

A Psychological Analysis of the War Verses in Surat al-Ahzab

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 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.537380.1493>

Introduction

Surat al-Ahzab, a Medinan sura of the Holy Quran, addresses a variety of social, familial, and military issues. Verses 9-26 describe the Battle of the Confederates, or the Battle of the Trench, in the fifth year after the Hijra, one of the most consequential crises of early Islam. In this battle, Arab tribes led by the Quraysh, in cooperation with Jewish groups in Medina, attacked the city with a large army. Acting on Salman al-Farsi's proposal, the Muslims dug a trench and implemented an innovative defense that demonstrated the Islamic community's strategic prudence. Beyond recounting historical events, the verses portray psychological pressures such as collective anxiety, intense fear, religious doubt, and cognitive dissonance, while proposing reliance on God, patience, and social cohesion as means of overcoming them. Seeking to address the relative absence of psychological analyses of the Quran's war verses, this study proceeds from the premise that these verses provide a comprehensive framework for managing psychological crises. Contemporary crises, including wars and social tensions, heighten the need for such frameworks. The study aims to identify the components of anxiety in the verses, examine religious-psychological mechanisms, and consider their use in therapeutic interventions. Its principal questions concern the psychological pressures represented in the Battle of the Trench and the Quranic strategies for resilience. By integrating authoritative exegeses with psychological theories, the study seeks to develop an applied framework for mental health.



Research Method

This qualitative study employs thematic analysis, a method well suited to extracting patterns of meaning from religious texts and integrating them with psychological concepts. The primary data consist of verses 9-26 of Surat al-Ahzab, classical exegeses including Al-Mizan and Tafsir Nemuneh, and psychological literature on such topics as religious coping and posttraumatic growth. The analysis followed six stages: familiarization through repeated reading; initial coding of key expressions such as 'fear' and 'reliance on God'; the search for themes such as collective anxiety and cognitive restructuring; review and classification of the themes; final naming of the themes as anxiety, resilience, and collective cohesion; and reporting with Quranic examples. Triangulation was used to enhance credibility by comparing the findings with exegetical sources and psychological theories and by obtaining peer review from specialists in the psychology of religion. The theoretical framework centers on anxiety as a response to threat, patience as resilience and a return to equilibrium, reliance on God as a means of reducing helplessness, and collective cohesion as a source of group morale. Without imposing Western perspectives on the verses, this approach examines them through concepts from modern psychology and facilitates their practical application in crisis situations.

Findings

The thematic analysis of verses 9-26 highlights the psychological dimensions of the Battle of the Trench. Verse 9 ('O you who believe, remember God's blessing upon you') depicts collective anxiety caused by the advancing armies and offers a cognitive means of managing it by recalling divine favor in the form of the wind and unseen hosts. Comparable to cognitive restructuring in cognitive behavioral therapy, this recollection redirects attention from the threat toward positive resources and reinforces hope and gratitude, thereby transforming anxiety into tranquility. Verse 10 ('When they came upon you from above you ... and you entertained various thoughts about God') portrays fear at its peak through bodily signs such as fixed gazes and hearts rising to the throats, generating cognitive



dissonance between faith and doubt. The crisis nevertheless functions as an occasion for posttraumatic growth, as the reconsideration of belief transforms fear into faithful submission.

Verses 11-12 contrast the believers' destabilization ('There the believers were tested and shaken severely') with the hypocrites' complaint ('God and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusion'), revealing the difference between the believers' active, faith-based coping and the hypocrites' passive denial. Influenced by a bystander effect, the hypocrites evade responsibility and thereby intensify anxiety. Verses 13-14 portray their flight ('O people of Yathrib, there is no place for you here') as anxious avoidance, which produces psychological frustration rather than solving the problem. Verse 15 represents their breach of covenant as cognitive dissonance, while verse 16 foregrounds fear of death ('Flight will never benefit you') as existential anxiety and stresses the acceptance of reality as a means of reducing panic. Verse 17 criticizes the hypocrites' illusion of control, and verse 18 presents their obstructionism as a negative social influence. Verse 19 connects miserliness and terror ('being miserly toward you') with deep-rooted anxiety, while verse 20 describes anticipatory anxiety ('They think the confederates have not withdrawn'). By contrast, verse 21 presents the Prophet as a model for observational learning and associates the remembrance of God with mindful awareness and reduced anxiety. Verse 22 transforms the believers' faith ('This is what God and His Messenger promised us') into faith-based resilience and optimism. Verse 23 treats fidelity ('They were true to what they pledged to God') as a basis of group cohesion, and verse 24 presents divine reward as motivation for resistance. Finally, verses 25-26 describe the removal of the threat ('God repelled the disbelievers') and the transfer of fear to the enemy, while strengthening solidarity and generating a psychological sense of victory. Taken together, the verses present a structured movement from anxiety toward psychological growth.

Conclusion

The analysis of verses 9-26 of Surat al-Ahzab reveals a comprehensive framework for managing psychological crises through strengthened faith, recollection of divine assistance, and social cohesion. Collective anxiety and individual fear placed the Islamic community under extreme pressure during the Battle of the Trench, yet the



believers transformed the threat into an opportunity for spiritual and psychological growth through reliance on God and patience. Whereas the hypocrites experienced psychological collapse and division through avoidance, denial, and duplicity, the believers maintained stability through cognitive restructuring, particularly the remembrance of divine blessings, and by following the Prophet's example.

These patterns extend beyond their historical setting and can be applied to contemporary crises such as psychological warfare, pandemics, and social tensions, helping to transform anxiety into courage and resilience. Practical applications include religiously integrated psychological interventions: educational programs centered on reliance on God to reduce helplessness, patience workshops to strengthen emotional regulation, and cohesion-oriented group therapy for crisis-affected communities. Integrated with modern treatments such as mindfulness-based and cognitive therapies, these teachings can provide effective tools for mental health. Future research should compare these verses with contemporary psychological models and empirically test the effectiveness of Quran-based interventions in real-world settings. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the central role of religious belief in reducing stress and strengthening resilience. As a divine source, the Quran provides not only devotional guidance but also profound psychological resources for confronting hardship. Integrating the psychology of religion with the behavioral sciences can enrich the understanding of sacred texts and translate their teachings into practical educational and therapeutic tools, thereby promoting collective resilience and lasting tranquility.

Keywords:

war psychology; Quran; Surat al-Ahzab; anxiety; fear; reliance on God; patience.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding statement

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

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How to cite:

Ramezani, Reyhaneh. (2026). A Psychological Analysis of the War Verses in Surat al-Ahzab. Quran, Culture And Civilization , 7 (3), 1-20. <http://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.537380.1493>