
FOR INDEED, WITH HARDSHIP [WILL BE] EASE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: COPING MECHANISMS IN AN ISLĀMIC CONTEXT

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The psycho-social impact of social distancing, self-isolation, and complete or partial lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the onset of different anxiety states, phobic anxiety, and depression. There is an increased likelihood of psychoactive substance abuse (tobacco and shisha, drugs, and alcohol) and increased incidents related to feelings of loneliness and isolation, domestic violence, and child abuse (Haider et al. 2020).

Coping mechanisms being exercised among Muslims, vary in dealing with the accompanying uncertainty and other aftereffects of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a study by Rassool et al. (2020), findings indicated a significant positive relationship between perceived vulnerability to disease, religious coping mechanisms, and psychological distress.

Individual strategies on coping with difficult situations, based on a religious perspective that gives them a meaningful interpretation of the events, are derived mainly from the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ. Muslims are encouraged to treat themselves through prayers, supplications (*duā's*), meditation, Al-Qur'ān recitation and believing in Allāh ﷻ. The Qur'ān clearly emphasizes that the difficulties in this world are tests for the believers and enjoins people to have patience while facing difficulties. Allāh ﷻ tests the sincerity and faith of believers by granting favors or introducing difficulties on different occasions.

Allāh ﷻ reminds us:

- *Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as a trial, and to Us, you will return.* (Al-'Anbiyā', 21:35).
- *And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits but give good tidings to the patient.* (Al-Baqarah, 2:155).

These trials and tribulations hold considerable significance for Muslims, who exercise patience to achieve spiritual growth and development. Despite the trials and tribulations, Allāh ﷻ does not burden a soul more than what it can bear:

- *Allāh does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [consequences] what [evil] it has earned* (Al-Baqarah, 2:156).

Numerous verses (*āyāt*) of the Qur'ān enjoin Muslims to bear these trials with "patient perseverance and prayer" and avoid despair. For example, Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

- *“O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allāh ﷻ is with the patient”* (Al-Baqarah, 2:153). Patience is mentioned in combination with prayer here, as patience is essential in all activities, including prayers.

- “And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allāh ﷻ] (Al-Baqarah, 2:45).
- “O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allāh ﷻ that you may be successful” (Āli `Imrān, 3:200).
- “ And be patient, [O Muhammad], and your patience is not but through Allāh ﷻ” (An-Nahl, 16:127).
- Exercising patience is also emphasized in the following verses (āyāt): Hūd, 11:115; Ghāfir, 40:55; Fuṣṣilat, 41:35; Al-`Aṣr, 103:2-3).

Since Allāh ﷻ is the decision-maker, believers must depend on Allāh ﷻ and have complete trust in Him (*Tawakkul*). Verses (āyāt) that express this trust in Allāh ﷻ:

- “Put your trust in Allāh ﷻ. Allāh ﷻ loves those that trust [in Him]” (Āli `Imrān, 3: 159).
- “Say, ‘Never will we be struck except by what Allāh ﷻ has decreed for us; He is our protector.’ And upon Allāh ﷻ let the believers rely on” (At-Tawbah, 9:51).
- “And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allāh ﷻ -- then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allāh ﷻ will accomplish His purpose. Allāh ﷻ has already set for everything a [decreed] extent” (Aṭ-Ṭalāq, 65: 3).
- “And why should we not rely upon Allāh ﷻ while He has guided us to our [good] ways? And we will surely be patient against whatever harm you should cause us. And upon Allāh ﷻ let those who would rely [indeed] upon rely on” (Ibrāhīm, 14:12).

There is also a narration of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ "If you had all relied on Allāh ﷻ as you should rely on Him, then He would have provided for you as He provides for the birds, who wake up hungry in the morning and return with full stomachs at dusk" (At-Tirmidhi).

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