



ISLAMIC PERCEPTION OF ANXIETY: A CONCEPTUAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract:

Anxiety is the most prevailing issue from the last decades. Many factors including emotional, genetics, personality, cognition and environmental lead towards anxiety and depression. With the rapid increase in stress and tension, there exist a corresponding need to highlight and discuss the coping and adaptive strategies of Islam to deal with the issue. The study sought to investigate the most common phenomena of the day, anxiety and its treatment and solutions in the perspective of Islam. In this study multiple strategies, therapies and methodologies are discussed which offered by Islam to overcome the problem. A person who suffer from anxiety, remains in stress, fear, anger, have negative thoughts and sometime severely attack to kill someone. Anxiety have impact on physical, mental, psychological, emotional and social aspects of life of anxious person. Symptom of anxiety depends upon the type and severity of disorders. In Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Disorders (DSM-IV) six types of anxiety disorders are identified and discussed.

Keywords: Psychological, Disorders, Anxiety, Islam, Strategies, Therapies.

Introduction

Anxiety is an emotion that have the feelings of tension, worried thoughts and negative physical changes. People with anxiety have different psychological and



physical symptoms. They may have negative thoughts, may avoid unpleasant situations, remain in worry, feelings of nervousness, tension or have physical symptoms in their body like sweating, dizziness, and shivering, weeping or rapid heartbeat.¹ Anxiety is linked with several issues like; social and economic crises, wars, terrorist attacks, epidemic diseases, mental and physical disorders, worries related to future etc. people fall in anxiety situation when they realize that there is no sudden solution of their problems. They become more anxious and have terrified feelings and thoughts as well as physical changes due to some uncertain situation.²

Anxiety is also associated with anger, sadness, fear, disgust, abrupt and frustrated behaviors. Anxiety may be severe or mild, momentary or long lasting, helpful or damaging. Whatever is the type of anxiety it has its consequences on human behavior and day to day functions. Anxiety can be experienced in different form like Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) that is intense anxiety and not associated with any specific phenomena or event. On the other hand, Phobias are linked with some specific situation or problem. While Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) refers to long lasting anxiety.³

Types of anxiety disorders:

Everyone faces anxiety time to time especially when face important event or some danger. Although day to day anxiety is mild, occasionally and less harmful, while the anxiety occurred frequently and lasts after long time leads towards anxiety disorder. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Disorders (DSM-IV) American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2000 have categories six main types of disorders; panic disorder, phobias, Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PSD), Obsessive-impulsive disorder, and acute stress disorder.⁴

Panic Disorder:

Panic disorder involved sudden, unexpected, and repeated attacks of fear and anxiety that often occurred without warning and followed by some physical symptoms such as shortness of breath, heart palpitations, sweating, and dizziness and flushed feelings. It continuous about one month and sometime move towards another panic attack.⁵ Unless the harm of panic attacks, it frightened the person and they begin to avoid the situations.⁶

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):

This is the most common anxiety disorder.⁷ The person having this disorder consider that his problems are uncontrollable and unsolvable. Other symptoms of this disorder are restlessness, muscular issues, headache and difficulty in sleep. People who suffer it they always think about something unpleasant to happen.⁸

Phobias:

These are the unrealistic fear for specific object or situation like water, Height, flying, dogs etc.⁹ the persons having this disorder limited themselves unnecessarily and avoid to face the situation that is fearful to them.¹⁰

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):

These are the stubborn thoughts, imaginations and impulses that create stress in life. The person having this order remained in doubts about day to day life matters.¹¹ These unrealistic fears and thought create anarchy and anxiety in life that may cause to harm some love one also.¹²

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

Such disorder occurs in the wake of traumatic event. Someone who face serious trauma in his life, such as death of someone having association, war, sever accident etc. avoid to remind the trauma and remained in the world of sorrow and nightmares or sleep difficulties.

Social Anxiety Disorder:

Persistent fear in social and performance situations come under this anxiety disorder. This anxiety disorder occurs when met with unfamiliar people and situations or having the possibility of judging by others. This situation is avoided due to humiliating behaviors of others. Blushing, nausea, nervousness and trembling are its most common symptoms.¹³

Anxiety disorders lasts from a short period of weeks to several months and years, rely upon the affect and severity of the disorder. Treatment depends upon the effect of disorder in functioning day to day tasks. It's difficult to decide which treatment work to a specific disorder.¹⁴ According to Rachman to deal with anxiety people adopt various style and coping strategies that sometime make them successful and sometime make turn the situation into worst condition. Anxiety disorder is treatable and early diagnostic help early treatment and success. Although treatment and support depend upon the nature and need of the person but mostly it falls in two categories i) Psychological ii) Pharmacological.¹⁵

Apart from these treatment categories, this article explored the treatment of anxiety disorders in the perspective of Islam. This article also identified and explored different strategies of Islam that can be used to treat the anxiety disorder. Whatever is the type of anxiety disorder Islam completely guide and provide support to come out from it. It is also important that although Islam has given strategies, methodologies and *Dua's* to overcome anxiety disorder but rather in case of necessity advised to seek professional help to maintain mental health.

Review of Islamic strategies:

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on revelations to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and provides complete code of life, behavior, ethics, and social values,

which helps to tolerate and develop adaptive coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety. Almost everyone in his life has face to difficulties and problems but Islam provide firm support to come out from these difficulties by considering it test from Allah (SWT).

1. Believe in Allah (SWT):

Muslims firmly believe that they are not alone in time of crises and they will sure come out from it with the support of their creator. As Allah said in Quran “And certainly, we shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the preserving and patient one”.¹⁶ This verse reveals that problems, pains and crises are the test of Allah and in these situations remain patient and calm; move towards prayers and firm believe in. Muslims also believe that difficulties are from Allah as He wants us to get closer to Him. It is necessary that in the time of difficulty and crises believe in Allah and succumb to the evil whispers and thinking. John Bowlby (1952) claimed in his attachment theory that secure attachments linked to overall wellbeing, better mental health outcome, self-esteem improvement and stronger relationships. Then how this is possible that attachments with Allah (SWT) would not be linked with good mental health and stresses free life.¹⁷

Allah (SWT) always provided support and hope in the time of trouble. As Quran says’

“And will provide him sustenance from a place he had never expected; and whoever relies on Allah – then Allah is Sufficient for him...”¹⁸

Furthermore, Allah console to people who are in pain by saying that in this time of catastrophes He is with them. As Allah says,

“Do people think they will be left alone and they will not be tried?”¹⁹

Try to avoid terrible and offensive thinking and granted help and support from Allah (SWT) through supplication and Dua. Just believe that Allah (SWT) listen and already knows each and everything which is in your heart. Ask him for what you want, it will release your pain and sorrow. It is also necessary to show full confidence and believe when you ask help form Allah (SWT). It is stated in Quran, “Our Lord! In you we have placed our trust, and to you we turn in repentance, and to you is the final return”.²⁰

Muslim also believe that Allah is most powerful, nothing is beyond to Him. Allah can deal with all the issues and problems. Keep remember frequently as Allah can handle everything and He will not let you alone at the time of grief and problem. One should also have believed that with the help and support of Allah (SWT)

he/she can handle all the issues and problems. As Allah says in Quran that those who keep reliance on Allah, they are rewarded.

“Those who are patient and who put their trust in their Lord”.²¹

Even prophet (SAW) in the time of difficulties call Allah (SWT) and remained consistent in His believe in Allah. Allah's Messenger (SAW) used to seek refuge with Allah from the difficult moment of a calamity and from being overtaken by destruction and from being destined to an evil end, and from the malicious joy of enemies.²²

2. Struggle:

Islam does not allow people totally rely on fate. Instead, Allah (SWT) put the responsibility on human beings to control their actions and deeds after declaring all the things. Allah (SWT) have provided the choices to alleviate the hardships and to improve conditions. If you are in trouble or in awkward situation, try to come out and control the situation.

“Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves”.²³

So, if you are in trouble, make a plan, think about its solutions, Allah definitely show you the path to come out from trouble.

3. Dua (Supplication):

Islam offers to the persons who become the victim of anxiety, stress and depression, to connect to Allah to eradicate the stress and reduce the fearful and stressful thoughts. The best way of this connection is to engage oneself in Dua (prayers) as Islam has guided towards a number of prayers according to the situation that provide peace of mind.

Prayers are important part of Islamic life. To cope with the anxiety issue, it is important to couple that strategic measures from some professionals and necessary prayers together, because mental health is the issue that cannot be handled with one thing only. Islam has guided to seek help from Allah (SWT) in time of distress and mental disorder. Specific prayers to deal with anxiety provide calm and peace to the victim. In Quran Allah (SWT) said,

“Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort”.²⁴

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also taught words to get relieve from distress and sorrow. He taught that in time of grief say these words

“Allah, Allah, my Lord, nothing is associated with Him” Narrated by Imam Muslim.

When Yunus (AS) stranded in the belly of a Whale and found no way to come out from it. At that time of depression and sorrow he prayed from Allah (SAW) in

these words, "there is no God but Allah, You are exalted, Indeed, I have been from the reprobates".²⁵

4. Charity:

Charity is also another source to release tension and stress. It is way to get closeness with the creator. Charity gives psychological comfort, happiness and peace of mind. To spend money for the sake of Allah to help the needy and poor brings reward and blessings from Allah (SWT). Charity brings happiness in the life of deprived and needy people; this situation brings internal contentment and reduced the anxiety and depression. Allah (SWT) says in Quran, "Say, O Prophet, "Surely it is my Lord Who gives abundant or limited provisions to whoever He wills of His servants. And whatever you spend in charity, He will compensate 'you' for it. For He is the Best Provider."²⁶

Giving person receives social and psychological benefits in the form of joy, warm glow, social uplift and self-satisfaction. Charity is also considered important in Islamic traditions to reduce the trials and hardships.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives another except that Allah increases his honor, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.²⁷

In Quran Allah promised to give the rewards to those who spend in the path of Allah (SWT) for the sake of Allah (SWT). Saying of prophet (PBUH) aroused to involve in giving process as Muhamad (SAW) told, "Allah said, 'O son of Adam! Spend, and I shall spend on you'.²⁸

5. Hope for best:

It is worth knowing that unless the past, today anxiety caused a variety of psychological illness. Today increasingly high number of people are suffering from anxiety disorders. One reason is negative thinking and lose hope for best. Our prophet (SAW) did not lose hope even at the time when he was in worst situation in His visit of "Ta'if". When non- Muslims through stones on Him, he prayed for guidance and showed his trust on Allah (SAW). Allah said angel of mountains to His beloved prophet who said to Him to, O Muhammad, if you wish, I will crush them between two mountains", but our beloved prophet (SAW) replied, "Rather, I hope that Allah will bring forth from their descendants people who will worship Allah alone and not associate anything with Him."

This incident gives us a lesson that if someone wants to reduce worries, anxieties, harm and depressions, he/ she can do so easily by catching the rope of hope. Worries can be reduced only if they are treated with patience, courage, will power and hope.

Allah (SWT) also advised to be patient and hopeful in the time of grief and worries. Hope for changing the time will surely reduce anxiety and depression. Allah says in Quran,

"Indeed, after hardship there is ease".²⁹

After reading this verse an anxious person becomes calm and peaceful. All the fears go away to know and recognize that Allah (SWT) has planned best for him and takes care of you.

Conclusions:

During modern time, almost every person is thoughtful about the mental health and has anxiety disorders. Someone has severe disorders and seeking for the solution of their mental illness while the other have minor anxiety disorders. Fears, social anxiety, emotional disabilities and mental health destroyed the peace of life and mind. To cope with the anxiety disorder role and therapist strategies of Islam cannot be ignored. Islam consists of a set of religious norms, beliefs, values, life style, behavioral patterns and traditions. Like all other areas of life, Islam also provide clear guideline to come out from anxiety, depression and other mental disorders. Islam provided a concise set of therapies in form of prayers, dua and actions. Trust, believe in Allah (SWT), struggling and positive attitude with other psychiatric remedies helps to manage the anxiety disorders and urge the victims to move forward a peaceful life. Religious involvement not only reduces the intensity of the illness but also provide support and motivation to deal with the mental disorders. If psychiatrist use these remedies and therapies during their session, they can easily handle the patient towards normal and peaceful life



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