish with

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<sup>37</sup> al-Qur'an, 16:97.

<sup>38</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 35–36.

<sup>39</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 8–10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Fawā'id* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 2004), 132.

purpose.

Ultimately, CBT fosters a sense of accomplishment and significantly improves overall well-being, making it a valuable tool in managing depression across all age groups. Thus, BA is an effective, relatively simple type of therapy that can be applied broadly in differing populations.<sup>41</sup>

### 5.5 Enhancing Spiritual Growth Through *Muraqabah* and *Tafakkur*

Spirituality can play a huge role in maintaining an individual's emotional stability. *Muraqabah* is a practice of mindfulness and spiritual awareness of Allah (ﷻ). This practice is used to help people relax by focusing on the presence of Allah (ﷻ), which calms their hearts and their mental state. In spiritual *muraqabah* it typically restructures the mind to respond to negative feelings and thoughts in a different way. This practice helps adolescents monitor their thoughts and creates mental barriers between them and their depressive systems. It is also expressed through contemplation, which is called *tafakkur*, and includes the act of deliberation. *Tafakkur* is the process of a person deeply contemplating and reflecting and thinking about Allah (ﷻ).<sup>42</sup> When faced with difficulties in life, these two tools can be invaluable to put the mind at peace and keep going forward without losing hope, knowing and trusting that Allah (ﷻ) will not leave them in misery and provide the best support. Both *muraqabah* and *tafakkur* connect the individual to their Creator and lighten or even remove the burdens they feel when depressed. This is possible with the strong connection and beliefs achieved through deep connection and good thought about the Creator.

The second pillar of Islam, prayer, is a form of *muraqabah*,

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<sup>41</sup> Pim Cuijpers et al., "Individual Behavioral Activation in the Treatment of Depression: A Meta Analysis," *Psychotherapy Research* 33, no. 7 (April 17, 2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2197630>.

<sup>42</sup> Dr. Nazia Zaman , Dr. Naila Maqsood , and Dr. Fakhara Aziz, "The Noble Quran as a Coping Mechanism with Stress: A Descriptive Study," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 9 (2022): 76–87, <http://mail.journalppw.com/index.php/jjpsp/article/view/12041>.

performed with concentration between the servant and his Lord. Praying five times a day establishes a strict routine for the mind, providing a moment of calm and guidance in life. Since the five prayers are obligatory for a Muslim, no matter how low they feel at a point, they will still have to push themselves to perform their prayers and that will in return bring a sense of accomplishment and hope. Therefore, prayer brings a sense of purpose, tranquility, and stability. Allah (ﷻ) affirms this in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 153, when He says:

O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.<sup>43</sup>

Another Islamic spiritual practice for remembering Allah (ﷻ) is *dhikr*. This repetition involves specific phrases such as “*SubhanAllah*” and “*Alhamdulillah*.” These phrases are said with the intention of remembering Allah (ﷻ). This is mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān in *Sūrah al-Ra’d*, verse 28:

Those who have believed and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.<sup>44</sup>

The concept of *dhikr* provides a source of peace and psychological comfort. In addition, Allah (ﷻ) mentions in *Sūrah Āl Imrān*, verse 191, that another way of contemplating is to deeply reflect on Allah (ﷻ) creation:

Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, Our Lord! You have not created any of this without purpose. Glory be to You! Protect us from the punishment of the Fire.<sup>45</sup>

This verse encourages Muslims to use their minds to understand the world around them and to remember Allah (ﷻ) in all their daily activities by contemplating His creations. *Tafakkur* is the

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<sup>43</sup> al-Qur’ān, 2:153

<sup>44</sup> al-Qur’ān, 13:28

<sup>45</sup> al-Qur’ān, 3:191

focus of the mind not only on Allah (ﷻ), but also on His attributes, creations, and signs in the world. It also highlights the need to contemplate the wonders of creation in the heavens and on the earth. Teenagers often feel an overwhelming sense of separation or alienation. Contemplating Allah (ﷻ) creation reminds them that they are part of His wondrous creation. Therefore, practicing this habit cultivates a sense of gratitude, enriches their inner contentment, and strengthens their connection with the Creator. The simple recitation of Qurʾān can also bring in positive change in mental health as the study by Khadijeh Moulai et al., concludes that the recitation of the Qurʾān has a notable positive influence on mental health factors.<sup>46</sup> Particularly, it can alleviate anxiety, reduce stress levels, mitigate symptoms of depression, and foster overall mental well-being. Thus, the connection to Allah (ﷻ) and his book, the Holy Qurʾān can have deep healing effects for teenagers who are depressed if done with intention and certainty of relief from Allah (ﷻ).

These spiritual practices—*muraqabah*, *tafakkur*, *dhikr*, and *ṣalāh*—are not simply emotional or meditative exercises; they are deeply embedded within the Islamic civilizational view of the self as a spiritual-moral being (*nafs*) journeying toward God. Classical scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Jawziyyah emphasize that the soul is refined and healed through sustained remembrance, focused reflection, and consistent ritual. In this light, emotional regulation and psychological healing are seen as effects of aligning the heart (*qalb*) and self (*nafs*) with divine presence and cosmic purpose. The Qurʾānic imperative to reflect on the signs of God in the self and creation reinforces a spiritual anthropology in which mental well-being arises not from self-centered introspection, but from God-centered awareness.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Khadijeh Moulai et al., “The Effect of the Holy Quran Recitation and Listening on Anxiety, Stress, and Depression: A Scoping Review on Outcomes,” *PubMed* 6, no. 12 (December 1, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1751>.

<sup>47</sup> Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, vol. 3, *Kitāb Riyāḍat al-Nafs* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 25; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Fawāʿid* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 2004), 132.

## 5.6 Nurturing Meaningful Connections Through Supportive Relationships

All of humanity is like a forest with tangled roots, whether hidden or unseen. Therefore, close relationships are a lifeline, without which people feel isolated and helpless. These close relationships have tremendous power to dispel misunderstandings, doubts, insecurities and overcome loneliness. Close relationships resolve all kinds of difficulties and pave the way to friendship. Where there is an emotional bond, there is sharing, a willingness to go the extra mile to give and forgive, and this can have a significant impact on their mental health. Teenagers suffering from depression may benefit from the understanding and emotional support provided by supportive relationships, such as family. The family environment and parenting practices play a vital role in children's physical and psychological development as well as their behavioral patterns. Substantial evidence has suggested the robust associations between parental socioeconomic status, mental health status, family dynamics (i.e., the way family members interact), and children's mental health problems.<sup>48</sup>

Another study showed that emotional support provided by family members can improve a person's ability to manage stress, increase self-confidence, and reduce the prevalence of depression in adolescents. Teens who have a good, trusting relationship with their parents are more likely to talk about their personal problems, which may reduce the likelihood of making unwise decisions or falling into the traps that give false hopes of friendship and security. These relationships can provide a sense of belonging, social support, and opportunities for positive social interactions that can help alleviate the loneliness and isolation associated with depression.

The Holy Qur'ān highlights the importance of companionship and community support. Teenagers can benefit from seeking out friendships that share their views and positively influence them. Regular dialogue and fun activities with peers enable a depressed

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<sup>48</sup> Jiayu Lin and Wuyuan Guo, "The Research on Risk Factors for Adolescents' Mental Health," *Behavioral Sciences* 14, no. 4 (April 1, 2024): 263, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14040263>.

person to see their situation from a different perspective and help alleviate feelings of depression, while love, respect, and compassion flourish. The Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) always listened to each other's needs and feelings. Today's teens should emulate and practice these ideals. Peer support plays an important role in reducing a person's sense of loneliness. Allah (ﷻ) says in *Sūrah al-Hujurat* verse 10:

The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allah so you may be shown mercy.<sup>49</sup>

The verse highlights the importance of unity and brotherhood. Therefore, building supportive relationships with peers is very beneficial for teens suffering from depression. They can gain solace, empathy, understanding, and support from their peers by fostering a sense of brotherhood.

In addition, it is important to maintain strong family ties and treat family members with kindness and respect. Family is the primary source of support, providing care and assistance. Families can support each other during difficult times by offering moral and practical support. Allah (ﷻ) highlighted in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* verse 83:

And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], ‘Do not worship except Allah, and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy. And speak to people good [words] and establish prayer and give zakāh.’ Then you turned away, except a few of you, and you were refusing.<sup>50</sup>

This verse emphasizes the importance of speaking kindly and treating others with kindness, without exception, whether family members or others. A good relationship between parents and children reduces the likelihood of a teen developing depression. Lack of care and

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<sup>49</sup> al-Qurʿān, 49:10

<sup>50</sup> al-Qurʿān, 2:83

overprotection are major risk factors that may lead to undesired responses from a teenager, who is facing a difficult state of mind already during those years of life. A strong relationship with a caregiver prevents depression and covers up negative life events. Peer relationships can act as a buffer, as a friend can provide the support a teen cannot receive from family. Parents are encouraged to provide comfort to their children and their families through the Holy Qur'ān as they grow up. Support through sharing Islamic stories contributes to shaping a personal worldview based on the spiritual, emotional, and spiritual parables contained in the divine scripture.

In Islamic heritage, many supportive relationships are documented that highlight the importance of family, friendship, and community, demonstrating support for people facing difficult life challenges through acts of unconditional love and kindness. These relationships were a true foundation for each other, partners in goodness, in times of prosperity and despair. Documented examples include the intimate and loving relationship between Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and Khadija (رضي الله عنها), his first wife, who supported him even after her death. The unexpected support for Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) from his close friend, Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), after the Quraysh mocked him. The well-intentioned support for Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) from his uncle Abu Talib (رضي الله عنه) is also well documented. His relationship with his cousin Ali (رضي الله عنه) also includes his support after the deaths of his daughter Fatima (رضي الله عنها), his son-in-law Ali (رضي الله عنه), and their grandson Hussein (رضي الله عنه), with kindness, assistance, and unconditional love. So, providing supportive relationships for adolescents with depression is an important way to build a comprehensive care model for them. Supportive relationships positively impact their mental health. Family, peers, and the community all play important roles in providing this support for adolescents with depression. Nurturing these strong relationships will prevent depression even before it can occur because in the majority of cases, depressed adolescents do not have strong connections in their family or friend circles that gradually take them down the dark tunnel of depression. Hence, strong and meaningful relationship bonds act as both prevention and cure for adolescent depression.

Within the broader framework of Islamic civilization,

relationships are not merely social constructs but are part of the divinely ordained structure of communal life. Human beings, according to the Qur’ān and classical Islamic thought, are created to live not in isolation but in interconnected harmony as part of the *ummah*. Scholars like al-Ghazālī have written extensively on the concept of *ḥusn al-‘ishrah*—beautiful companionship—as both a moral virtue and a spiritual discipline.<sup>51</sup> Nurturing relationships are thus not just psychologically restorative but also acts of *‘ibādah* (worship), reflecting values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and *sabr* (patience). As such, supporting adolescents through loving kinship and righteous friendship revives an Islamic model of communal care where emotional healing is inseparable from moral-spiritual growth.

## Quranic Insights + CBT

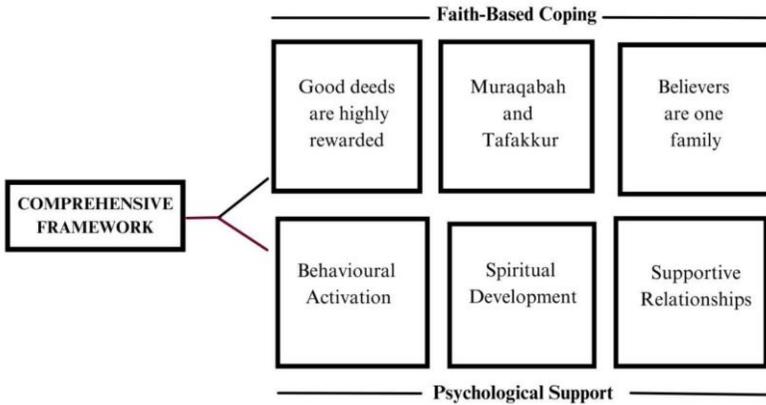


Figure: 01 Source: Author, (2025)

## 6. Conceptual Framework Summary

### 6.1 Limitations and Scope of Application

<sup>51</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 2, *Kitāb Ādāb al-Mu’āsharah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, n.d.), 42.

While the integration of Qur'anic guidelines with CBT has been shown to be highly effective in addressing depressive symptoms, this framework may have contextual limitations in application. Individuals especially teens, who struggle to establish even a basic spiritual connection, as well as those from other faith backgrounds, may find it challenging to fully contextualize Qur'anic teachings within their personal experiences. Additionally, this framework is not intended as a self-treatment manual. Addressing depressive symptoms requires professional guidance and structured therapeutic support to ensure effective intervention. From an Islamic perspective, seeking expert assistance is strongly encouraged, particularly for individuals who lack social support or are uncertain about how to navigate their mental health challenges.

This consideration is especially relevant in mental health care, as improper self-treatment or isolation in managing depression can lead to serious consequences. The guidelines presented in this article serve as a complementary resource, offering valuable insights for professionals seeking to develop a holistic approach that integrates spiritual and psychological therapeutic frameworks. They are also beneficial for individuals who already engage with Qur'anic contemplation, as such practices can deepen their spiritual connection and strengthen their relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

## **6.2 A Civilizational Perspective on Integrating Islamic and Psychological Frameworks**

Islamic psychology does not merely complement modern cognitive-behavioral therapy; it represents a broader civilizational paradigm in which mental well-being is inseparable from the soul's alignment with divine order. Thinkers like al-Attas and Nasr argue that healing and knowledge must return to their metaphysical roots to overcome the epistemic fragmentation caused by secular modernity. As al-Attas notes, "the confusion and error in knowledge... have created a condition in which the self is no longer true to its real nature."<sup>52</sup>

In this view, therapy must engage the inner self (*nafs*) as a

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<sup>52</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978), 100.

spiritual reality, not just a psychological construct. Nasr likewise reminds us that “the crisis of modern man is above all a crisis of knowledge... he no longer knows what it means to know.”<sup>53</sup> Hence, true healing lies not merely in cognitive restructuring but in reorienting the self to the sacred and restoring meaning through divine anchoring.

## 7. Conclusion

The study concluded that Islam, as a comprehensive religion, helps humans behave in a dignified and beneficial way in this world. The guidance revealed in the Holy Qur’ān provides a model that enables humanity to endure and progress. The study highlighted the devastating effects of moral decay in today’s technologically advanced world, highlighting the troubling issue of depression, which can be fatal if not properly addressed. In the context of the discussion, the study explores the methods indicated in the Holy Qur’ān regarding coping mechanisms and support systems for combating and overcoming depression. It addresses three arguments: behavioral activation, spiritual development through contemplation and meditation, and building supportive relationships.

The study describes how the Holy Qur’ān emphasizes taking steps to achieve life satisfaction. It encourages individuals to engage in pleasurable activities, provided they are within the framework of Islamic teachings, maintain a positive outlook on life, and integrate the Holy Qur’ān and therapeutic approaches in treating depression. The analysis also addresses the importance of dealing with depression through mindful *muraqabah* and awareness of the body, emotions, and mind, which can be achieved through reflection (*tafakkur*) and contemplation. Connecting with oneself and one’s Creator contributes to enhancing physical, mental, and spiritual health. This Qur’anic study also emphasizes that humans, as social beings, must seek companionship and build and maintain supportive relationships, which contribute to psychological support in the face of depression. Thus, the study concludes by emphasizing the need for

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<sup>53</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 9.

the individual, society, and even society as a whole to work together to limit and mitigate the devastating effects of depression, in light of the teachings of the Holy Qur'ān, to ensure a better life for all of humanity.

Addressing the increasing prevalence of depression and anxiety among adolescents requires adaptation, innovation, policy development, and budget allocation from both mental health policymakers and institutions. These efforts are essential for the early identification and management of mental health issues within adolescent institutional settings. While institutions primarily focus on academic achievement, research suggests they also provide valuable opportunities for social and emotional learning. Governments, institutions, parents, and adolescents must recognize and, where possible, openly acknowledge the role institutions can play in mental health development. To support this, policymakers should integrate mental health literacy programs into curriculum design and implementation. These programs would raise awareness, enhance understanding, reshape attitudes, reduce stigma, and equip children with vital life skills necessary for a healthy and productive future.

Beyond its therapeutic efficacy, this integrated framework reflects a deeper civilizational imperative: restoring a sacred worldview in which the self is viewed as a moral and spiritual entity, not merely a clinical subject. Islamic psychology, grounded in the Qur'anic worldview, offers a unified understanding of human nature, where healing entails mental regulation and spiritual realignment. Thinkers like Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Seyyed Hossein Nasr argue that the modern crisis of mental health is inseparable from the loss of metaphysical meaning and the desacralization of knowledge. Reintegrating revelation with psychological practice is, therefore, not merely a therapeutic act but a civilizational project that restores *adab*, purpose, and the soul's connection to the divine order. This study hopes to contribute to that revival.