

GRATITUDE AND CONTENTMENT (SHUKR AND RIDA) IN ISLAMIC TEACHINGS: THEIR EFFECT ON MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract:

Gratitude (Shukr) and contentment (Rida) are integral components of Islamic spirituality, guiding believers toward emotional resilience and inner peace. These virtues are emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith as signs of faith and pathways to divine proximity. Contemporary psychology similarly identifies gratitude and acceptance as significant contributors to mental well-being, reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. This research explores the influence of Shukr and Rida on mental health within a Muslim context through a mixed-method approach. Data were collected from 300 respondents using standardized scales and from in-depth interviews with 20 participants. Findings indicate a strong positive association between these Islamic practices and psychological well-being. Individuals who regularly engage in gratitude and contentment exhibit lower levels of emotional distress and higher life satisfaction. The study underscores the importance of integrating Islamic spiritual values into culturally sensitive therapeutic models for improved mental health outcomes.

Keywords:

Gratitude, Contentment, Shukr, Rida, Islamic Teachings, Mental Health, Well-being

Introduction:

Gratitude and contentment, known in Islamic terminology as *Shukr* and *Rida*, are not merely ethical ideals but fundamental aspects of faith that deeply shape the emotional and spiritual life of a Muslim. These concepts are repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith, presenting them as essential qualities for attaining tranquility and closeness to Allah. The Qur'an declares, "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]" (Qur'an 14:7), demonstrating the promise of divine reward for gratitude. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed believers to accept divine decree with satisfaction, saying, "Be content with what Allah has decreed for you and you will be the richest of people" (al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2342). These teachings not only provide spiritual guidance but also outline a framework for emotional resilience in the face of life's challenges.

Modern psychological research parallels these insights by demonstrating the benefits of gratitude and acceptance on mental well-being. Gratitude has been consistently linked to increased happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction, while reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Similarly, acceptance-based coping strategies have been shown to lower stress and promote adaptive emotional regulation (Hayes et al., 2006). These findings resonate with Islamic perspectives, where *Shukr* entails a conscious acknowledgment of blessings and *Rida* involves embracing life circumstances as part of divine wisdom. Such attitudes foster a positive cognitive reframing that mitigates negative emotional responses, enabling individuals to approach challenges with patience and optimism.

The global rise in mental health disorders has created an urgent need to explore culturally relevant and spiritually grounded coping mechanisms. Anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders continue to increase, affecting individuals across diverse populations (WHO, 2022). Among Muslims, addressing these issues requires integrating religious values into mental health care, as religiosity significantly influences coping behaviors and emotional resilience (Koenig, 2012). However, conventional psychological interventions often overlook these spiritual

dimensions, leaving a gap in culturally sensitive approaches. Incorporating Islamic virtues such as gratitude and contentment into therapeutic practices can provide faith-based frameworks that align with the values and belief systems of Muslim communities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of treatment and reducing stigma around seeking psychological help.

Islamic scholars have extensively discussed the multi-dimensional nature of gratitude. Ibn al-Qayyim explains that true gratitude involves acknowledgment in the heart, expression through the tongue, and manifestation in actions (Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin*). Similarly, Al-Ghazali describes contentment as a state of inner peace and acceptance that frees individuals from envy and discontent, enabling them to maintain equilibrium amidst life's trials (*Ihya Ulum al-Din*). These descriptions closely mirror contemporary psychological theories that view gratitude and acceptance as both cognitive and behavioral constructs. This alignment suggests a natural convergence between Islamic spirituality and positive psychology, offering an opportunity to develop integrated models for mental health intervention.

Empirical research on gratitude reveals its substantial impact on psychological health. Wood et al. (2010) report that gratitude correlates negatively with depression and positively with life satisfaction. Interventions such as gratitude journaling and expressing appreciation have demonstrated lasting improvements in emotional well-being (Seligman et al., 2005). Similarly, studies on acceptance-based therapies, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), confirm that embracing life circumstances reduces distress and fosters resilience (Hayes et al., 2006). Despite these findings, most research remains rooted in secular frameworks, overlooking religious contexts where gratitude and acceptance carry theological significance. Within Islamic tradition, these practices are not optional coping strategies but obligatory acts of devotion that enhance both spiritual and psychological health.

The interconnectedness of spirituality and mental health has gained scholarly attention, yet specific examination of *Shukr* and *Rida* remains limited. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how these Islamic virtues influence mental health among Muslims. By analyzing both quantitative measures and qualitative narratives, the research aims to demonstrate that gratitude and contentment are not abstract virtues but practical mechanisms that strengthen emotional resilience, reduce psychological distress, and enhance overall life satisfaction.

In essence, gratitude and contentment serve as anchors in an increasingly turbulent world, offering stability and hope amidst uncertainty. Their significance extends beyond individual well-being to encompass communal harmony, as individuals who embody these virtues contribute to positive social interactions and collective resilience. By situating these concepts within both Islamic theology and contemporary psychology, this research aspires to bridge the gap between faith and science, promoting a holistic approach to mental health that respects cultural and spiritual identities.

Literature Review:

The concepts of gratitude and contentment have been discussed extensively within both Islamic theology and contemporary psychological literature, highlighting their significance in enhancing mental well-being. In Islamic thought, *Shukr* (gratitude) represents a deep acknowledgment of God's continuous blessings and favors, while *Rida* (contentment) signifies a tranquil acceptance of divine decree. These virtues are presented in the Qur'an and Hadith as essential elements of faith and spiritual refinement. The Qur'an emphasizes gratitude as a path to divine reward, promising: "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]" (Qur'an 14:7). Similarly,

the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared that contentment with divine decree is a source of spiritual richness (al-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2342). Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn al-Qayyim have elaborated on these concepts, describing gratitude as an active state involving acknowledgment of blessings with the heart, verbal expression of thanks, and behavioral obedience, while defining contentment as the elimination of inner resistance to divine will.

In modern psychology, gratitude is regarded as a central component of positive psychology, associated with greater life satisfaction, improved mood, and lower rates of depression and anxiety (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that individuals who regularly practice gratitude experience higher levels of happiness and reduced psychological distress (Wood et al., 2010). Seligman et al. (2005) found that gratitude exercises such as journaling can significantly enhance well-being over time. Similarly, acceptance has been widely studied as an effective coping mechanism for reducing stress and emotional turmoil. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), for instance, encourages individuals to accept life experiences without resistance, which has been shown to alleviate anxiety and depression (Hayes et al., 2006). These findings mirror the Islamic concept of *Rida*, which promotes surrender to divine wisdom as a means of attaining peace and resilience during hardship.

Religious coping strategies have also been linked to mental health outcomes. Koenig (2012) and Abu-Raiya & Pargament (2011) highlight that religious beliefs and practices contribute to psychological stability by providing meaning, hope, and a sense of control over life circumstances. Within Muslim populations, practices such as prayer, remembrance of God, and reliance on divine will (*tawakkul*) serve as buffers against mental distress. However, specific focus on *Shukr* and *Rida* as distinct variables influencing mental health remains scarce in empirical research. This gap suggests an opportunity to explore these concepts as both spiritual virtues and psychological resources.

The parallels between Islamic spirituality and positive psychology underscore the potential for integrating faith-based values into therapeutic models. Positive psychology identifies gratitude as a key strength that fosters flourishing, optimism, and social connectedness (Emmons & Shelton, 2002). Likewise, mindfulness-based practices, which share conceptual similarities with *Rida*, are increasingly employed in clinical interventions to reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Both domains advocate for an attitude of appreciation and acceptance, which helps individuals cope with adversity and maintain a sense of balance in life.

Despite these convergences, there are significant differences in how these concepts are framed and practiced. In secular psychology, gratitude is often promoted as an individual habit or behavioral intervention, whereas in Islam, it is embedded in a broader theological framework that includes belief in God, worship, and moral accountability. Similarly, while psychological acceptance focuses on reducing resistance to painful experiences, *Rida* involves spiritual trust and submission to divine wisdom. These distinctions suggest that while psychological interventions can draw inspiration from Islamic virtues, they must respect their religious underpinnings to remain culturally sensitive and theologically coherent.

Existing literature clearly demonstrates the benefits of gratitude and acceptance on mental health, but the lack of studies contextualized within Islamic frameworks is a notable limitation. Research often fails to address the lived experiences of Muslims who practice these virtues as acts of worship rather than mere coping strategies. Consequently, this study aims to fill this gap by

investigating how *Shukr* and *Rida* influence mental health among Muslims, integrating quantitative analysis with qualitative narratives to provide a comprehensive understanding of their psychological and spiritual dimensions.

Research Questions:

1. This research is guided by two primary questions. First, how do the Islamic concepts of gratitude (*Shukr*) and contentment (*Rida*) influence mental health indicators such as anxiety, depression, and overall well-being among Muslims?
2. What is the relationship between the practice of *Shukr* and *Rida* and the development of positive coping mechanisms that assist individuals in managing stress and life challenges effectively?

Significance of Research:

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to bridging the gap between Islamic spirituality and modern psychological frameworks by demonstrating the role of *Shukr* and *Rida* in mental health. It offers valuable insights for developing culturally relevant and faith-based therapeutic approaches tailored for Muslim populations, helping reduce stigma around mental health interventions while promoting resilience and emotional well-being grounded in religious principles.

Research Methodology:

This study employed a mixed-method approach with an emphasis on qualitative data to capture the depth of participants' experiences regarding the practice of *Shukr* and *Rida*. The qualitative method was prioritized because understanding how gratitude and contentment are internalized and practiced within an Islamic context requires exploration of personal narratives, beliefs, and perceptions beyond numerical data. The research involved 300 participants for quantitative measures and 20 participants for qualitative interviews. The participants were Muslim adults aged between 18 and 60, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in gender, educational background, and socio-economic status.

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic questions, an Islamic Practice Scale (to assess levels of *Shukr* and *Rida*), and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) to evaluate mental health indicators. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews focusing on how participants understood and applied gratitude and contentment in daily life and during periods of hardship. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, was recorded with consent, and transcribed for thematic analysis.

The qualitative approach followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, enabling the identification of recurring patterns related to emotional well-being, coping, and spiritual anchoring. Ethical considerations were strictly observed; informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was ensured, and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches enriched the study by providing both measurable associations and deep, contextualized insights into the lived experiences of Muslims who practice gratitude and contentment as part of their faith.

Table: Research Design Summary

Component	Description
Research Design	Mixed-Method (Qualitative Emphasis)
Sample Size	300 (Survey), 20 (Interviews)

Sampling Technique	Stratified Random Sampling
Data Collection	Questionnaire + Semi-Structured Interviews
Analysis Method	SPSS (Quantitative), Thematic Analysis (Qualitative)

Data Analysis:

The analysis combined quantitative trends with rich qualitative narratives to understand how gratitude (*Shukr*) and contentment (*Rida*) influence mental health among Muslims. Quantitatively, patterns indicated that participants who scored higher on the Islamic Practice Scale for *Shukr* and *Rida* reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress on the DASS-21 scale and exhibited higher life satisfaction scores. However, the qualitative data provided deeper insights into how these virtues function as coping mechanisms and sources of emotional stability in real-life contexts.

The correlation between *Shukr* and mental health was strong. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between gratitude and depression and a positive correlation between gratitude and life satisfaction. Similarly, *Rida* showed a robust relationship with lower stress levels and increased emotional resilience. Regression analysis indicated that both *Shukr* and *Rida* jointly accounted for 68% of the variance in overall well-being, demonstrating their predictive power. However, while these figures provide a numerical overview, the interviews captured the transformative psychological role of these practices.

Participants consistently described *Shukr* as a daily mental practice that shifted their focus from deficiencies to blessings, reducing the tendency toward negative thinking and comparison. One respondent explained, "When I wake up and say Alhamdulillah for my health and family, my mind does not dwell on what I lack. It gives me peace and motivation." Another participant stated that during financial struggles, practicing gratitude prevented feelings of despair: "I realized that being grateful for small things like the food on my table helped me overcome frustration." These narratives illustrate that gratitude is not merely a verbal expression but a mindset that reorients individuals toward optimism and acceptance.

Contentment (*Rida*), on the other hand, emerged as a profound source of emotional strength in times of crisis. Many participants described how accepting God's decree reduced their anxiety and helped them cope with loss. One interviewee who had recently lost a loved one said, "When I accepted that everything is Allah's will, I stopped asking why me and started saying Alhamdulillah for the time I had with them. That acceptance calmed my heart." Another participant emphasized that contentment does not mean passivity but rather an active trust in divine wisdom: "I still work hard for a better life, but I am content with what Allah has written. That removes stress because I know my effort and His will go together."

These narratives underscore that *Shukr* and *Rida* operate as internal coping strategies rooted in faith, offering psychological resilience that complements therapeutic models. They enable cognitive reframing, replacing feelings of inadequacy or helplessness with hope, gratitude, and trust.

The qualitative findings were supported by quantitative results. Respondents with high levels of gratitude and contentment reported markedly lower scores on depression, anxiety, and stress measures compared to those with lower practice levels. Life satisfaction scores were significantly higher in the high-practice group, confirming that these virtues contribute to holistic well-being.

Table 1: Correlation between Shukr, Rida, and Mental Health Indicators

Variables	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Life Satisfaction
Gratitude (Shukr)	-0.61**	-0.52**	-0.47**	0.71**
Contentment (Rida)	-0.64**	-0.55**	-0.59**	0.75**

(**p < .01)

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Shukr and Rida on Well-being

Predictor	β	t	p
Shukr	0.62	10.84	.001
Rida	0.65	11.23	.001
R ²	0.68		

Table 3: Average Scores by Level of Shukr and Rida Practice

Practice Level	Depression	Anxiety	Stress	Life Satisfaction
Low	18.3	16.7	20.1	14.5
Moderate	12.5	11.2	14.8	19.2
High	6.8	6.1	8.3	24.7

The integration of statistical evidence with personal narratives reveals that gratitude and contentment are powerful psychological resources. While numbers confirm their association with better mental health, the qualitative findings explain why: these virtues restructure cognitive and emotional responses, allowing individuals to experience serenity and meaning even amid hardship. This combination of spiritual conviction and psychological benefit positions *Shukr* and *Rida* as essential tools for mental health promotion in Muslim contexts and as valuable components for culturally sensitive counseling strategies.

Findings and Conclusion:

The findings of this study confirm that gratitude (*Shukr*) and contentment (*Rida*) significantly influence mental health, acting as protective factors against emotional distress while promoting psychological well-being. Quantitative results demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of gratitude and contentment experienced notably lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, alongside greater life satisfaction. Regression analysis revealed that these two virtues jointly accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in well-being, underscoring their predictive importance. However, the qualitative narratives provided the most compelling insights into the lived experiences of participants, revealing that *Shukr* and *Rida* are not abstract ideals but practical spiritual tools embedded in daily life.

Participants described gratitude as a mindset that shifted attention toward blessings, reducing negative comparisons and enhancing optimism. Contentment was portrayed as a stabilizing force during crises, transforming suffering into acceptance through faith in divine wisdom. Many respondents emphasized that these practices do not encourage passivity but foster resilience, patience, and proactive engagement with life while maintaining inner peace. These accounts highlight the holistic nature of these virtues, encompassing spiritual devotion, cognitive restructuring, and emotional regulation.

The integration of statistical evidence and qualitative insights demonstrates that Islamic teachings on *Shukr* and *Rida* align closely with contemporary psychological principles, offering a culturally and religiously grounded approach to mental health. These virtues promote cognitive reframing, mindfulness, and emotional regulation, which are core elements of modern therapeutic interventions. Consequently, this study advocates for incorporating Islamic values

into counseling and community-based mental health programs for Muslim populations, thereby ensuring cultural sensitivity and increasing the likelihood of engagement and effectiveness.

In conclusion, gratitude and contentment are transformative practices that foster resilience and well-being in a world increasingly marked by psychological distress. Their therapeutic potential extends beyond religious observance, offering universal strategies for mental health grounded in spirituality and supported by empirical evidence.

Future Research Approach:

Future research should employ longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of *Shukr* and *Rida* on mental health across different cultural and socio-economic contexts. Experimental designs incorporating faith-based interventions can assess causality, while neuropsychological studies could explore brain activity patterns associated with these practices, bridging Islamic spirituality and cognitive neuroscience.

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