



Qur'anic Psychospiritual Healing in Sufi Exegesis: Reading al-Ālūsī through al-Balkhī's Psychology of the Soul

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Abstract: Contemporary studies of Qur'anic healing have largely emphasized *ruqyah*, recitation, listening, devotional consolation, and measurable effects on mental health, while the healing mechanisms embedded in classical Sufi exegesis remain underexplored. This article examines Qur'anic psychospiritual healing by reading al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* through Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul. It argues that al-Ālūsī's interpretation of selected passages concerning emotional disturbance does not merely provide moral exhortation or ritual guidance, but articulates a structured cognitive-Sufi model of psychospiritual healing. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative textual analysis by combining thematic Qur'anic interpretation with conceptual analysis of al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul. It focuses on Q 42:37 on anger, Q 20:68 on fear and panic, Q 16:127–128 on grief, and Q 114:1–4 on obsessive whispering. The findings identify four interrelated healing mechanisms: forgiveness-based regulation, cognitive reassurance, graded patience through the vertical ladder of *ṣabr*, and divine refuge through *isti'ādhah* and attentional reorientation. These mechanisms converge into a cognitive-Sufi model of Qur'anic psychospiritual healing based on cognitive-spiritual reorientation, God-centered meaning reconstruction, and disciplined psychospiritual formation.

Contribution: This study contributes to Sufi healing studies and Islamic psychology by positioning classical tafsir as a conceptual site of psychospiritual theory. It provides insight into al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul as an analytical lens for reading al-Ālūsī's *ishārī* exegesis, thereby transforming dispersed Sufi counsels into a structured model of Qur'anic psychospiritual healing.

Keywords: Qur'anic healing; Sufi healing; al-Ālūsī; al-Balkhī; psychospiritual healing

Introduction

Mental health has become a pressing global concern, but the problem is not exhausted by the prevalence of psychological disorders. It also concerns how human suffering is interpreted, emotionally regulated, and situated within systems of meaning. The World Health Organization reports that more than one billion people worldwide live with a mental health condition, while anxiety and depression remain among the most prevalent forms of psychological distress.¹ For Muslim communities, this raises a further question: how might Islamic intellectual traditions contribute to forms of care that take emotional suffering seriously without reducing the human person to a clinical category? Such a question does not require religious resources to replace psychiatric or psychological treatment. Rather, it invites closer examination of how Islamic sources conceptualize distress, restoration, and the disciplined formation of the self.

The Qur'an occupies a central place in this inquiry because Islamic tradition understands it as *shifā'*, a source of healing. Contemporary scholarship on Qur'anic healing, however, has focused predominantly on practices such as recitation, listening, memorization, *ruqyah*, and related devotional activities, often examining their associations with anxiety, depression, stress, and psychological well-being.² This body of scholarship has established an important field of inquiry into Qur'anic engagement and mental or spiritual well-being, yet another dimension remains comparatively underdeveloped: the construction of healing through Qur'anic interpretation itself. In Islamic and particularly Sufi

¹ World Health Organization, "Mental Health Atlas 2024," 2024, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240114487>; World Health Organization, "World Mental Health Today: Latest Data," 2025, <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240113817>.

² Janine Owens et al., "Interventions Using the Qur'an to Promote Mental Health: A Systematic Scoping Review," *Journal of Mental Health* 32, no. 4 (2023): 842–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2023.2232449>; Khadijeh Moulaci et al., "The Effect of the Holy Quran Recitation and Listening on Anxiety, Stress, and Depression: A Scoping Review on Outcomes," *Health Science Reports* 6, no. 12 (2023): e1751, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1751>; Wan Nor Atikah Che Wan Mohd Rozali et al., "The Impact of Listening to, Reciting, or Memorizing the Quran on Physical and Mental Health of Muslims: Evidence From Systematic Review," *International Journal of Public Health* 67 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/ijph.2022.1604998>; Ali Ali Gobaili Saged et al., "Impact of Quran in Treatment of the Psychological Disorder and Spiritual Illness," *Journal of Religion and Health* 59, no. 4 (2020): 1824–37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0572-8>.

traditions, healing may also involve ethical refinement, remembrance (*dhikr*), patience (*ṣabr*), spiritual vigilance (*murāqaba*), and the purification and adornment of the self (*takhallī-taḥallī*). Through such practices, suffering is not merely alleviated but reoriented toward God, while the self is gradually purified, trained, and spiritually reformed.³ The question, therefore, is not only how the Qur'an is engaged as a source of healing, but how Qur'anic meanings, as interpreted within Sufi exegetical traditions, articulate responses to identifiable forms of emotional disturbance.

This study consequently employs a more specific understanding of psychospiritual healing. The term does not refer here to clinical treatment, psychiatric cure, or empirically demonstrated therapeutic efficacy. It denotes the restoration and reorientation of a disturbed soul through Qur'anic meaning, ethical regulation, and spiritual discipline as articulated in exegetical discourse. This formulation is anchored in Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's distinction between preserving the health of the soul (*ḥifẓ ṣiḥḥat al-nafs*) and restoring that health after disturbance (*i'ādāt ṣiḥḥat al-nafs*).⁴ In *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa al-Anfus*, al-Balkhī devotes separate discussions to the preservation of the soul's health and its restoration after that health has been disturbed, before turning to particular forms of psychological disturbance and their management.⁵ Within this broader process of restoration, *tasliyah* is understood here as one mode of Qur'anic consolation and strengthening in situations of affliction, rather than as a synonym for healing as a whole.

Within this interpretive dimension of healing, Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* becomes particularly significant. The commentary brings together transmitted reports (*riwāya*), linguistic and rational analysis (*dirāya*), theological

³ Merve Cetinkaya and Jo Billings, "Systematic Review of the Relationship between Islamic-Sufi Spirituality and Practice and Mental Well-Being," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 26, no. 10 (November 2023): 1065–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2023.2256265>; Casmini Casmini et al., "Patience in the Perspective of Sufism: Spiritual Strategies for Students to Maintain Mental Health," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 14, no. 1 (2025): 29–56, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v14i1.27087>; Nur Hadi Ihsan et al., "Spiritual Equilibrium: Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's Concept of Tazkiyat Al-Nafs," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 14, no. 1 (2025): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v14i1.26301>.

⁴ Abū Zayd Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus* (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah, 2004), 118–24.

⁵ Al-Balkhī, 118–24.

reflection, legal discussion, and Sufi indication (*ishāra*).⁶ Its layered character makes it possible to investigate not merely what a Qur'anic passage says about an emotional condition, but how exegetical discourse connects Qur'anic language with moral discipline, inward states, and the transformation of the self. Scholarship has examined al-Ālūsī as a major Ottoman-Iraqi scholar and exegete and has discussed the intellectual complexity of *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. His engagement with Sufi interpretation has also received attention.⁷ Yet the possibility of reading this exegetical discourse as a structured account of psychospiritual restoration remains comparatively underexplored.

To illuminate this question, the study draws on Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus*. Importantly, the present article does not treat al-Balkhī as a historical source of al-Ālūsī's exegesis, nor does it posit a line of intellectual transmission between the two authors. Rather, al-Balkhī is employed as a historically grounded heuristic framework through which forms of psychological disturbance can be organized for analysis. His treatment distinguishes the preservation and restoration of the soul's health and subsequently devotes separate discussions to anger (*al-ghaḍab*), fear and panic (*al-khawf wa-l-faza'*), grief and distress (*al-ḥuẓn wa-l-jaza'*), and whispering (*waswās*) and inner utterances (*aḥādīth al-nafs*).⁸ These should not be presented as a formally stated "fourfold classification" in the modern classificatory sense; rather, they are four major forms of psychological disturbance treated in successive parts of al-Balkhī's work. His discussion of distress provides an additional layer, insofar as he presents it as a fundamental affective condition associated with the disturbances that follow.⁹

Recent scholarship on al-Balkhī has increasingly placed his thought in dialogue with modern psychology, psychotherapy, and contemporary approaches to mental disorder. Badri reconstructs aspects of al-Balkhī's therapeutic reasoning through the vocabulary of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, while Awaad and Ali examine his discussions of obsessional disturbance and phobia in relation

⁶ Maḥmūd Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafṣīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm Wa-l-Sab' Al-Mathānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994), 5–44.

⁷ Basheer Nafi, "Abu Al-Thana' Al-Alusi: An Alim, Ottoman Mufti, and Exegete of the Qur'an," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 465–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743802003033>; Muḥsin 'Abd Al-Ḥamīd, *Al-Ālūsī Mufasssiran* (Bagdad: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1968), 42, 165–66.

⁸ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 129–65.

⁹ Al-Balkhī, 125–28.

to modern psychiatric categories.¹⁰ Contemporary studies have also situated al-Balkhī more broadly within the history of psychological and psychotherapeutic thought and within approaches to mental disorders in the Islamic intellectual tradition.¹¹ More specifically, Istikhari reads al-Balkhī through a cognitive perspective, Arroisi and Himaya examine his treatment of *ḥuẓn* through cognitive theory, and Wijayanti, Prasetiawati, and Sugiarto connect Qur'anic discussions of *ḥuẓn* with al-Balkhī's psychological perspective and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy.¹² These studies have significantly expanded the contemporary relevance of al-Balkhī's thought, but they also indicate that the novelty of the present article cannot rest simply on placing al-Balkhī, Qur'anic verses, emotional disturbance, and cognitive psychology within the same analytical frame. Rather, the specific gap lies in the direction and textual site of analysis: existing studies have largely moved from al-Balkhī's treatise toward modern psychology or particular psychological conditions, whereas the present study examines how a later Qur'anic Sufi commentary, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, articulates restorative responses to emotional disturbance through a historically grounded psychology of the soul.

¹⁰ Malik Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behavior Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician* (London - Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013); Rania Awaad and Sara Ali, "Obsessional Disorders in Al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 180 (2015): 185–89, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.03.003>; Rania Awaad and Sara Ali, "A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia in Al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 37 (2016): 89–93, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2015.11.003>.

¹¹ Sarhang I Saeed et al., "Abu Zayd Ahmed Ibn Sahl Al-Balkhi (850-934): A Pioneer in the Field of Psychotherapy and Mental Health," *Cureus* 16, no. 8 (2024): e67998, <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.67998>; Karim Mitha, "Conceptualising and Addressing Mental Disorders amongst Muslim Communities: Approaches from the Islamic Golden Age," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 57, no. 6 (2020): 763–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461520962603>.

¹² Naufil Istikhari, "Pendekatan Kognitif Dalam Teori Kesehatan Mental Al-Balkhi: Psikologi Positif Di Abad Keemasan Islam," *Psikologika: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Psikologi* 26, no. 2 (2021): 233–50, <https://doi.org/10.20885/psikologika.vol26.iss2.art1>; Jarman Arroisi and Novita Najwa Himaya, "Abu Zayd Al-Balkhi's Perspective on Depression: Countering Sadness with Cognitive Theory in the Book of Mashalih Al Abdan Wa Al Anfus," *Tazkiya Journal of Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.15408/tazkiya.v11i1.29913>; Elva Wijayanti, Eka Prasetiawati, and Sugiarto Sugiarto, "Interpretasi Ayat-Ayat Huẓn (Depresi) Perspektif Psikologi Abu Zayd Al-Balkhi (w. 934 M)," *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2025): 667–88, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v5i2.27801>.

The present study therefore reverses that analytical direction. Instead of moving from al-Balkhī to modern psychology, it moves from al-Balkhī's historically situated psychology of the soul to al-Ālūsī's Sufi exegesis and then to the reconstruction of Qur'anic psychospiritual healing. This approach also responds to the methodological concern that classical Islamic psychological thought can be distorted when interpreted through contemporary categories without sufficient attention to historical and conceptual difference.¹³ Accordingly, the study asks: What model of psychospiritual healing, if any, emerges when al-Ālūsī's interpretation of selected Qur'anic passages concerning emotional disturbance is examined through al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul? Four Qur'anic anchor passages form the principal corpus: Q 42:37, concerning anger; Q 20:68, concerning fear and panic; Q 16:127–128, concerning grief and the cultivation of patience; and Q 114:1–4, concerning waswās. Supporting passages are included only where they clarify the interpretive logic of the principal cases.

The article contributes to scholarship on Qur'anic healing, Sufi tafsir, and Islamic psychology in two ways. First, it reconstructs psychospiritual healing as an exegetically articulated process of restoration, rather than assuming that healing is simply synonymous with *shifā'*, *tasliyah*, or general religious consolation. Second, it brings al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul into a controlled analytical dialogue with al-Ālūsī's Sufi exegesis without collapsing the historical distinction between them. In this arrangement, al-Balkhī frames the inquiry, while al-Ālūsī supplies the primary textual evidence from which the Qur'anic meaning and restorative logic are reconstructed.

Literature Review

Tafsīr Ishārī and al-Ālūsī's Sufi Exegesis

The present study approaches selected portions of al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* through the tradition of *tafsīr ishārī* (Sufistic interpretation). This approach is necessary because the psychospiritual significance examined in the article does not emerge simply from Qur'anic wording considered in isolation. It emerges from the interpretive movement through which Qur'anic expressions are connected with inward states, ethical formation, spiritual discipline, and the

¹³ Khalid Elzamzamy, Rasha K. Bader, and Fikriye Bilge Bircan, "Contemporary Scholarship on Classical Islamic Psychology: A Scoping Review," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 18, no. 1 (2024): 3–45, <https://doi.org/10.3998/jmmh.6025>.

transformation of the self. Scholarship on classical Sufi tafsir has demonstrated that *ishān* interpretation should not be reduced to arbitrary mystical association. Rather, it represents a historically recognizable mode of interpretation in which outward Qur'anic expression and inward spiritual significance are related within a broader process of moral and spiritual formation.¹⁴

Classical Muslim scholarship nevertheless placed important conditions upon the legitimacy of such inward indication. Al-Zarqānī, in his discussion of *tafsīr ishān*, maintains that an inward indication is acceptable so long as it does not invalidate the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*), does not claim exclusive authority for the inward meaning, does not contradict the Qur'an, Sunna, or sharī'a, and possesses an appropriate evidentiary basis or *shāhid*.¹⁵ These conditions are methodologically important for the present study. They mean that a psychological or spiritual interpretation cannot simply be projected onto a Qur'anic passage because it appears conceptually attractive. It must be demonstrable in the exegetical discourse itself.

Al-Ālūsī's methodological orientation is particularly relevant in this respect. His introduction to *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* discusses *tafsīr*, *ta'wīl*, interpretation by reason, the qualifications of the exegete, and the place of interpretive indication within Qur'anic exegesis.¹⁶ At the same time, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* should not be reduced to a purely Sufi commentary. Al-Dhahabī places al-Ālūsī's work principally within commendable rational interpretation while recognizing the presence of Sufi indications in the commentary.¹⁷ The present study therefore focuses analytically on the *ishān* layer without detaching it from the broader exegetical architecture of *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. In this sense, al-Ālūsī's commentary provides an appropriate textual site for examining how Qur'anic meanings may be related to inward states, moral regulation, and spiritual transformation.

¹⁴ Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203019566>; Annabel Keeler, *Sufi Hermeneutics The Qur'an Commentary of Rashīd Al-Dīn Maybudī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Gerhard Böwering, "The Qur'an Commentary of Al-Sulamī," in *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden: BRILL, 1991), 41–56, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004661523_008.

¹⁵ Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm Al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil Al-'Irfān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Shams Al-Dīn (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2019), 2:78-82.

¹⁶ Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Azīm*, 5–44.

¹⁷ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa-l-Mufasssīrūn* (Maktabat Wahbah, 2000), 251; Al-Ḥamīd, *Al-Ālūsī Mufasssiran*, 165–66.

Al-Ālūsī's engagement with Sufism should also be situated within his spiritual and intellectual formation in the Naqshbandī milieu. Biographical accounts identify Shaykh Khālīd al-Naqshbandī among the figures associated with his Sufi formation. This background provides relevant historical context for the prominence of remembrance, spiritual vigilance, discipline, and refinement of the self in his exegetical discourse.¹⁸ It does not, however, warrant treating every Sufi indication in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* as distinctly Naqshbandī. The present study therefore treats al-Ālūsī's Naqshbandī connection as historical and intellectual context, while relying on the exegetical text itself as the primary basis for reconstructing the psychospiritual meanings examined here.

Qur'anic Psychospiritual Healing and Al-Balkhī's Psychology of the Soul

The expression Qur'anic psychospiritual healing requires a more precise definition than the broad use of "healing" in contemporary religious discourse. In this study, it refers to the restoration and reorientation of a disturbed soul through processes of meaning, ethical regulation, and spiritual discipline as articulated through Qur'anic interpretation. The term Qur'anic is therefore used primarily in an exegetical rather than merely ritual sense: the study is not principally concerned with healing through Qur'anic recitation, listening, memorization, or ruqyah, but with restorative meanings constructed from Qur'anic passages through the interpretive discourse of al-Ālūsī. The Qur'anic text constitutes the semantic ground, while al-Ālūsī's exegesis provides the interpretive articulation through which restorative processes become visible.

This definition also clarifies what "healing" means in the present study. It does not refer to clinical cure, psychiatric diagnosis, or empirically validated therapeutic efficacy. Nor does the study claim that the Qur'anic passages examined here function as clinical interventions for modern mental disorders. Rather, healing denotes a restorative process at the level of the soul, particularly the reorientation of a person's relation to emotional disturbance through consolation, ethical regulation, spiritual discipline, and renewed orientation toward God. Thus, the term is narrower than general moral exhortation: a passage is considered relevant to psychospiritual healing only when its exegetical interpretation connects a recognizable affective disturbance with an identifiable process of restoration, regulation, consolation, reorientation, or spiritual transformation.

¹⁸ Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr Wa-l-Mufasssīrūn*, 251; Al-Ḥamīd, *Al-Ālūsī Mufasssiran*, 42.

This understanding has a historical conceptual anchor in Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's distinction between the preservation and restoration of the soul's health. In *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus*, the second chapter addresses *tadbīr ḥifẓ ṣiḥḥat al-anfus*, the management of preserving the health of the souls, while the third discusses *tadbīr i'ādat ṣiḥḥat al-nafs idhā fuqīdat ilayhā*, the management of restoring the soul's health when it has been lost.¹⁹ Al-Balkhī's account of restoration includes both internal and external forms of assistance: the self may generate restorative responses through thought, while external assistance may occur through speech or counsel from another person.²⁰ Restoration, therefore, is not confined to a single therapeutic technique but concerns the reconstitution of the soul's capacity to respond appropriately to disturbance.²¹ This distinction between preservation and restoration provides the historical basis for using "healing" in this article without equating it with modern clinical treatment.

Al-Balkhī's discussion of psychological disturbance is also more nuanced than a simple four-part classification. In his discussion of *al-a'rāḍ al-nafsāniyyah*, he gives *al-ghamm* a distinctive foundational position, describing it as *ka-l-aṣl*—"like the root"—and as a *muqaddimah* or antecedent to the disturbances that follow, while indicating that it is present alongside them. He further explains anger (*al-ghaḍab*) in relation to *al-ghamm* and identifies *al-ghamm* among the strongest causes of illness of the soul, while *al-surūr* is presented as among the strongest causes of its health.²² The subsequent chapters provide extended treatments of anger (*al-ghaḍab*), fear and panic (*al-khawf wa-l-faza*), grief and distress (*al-ḥuẓn wa-l-jaza*), and *wasāwis al-ṣadr wa-aḥādīth al-nafs*—inner whisperings and inner utterances.²³ These four chapter-length domains are therefore used in this study as analytical coordinates, rather than as a rigid fourfold taxonomy imposed upon al-Balkhī's psychology.

The terminology must likewise be kept historically controlled. The four domains discussed by al-Balkhī should not be treated as modern psychiatric diagnoses or as fixed equivalents of contemporary mental disorders. Similarly, describing al-Balkhī's framework as "cognitive psychology" risks making a modern disciplinary category appear to be his own historical terminology. The more appropriate designation for the present study is al-Balkhī's psychology of

¹⁹ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 118–24.

²⁰ Al-Balkhī, 122–24.

²¹ Al-Balkhī, 122–24.

²² Al-Balkhī, 126–27.

²³ Al-Balkhī, 129–65.

the soul. Contemporary terms such as "cognitive" may be used only descriptively when the analysis identifies processes involving perception, appraisal, recollection, imagination, inner speech, or related forms of mental processing. Such terminology does not imply equivalence between al-Balkhī's framework and modern cognitive psychology or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Modern scholarship has nevertheless shown the analytical value of examining his treatment of emotional states, cognition, bodily symptoms, and therapeutic responses, while also demonstrating the need for caution against historical anachronism.²⁴

Within this framework, *tasliyah* should be understood as one particular mode of consolation and strengthening rather than as a synonym for psychospiritual healing as a whole. It may become relevant where Qur'anic interpretation addresses grief, affliction, constriction, or emotional burden. Other restorative processes may involve patience (*ṣabr*), remembrance (*dhikr*), repentance and forgiveness, vigilance, purification, or seeking divine refuge. The analytical question, however, is not whether these practices constitute "healing" in themselves, but whether al-Ālūsī's interpretation presents them as responses to a recognizable affective disturbance and as means of reorienting the subject's relation to that disturbance. This distinction allows the study to separate a specific restorative mechanism from a general catalogue of spiritual virtues.²⁵

The relationship between the two principal sources is therefore asymmetrical. Al-Balkhī provides the analytical lens, whereas al-Ālūsī provides the primary textual evidence. Al-Balkhī does not determine the meaning of the Qur'anic passages and is not invoked to establish a historical influence or intellectual transmission between *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus* and *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. His historically situated psychology of the soul instead provides a vocabulary for organizing the affective phenomena under investigation. The actual Qur'anic meanings and restorative processes are reconstructed from al-Ālūsī's exegetical interpretation. In methodological terms, therefore, al-Balkhī frames the inquiry; al-Ālūsī supplies the evidence.

²⁴ Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*; Awaad and Ali, "Obsessional Disorders in Al-Balkhī's"; Awaad and Ali, "A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia."

²⁵ Cetinkaya and Billings, "Systematic Review of the Relationship"; S. Haque Nizamic, Mohammad Zia Ul Haq Katshu, and N. A Uvais, "Sufism and Mental Health," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 55, no. 6 (2013): 215, <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.105535>; Casmini et al., "Patience in the Perspective of Sufism"; Ihsan et al., "Spiritual Equilibrium."

Method

This study employs a qualitative textual-interpretive design to examine how psychospiritual healing is constructed in selected Qur'anic passages as interpreted by Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. The unit of analysis is therefore al-Ālūsī's exegetical interpretation of the selected passages, rather than the Qur'anic verses considered independently of their commentary. The study is interpretive because its objective is to reconstruct the meanings, affective processes, and restorative responses articulated in exegetical discourse rather than to measure psychological outcomes or clinical efficacy.

The principal data source is *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, read alongside Abū Zayd al-Balkhī's *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus* as the historical analytical framework. The inquiry comprises four Qur'anic anchor passages: Q 42:37 concerning anger, Q 20:68 concerning fear and panic, Q 16:127–128 concerning grief and patience, and Q 114:1–4 concerning *waswās*. These four affective domains treated by al-Balkhī serve as analytical entry points for examining the corresponding exegetical material in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. Supporting passages are considered when they clarify the interpretive logic of the principal cases. The analytical entry points indicate which affective conditions are examined; the presence of a restorative process, however, is determined from the exegetical evidence in each case.

Table 1. Corpus and Analytical Organization

Form of disturbance treated by al-Balkhī	Emotional phenomenon	Qur'anic anchor passage	Analytical focus
<i>al-ghaḍab</i>	Anger	Q 42:37	How al-Ālūsī interprets anger and the response he associates with it
<i>al-khawf wa-l-faẓa'</i>	Fear and panic	Q 20:68	How al-Ālūsī interprets fear and the response he associates with it
<i>al-ḥuzn wa-l-jaza'</i>	Grief and distress	Q 16:127–128	How al-Ālūsī interprets grief in relation to patience, affliction, and spiritual discipline
<i>wasāwis al-ṣadr wa-aḥādīth al-nafs</i>	Intrusive whispering and inner utterances	Q 114:1–4	How al-Ālūsī interprets <i>waswās</i> and the role he assigns to seeking divine refuge

Source: Author's construction based on Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-l-Anfus*, 129–165, and Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*.

Data were collected through systematic textual reading of each anchor passage and its surrounding exegetical context in *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. The material was recorded in an analytical extraction matrix consisting of five elements: (1) the affective disturbance under discussion; (2) its Qur'anic and exegetical context; (3) al-Ālūsī's interpretive claim; (4) the response, practice, or orientation associated with the disturbance; and (5) its analytical relation to al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul. Supporting passages were used only when they clarified, elaborated, or contextualized the principal interpretation. This procedure kept the analysis centered on al-Ālūsī's exegetical discourse rather than on isolated Qur'anic expressions.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the relevant concepts in al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul were identified, particularly the preservation and restoration of the soul's health and the psychological disturbances treated in the corresponding sections of his work. Second, each Qur'anic case was examined through al-Ālūsī's exegetical discourse, attending to the affective condition, its interpretation, and the response articulated in relation to it. The four domains thus framed the inquiry, but the substantive interpretation remained dependent on the exegetical evidence. A passage was considered to articulate a psychospiritual healing mechanism only when al-Ālūsī's interpretation connected a recognizable affective disturbance with an identifiable restorative process, such as regulation, consolation, reorientation, seeking divine refuge, or disciplined transformation. General moral exhortation alone was not automatically classified as healing. Third, the four cases were compared to identify recurrent forms of psychospiritual restoration.

The comparison is asymmetrical rather than genealogical. Al-Balkhī provides the historical analytical lens, while al-Ālūsī remains the primary textual authority for determining Qur'anic meaning and reconstructing the restorative processes identified in the analysis. No claim is made that al-Ālūsī adopted, reproduced, or was historically influenced by al-Balkhī's framework. The term healing is used in the specific sense established in this study—restoration and reorientation at the level of the soul—not clinical cure, psychiatric diagnosis, or empirically validated therapeutic efficacy. Contemporary terms such as "cognitive," "reorientation," and "meaning reconstruction" are used only as controlled analytical descriptors and do not equate al-Balkhī's historical psychology with modern cognitive psychology or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Because the study relies exclusively on published textual sources and involves no human participants, interviews, surveys, personal data, or experimental

procedures, no human-subject ethical approval or consent procedure was required.

Results and Discussion

Psychospiritual Healing Mechanisms in al-Ālūsī's Sufi Exegesis

The four cases are presented in the sequence of al-Balkhī's corresponding discussions, moving from anger and fear to grief and inner whisperings.

Anger and Forgiveness-Based Regulation: Q 42:37

Al-Balkhī treats anger (*al-ghaḍab*) as a disturbance of the soul because it overtakes judgment, agitates the body, and moves the person toward retaliation. Anger is not merely an emotion one happens to feel; it is an affective force that may seize the self and produce speech or action later regretted. For this reason, al-Balkhī proposes both external and internal treatment. Externally, the angry person needs counsel from wise companions who remind him of the destructive consequences of rage and the nobility of pardon. Internally, he must rehearse thoughts that interrupt revenge, delay reaction, and bring to mind the virtue of patience and forgiveness before anger becomes uncontrollable.²⁶

Al-Ālūsī's interpretation of Q 42:37 gives Qur'anic and Sufi substance to this structure. The verse praises those who avoid major sins and indecencies and, "when they are angry, they forgive" (*wa-idhā mā ghaḍibū hum yaghfirūn*). Al-Ālūsī connects this clause to *al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiyyah*, the irascible faculty or power of anger. This is crucial because the verse addresses not only an outward social situation, but an inner power of the soul. The Qur'anic response to this force is not counter-violence, nor even mere silence, but *maghfīrah*. Forgiveness becomes the discipline that redirects the irascible faculty before it hardens into revenge. The verse is especially demanding because it praises forgiveness "when they are angry," not after anger has faded. The one who forgives at the point of affective pressure displays mastery over the self, not weakness or avoidance.²⁷

Q 3:134–135 clarifies the stages of this regulation. The Qur'an praises those who restrain anger (*al-kāzimīn al-ghayḥ*), pardon people (*al-ʿāfin ʿan al-nās*), and, when they wrong themselves, remember God and seek forgiveness (*dhakarū Allāh fa-staghfarū*). Al-Ālūsī distinguishes *al-ghayḥ* from *al-ghaḍab*: *ghayḥ* is an inward agitation that may remain contained, while *ghaḍab* is anger

²⁶ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 130–34; Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*, 39–43.

²⁷ Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Maʿānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qurʾān Al-ʿAẓīm*, 13:64.

joined to the desire for retaliation. This distinction supports a staged movement of healing: the inward surge is first restrained, then transformed into pardon, and finally turned toward God through remembrance and *istighfār*.²⁸

The final movement is decisive. If the process stopped at restraint and pardon, anger regulation would remain primarily interpersonal. But Q 3:135 deepens it into spiritual self-purification. The angry person does not merely pardon the offender; he recognizes disorder within himself, remembers God, and seeks forgiveness. *Istighfār* becomes the bridge between ethics and spiritual therapy. The self is repositioned from the one who demands compensation to the one who seeks purification before God.

Al-Ālūsī's Sufi anthropology strengthens this reading. In his discussion of Q 2:36, he reports from "our masters among the Sufis" that Satan unsettled Adam through appetite and anger. Anger is presented as especially near to the spiritual interior, which explains why it can quickly dominate the person if left undisciplined.²⁹ The healing response is therefore not suppression, but redirection: the irascible faculty is trained through restraint, forgiveness, remembrance, and repentance.

The mechanism that emerges may be called forgiveness-based regulation. It is regulation because anger is interrupted before it becomes retaliation; it is forgiveness-based because the regulating acts are *maghfirah*, *'afw*, and *istighfār*; and it is psychospiritual because the process transforms both the relation to the offender and the relation to God. Modern theories of emotion regulation and forgiveness may help clarify the general structure of this process, but the parallel remains conceptual. Al-Ālūsī's concern is not simply that the angry person feel better, but that the soul be rescued from vengeance and trained in mercy before God.³⁰

²⁸ Al-Ālūsī, 2:372-373.

²⁹ Al-Ālūsī, 1:319.

³⁰ James J. Gross, "The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation: An Integrative Review," *Review of General Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1998): 271–99, <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>; Nathaniel G. Wade et al., "Efficacy of Psychotherapeutic Interventions to Promote Forgiveness: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 82, no. 1 (2014): 154–70, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035268>; Fatih Aydın, "Does Attachment to God Matter? Role of Spiritual Attachment in Mental Health through Self-Forgiveness: Lessons from Turkish College Sample," *Frontiers in Psychology* 16 (2025): 1603654, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1603654>.

Fear, Panic, and Cognitive Reassurance: Q 20:68

Al-Balkhī's second emotional disturbance is fear and panic (*al-khawf wa-l-faza*). Fear becomes disordered when perception is captured by imagination, exaggeration, or faulty appraisal. The fearful person often responds not to reality itself, but to what the mind projects into reality. Al-Balkhī therefore treats fear through internal correction and practical habituation: the person must examine the feared object, correct exaggerated imagination, cultivate courage, and gradually confront what fear had made overwhelming.³¹

Q 20:68 addresses Moses at the moment when fear arises before Pharaoh's magicians: "We said: Do not fear; surely you are the higher" (*qulnā lā takhaf innaka anta al-a'ālā*). The scene is psychologically charged, for the Qur'an itself acknowledges that Moses felt fear within himself. Al-Ālūsī glosses *lā takhaf* as "do not persist in your fear arising from what you have imagined" (*lā tastamirra 'alā khawfika mimmā tawahhamta*). This phrase is central. Fear is not located simply in the external spectacle, but in *wahm*, the imaginative perception through which the event is misread as overpowering. The divine command interrupts this misperception. It does not deny the frightening scene; it corrects the meaning assigned to it.³²

This is why the mechanism in Q 20:68 may be called cognitive reassurance. The command *lā takhaf* is not shallow optimism or emotional denial. It stops the continuation of fear rooted in imagined threat. In al-Balkhī's terms, the inner representation of the feared object is corrected. In al-Ālūsī's Qur'anic-Sufi horizon, however, the correction comes through divine speech. The self is reassured because God discloses the true structure of the event: what appears as overwhelming threat is reinterpreted as an arena of divine support.

The second part of the verse, *innaka anta al-a'ālā*, deepens this reassurance. Al-Ālūsī reads the phrase as an emphatic declaration of superiority and victory, strengthened by *inna*, the explicit pronoun *anta*, and the superlative *al-a'ālā*. The verse therefore gives Moses not only a prohibition of fear but a new certainty by which fear can be displaced. Al-Ālūsī also adds a practical dimension by reading the command as encouragement to resist and defend oneself, *idfa' 'an nafsika*. This brings the verse close to al-Balkhī's full treatment of fear: corrected perception must become courageous action. Moses is not invited to withdraw

³¹ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 135–39; Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*; Awaad and Ali, "A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia."

³² Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, 8:717.

into private serenity; he is strengthened to stand, confront the threat, and continue the mission.

The same mechanism appears in Q 20:46: "Do not fear; indeed, I am with you both, hearing and seeing" (*lā takhāfā innanī ma'akumā asma'u wa-arā*). Al-Ālūsī reads divine *ma'īyyah* as support, protection, and intimate accompaniment. He also connects "I hear and I see" to the mode of supplication, so that prayer becomes a channel through which the fearful self renews its awareness of being heard, seen, and accompanied by God.³³ Here reassurance is not only cognitive correction; it is relational presence.

Q 28:7 offers a supporting parallel in the story of Moses' mother: "Do not fear and do not grieve; We shall return him to you." The command does not deny her vulnerability. It gives a divine promise that reorders perception: what appears as loss is held within God's protection and return.³⁴ This strengthens the broader pattern found in Q 20:68: fear is addressed when divine speech changes the horizon through which danger is read.

The mechanism of cognitive reassurance therefore consists of four movements: fear is recognized as real; its continuation is traced to *wahm*; divine speech interrupts imagined threat through *lā takhaf*; and reassurance becomes certainty, supplication, and action. Modern studies on religious coping, religion-adapted cognitive therapy, and *tawakkul* may help illuminate why trust in God can function as a cognitive and affective resource in distress. Yet this parallel remains conceptual. Al-Ālūsī's contribution is exegetical and Sufi: he shows how Qur'anic speech transforms fear by relocating the heart from imagined threat to divine presence, from panic to *thiqah*, and from avoidance to spiritually grounded action.³⁵

³³ Al-Ālūsī, 8:679.

³⁴ Al-Ālūsī, 10:342.

³⁵ Kenneth I. Pargament, Harold G. Koenig, and Lisa M. Perez, "The Many Methods of Religious Coping: Development and Initial Validation of the RCOPE," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 56, no. 4 (2000): 519–43, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4679\(200004\)56:4519::AID-JCLP63.0.CO;2-1](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4679(200004)56:4519::AID-JCLP63.0.CO;2-1); Marianna de Abreu Costa and Alexander Moreira-Almeida, "Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: A Review and Description of Techniques," *Journal of Religion and Health* 61, no. 1 (2022): 443–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01345-z>; Muhammad Usama Gondal, Adnan Adil, and Anam Khan, "Tawakkul Mediates Between Personality Traits, Depression, and Anxiety in Pakistani Muslim Adults," *Journal of Religion and Health* 63, no. 1 (2024): 582–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-023-01771-1>.

Grief and Graded Patience through the Vertical Ladder of Ṣabr: Q 16:127–128 and Q 15:97–99

Al-Balkhī treats sadness and grief (*al-ḥuzn wa-l-jaza'*) as a destructive disturbance of the soul because it weakens vitality, burdens the body, and darkens one's capacity to experience joy. Sadness arises from loss or deprivation; when intensified, it becomes *jaza'*, a state of impatience, despair, and inability to endure affliction. This must be distinguished from *faza'*, which belongs to the register of fear and panic. For al-Balkhī, grief with a known external cause may be addressed through counsel, reframing, spiritual reflection, and disciplined training of the soul.³⁶

Q 16:127–128 provides al-Ālūsī's clearest account of grief as a disturbance addressed through active spiritual patience. The verse commands the Prophet to be patient, reminds him that patience is only through God, forbids grief over rejection, and prohibits constriction before hostile plots. Al-Ālūsī reads *wa-ṣbir* as a command to endure harm, rejection, and opposition without allowing sorrow to collapse the heart. His reading of *wa-mā ṣabruka illā bi-llāh* is especially important: patience is not sustained except through God, and this dependence is linked to remembrance of God, vigilance over His affairs (*murāqaba*), and complete devotion to Him (*tabattul*) through the full concentration of the heart. Thus, patience is not passive endurance. It is a discipline of consciousness in which *dhikr* redirects attention, *murāqaba* stabilizes awareness of divine nearness, and *tabattul* gathers the self toward God.³⁷

Al-Ālūsī's reading of the following clauses clarifies the temporal structure of grief. "Do not grieve over them" addresses sorrow over rejection and refusal of guidance, while "do not be in constriction because of what they plot" addresses distress before anticipated harm. The verse therefore gathers both retrospective sorrow and anticipatory constriction. Healing does not occur by denying either pain, but by carrying both through patience rooted in God.³⁸

A distinctive feature of al-Ālūsī's reading is his fivefold account of patience: *ṣabr li-Llāh*, *ṣabr fī Llāh*, *ṣabr ma'a Llāh*, *ṣabr 'an Llāh*, and *ṣabr bi-Llāh*. This sequence transforms patience from a single moral virtue into a graded ascent of the soul. *Ṣabr li-Llāh* names endurance for God; *ṣabr fī Llāh* names

³⁶ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 141; Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*.

³⁷ Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, 7:663-664.

³⁸ Al-Ālūsī, 7:663-664.

steadfastness on the path; *ṣabr ma'a Llāh* names presence with God; *ṣabr 'an Llāh* names the pain of longing and separation; and *ṣabr bi-Llāh* names stability through God rather than through the ego's own power. This is what the article calls graded patience through the vertical ladder of *ṣabr*.³⁹

The final phrase of Q 16:128—"Indeed, God is with those who are mindful and those who do good"—adds a further Sufi layer. Al-Ālūsī links the pairing of *taqwā* and *ihsān* to the sequence of *takhallī* and *taḥallī*: purification from what corrupts the soul precedes adornment with worship, virtue, and spiritual excellence. Grief is therefore not addressed only by adding positive practices to a wounded self. The soul must also be emptied of resentment, despair, heedlessness, and constrictive attachment before it can be adorned with remembrance, vigilance, and excellence.⁴⁰

Q 15:97–99 supports the same mechanism from another angle. The passage acknowledges the Prophet's constricted breast and answers it through *tasbīḥ*, *taḥmīd*, *sujūd*, worship, perseverance, and certainty. Al-Ālūsī reads this as divine consolation and strengthening. Prostration is especially important because it places the body in the posture of humility, nearness, and surrender. The grieving heart is not re-formed by abstract thought alone; it is trained through embodied worship that relocates the whole person before God.⁴¹

The healing mechanism in this section is therefore graded patience through the vertical ladder of *ṣabr*. Grief is not overcome by forgetting loss or denying pain, but by moving the soul through remembrance, vigilance, devotion, purification, adornment, prostration, worship, and perseverance until certainty. Contemporary studies on patience in Sufism may illuminate the relevance of *ṣabr* for resilience and mental well-being, but the parallel remains conceptual. Al-Ālūsī does not offer a modern intervention manual; he offers a Qur'anic-Sufi account in which grief is transformed by training the soul to endure for God, in God, with God, in longing for God, and ultimately by God.⁴²

Obsessive Whispering, *Isti'ādhah*, and Attentional Reorientation: Q 114:1–4

Al-Balkhī identifies *al-waswās* as a disturbance of inner speech that repeatedly attacks thought, perception, and bodily calm. It is not occasional

³⁹ Al-Ālūsī, 7:665.

⁴⁰ Al-Ālūsī, 7:665.

⁴¹ Al-Ālūsī, 7:440.

⁴² Casmini et al., "Patience in the Perspective of Sufism"; Cetinkaya and Billings, "Systematic Review of the Relationship."

doubt, but persistent intrusive self-talk that generates apprehension, pessimistic expectation, and loss of inner stability. In Badri's translation, al-Balkhī treats such whispering through mental strategies that expose the unreality of harmful thoughts, accustom the sufferer to their recurrence, and reduce their power over the soul.⁴³

Al-Ālūsī's interpretation of Q 114:1–4 provides the Qur'anic-Sufi content for this disturbance. Sūrah al-Nās opens with an act of refuge: "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of humankind, the King of humankind, the God of humankind, from the evil of the whisperer who withdraws." Following earlier linguistic discussion, especially al-Zamakhsharī, al-Ālūsī explains that *waswās* is related to *waswasah*, originally associated with a faint sound and later used for hidden whispering and corrupt inward thought (*khaṭrah radiyyah*). The term therefore carries both an acoustic and an interior dimension: *waswās* is a whisper, but also an intrusive thought that enters the inner space of the self.⁴⁴

Al-Ālūsī also records a philosophical-psychological interpretation attributed to Ibn Sīnā, in which *waswās* is understood through the imaginative faculty and the animal dimension of the human being. Yet he does not endorse this interpretation uncritically; he marks such philosophical allegorization as problematic when treated as tafsīr proper. This shows not that al-Ālūsī merges theological and philosophical accounts, but that *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* registers their encounter within classical tafsīr while maintaining the theological frame of Sūrat al-Nās as primary.⁴⁵

The core of the healing mechanism lies in the reorientation of consciousness through the three divine names: *Rabb al-nās*, *Malik al-nās*, and *Ilāh al-nās*. By invoking God as *Rabb al-nās*, the disturbed self remembers that it is nurtured and sustained. By invoking Him as *Malik al-nās*, it remembers that it belongs to the sovereign King whose authority exceeds the whisperer. By invoking Him as *Ilāh al-nās*, it remembers that worship, dependence, and ultimate refuge belong only to God. The movement is not mere verbal repetition. It is a graded spiritual reorientation from vulnerability to dependence, from dependence to divine sovereignty, and from sovereignty to worshipful surrender.⁴⁶

⁴³ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 125–27; Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*; Awaad and Ali, "Obsessional Disorders in Al-Balkhī's."

⁴⁴ Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, 15:525.

⁴⁵ Al-Ālūsī, 15:525–526.

⁴⁶ Al-Ālūsī, 15:524–526.

This structure makes *isti'ādhah* more than formulaic recitation. It is refuge and attentional reorientation at once. *Waswās* contracts consciousness around fear, impurity, doubt, or threat; *isti'ādhah* expands consciousness toward divine lordship, kingship, and worship. The whisperer narrows the field of awareness, while refuge widens it by relocating attention from intrusive inner speech to the One who protects.

Al-Ālūsī's discussion of Q 12:67 may be used only as a supporting analogy. In the context of protection from the evil eye, he transmits forms of *i'ādhah* and discusses the use of water associated with ablution, showing that protective speech and embodied purification may work together when disturbance touches both body and soul.⁴⁷ This passage is not direct commentary on *waswās*, so it should not carry the main argument. Its function is limited: it supports the ritual-somatic dimension of refuge, while the core mechanism remains *isti'ādhah* and attentional reorientation in Sūrat al-Nās.

The healing mechanism that emerges from Q 114:1–4 is therefore divine refuge and attentional reorientation. The disturbed self is not asked merely to argue against the whisper, but to relocate attention under divine lordship, sovereignty, and worship. Modern discussions of obsessional disturbance may clarify the conceptual resonance of this reading, but the comparison must remain guarded: *waswās* should not be equated directly with modern OCD, and *isti'ādhah* should not be reduced to a clinical coping technique.⁴⁸ Al-Ālūsī's contribution is exegetical and Sufi: he shows how Qur'anic refuge transforms the inner field of consciousness by returning the self to God.

Toward a Cognitive-Sufi Model of Qur'anic Psychospiritual Healing: Synthesis, Relevance, and Limits

The four analyses above show that al-Ālūsī's Sufi exegesis does not merely offer separate counsels on anger, fear, grief, and whispering. When read through al-Balkhī's account of emotional disturbance, these interpretations form Qur'anic psychospiritual healing. Al-Balkhī supplies the analytical lens: anger, fear and

⁴⁷ Al-Ālūsī, 7:24–26.

⁴⁸ Pargament, Koenig, and Perez, “The Many Methods of Religious Coping”; Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, “Toward a Framework for Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: An Islamic Model of the Soul,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 5 (October 2018): 1731–44, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0651-x>; G. Hussein Rassool and Zuleyha Keskin, “Positioning the Self (Nafs) in Islāmic Psycho-Spirituality,” *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 27, no. 1 (January 2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2023.2264848>.

panic, sadness and grief, and obsessive whispering. Al-Ālūsī supplies the Qur'anic-Sufi substance: forgiveness, reassurance, graded *ṣabr*, remembrance, vigilance, prostration, refuge, and reorientation toward God. The originality of this article lies in using al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul as an analytical lens for reading al-Ālūsī's *ishān* exegesis, thereby transforming dispersed Sufi counsels into a structured model of Qur'anic psychospiritual healing.⁴⁹

Table 2. Four Psychospiritual Healing Mechanisms Reconstructed from the Exegetical Analysis

Disturbance	Anchor passage	Healing mechanism
Anger	Q 42:37; Q 3:134–135	Forgiveness-based regulation
Fear	Q 20:68; Q 20:46	Cognitive reassurance
Grief	Q 16:127–128; Q 15:97–99	Graded patience through the vertical ladder of <i>ṣabr</i>
Waswās	Q 114:1–4	Divine refuge and attentional reorientation

Source: Author's synthesis of the textual analysis of al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* through al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul.

The four mechanisms in Table 2 are the direct findings of the textual analysis, while the three broader patterns are higher-level syntheses that explain how those mechanisms work. Forgiveness-based regulation primarily reorients anger away from retaliation and toward mercy. Cognitive reassurance reconstructs fear under divine promise, support, and presence. Graded patience through the vertical ladder of *ṣabr* forms the grieving soul through remembrance, vigilance, purification, prostration, and perseverance. Divine refuge and attentional reorientation redirect intrusive whispering toward divine lordship, sovereignty, and worship. The three patterns therefore should not be read as additional mechanisms, but as organizing logics that cut across the four exegetical findings.

This structure clarifies the cognitive dimension of the model. Al-Ālūsī's exegesis repeatedly shows that emotional suffering is mediated by how the self interprets injury, danger, loss, and intrusive inner speech. Anger becomes destructive when the self reads injury through retaliation; fear intensifies when imagination magnifies threat; grief collapses the heart when loss is not carried through patience; and *waswās* dominates when inner whispering narrows the field of consciousness. In each case, Qur'anic meaning intervenes by changing the

⁴⁹ Al-Balkhī, *Maṣāliḥ Al-Abdān Wa-l-Anfus*, 270–83; Badri, *Abu Zayd Al-Balkhī's Sustenance of the Soul*, 22–25, 39–64; Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ Al-Ma'ānī Fī Tafṣīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, 2:372–373, 7:440, 663–65, 8:717, 13:64, 15:524–526.

direction of perception. This is what the article calls cognitive-spiritual reorientation: cognition is not detached from spirituality, and spiritual discipline is not detached from perception, appraisal, and inner speech.

The second pattern, God-centered meaning reconstruction, is equally important. This model does not describe "positive thinking" or optimism generated by the autonomous self. Rather, it describes how suffering is reread under divine mercy, promise, companionship, and refuge. The angry self is placed under the horizon of forgiveness; the fearful self under divine reassurance; the grieving self under divine companionship and patience; and the disturbed self under the protection of *Rabb*, *Malik*, and *Ilāh*. Meaning is reconstructed not by denying pain, but by relocating pain within a Qur'anic-Sufi horizon of dependence upon God.

The third pattern, disciplined psychospiritual formation, shows that healing in al-Ālūsī is not merely a change in thought. It is the gradual formation of the soul through repeated spiritual practice. *Istighfār*, *dhikr*, *ṣabr*, *murāqaba*, *tabattul*, *takhallī-taḥallī*, *sujūd*, and *isti'ādhah* are not decorative devotional additions; they are practices through which Qur'anic meaning becomes embodied and habituated. This is why the model is Sufi as well as cognitive. Its goal is not only emotional relief, but the training of the self before God.

The contemporary relevance of this model lies not in the claim that al-Ālūsī anticipated modern cognitive therapy, but in the deeper recognition that emotion is shaped by meaning, appraisal, attention, and response. Beck's cognitive therapy, Lazarus and Folkman's appraisal theory, and Gross's theory of emotion regulation all emphasize that emotion is mediated by cognition, interpretation, and regulation.⁵⁰ These theories help modern readers understand why the reorientation of perception can reshape anger, fear, grief, or intrusive thought. Yet al-Ālūsī's model remains fundamentally different: the corrective force is not autonomous rationality alone, but Qur'anic address, divine promise, Sufi discipline, and the reformation of the soul before God.

This model also contributes to contemporary discussions of Islamic psychotherapy and Muslim mental health. Keshavarzi and Haque argue that psychotherapy with Muslims should attend to Islamic worldview and

⁵⁰ Aaron T Beck, *Cognitive Therapy and the Emotional Disorders*. (Oxford, England: International Universities Press, 1976); Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman, *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1984); James J. Gross, "Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects," *Psychological Inquiry* 26, no. 1 (January 2015): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>.

anthropology, while Rothman and Coyle develop Islamic psychotherapy around a model of the soul. Work on traditional Islamically integrated psychotherapy further shows the need for approaches that take religious belief, spiritual practice, and Muslim self-understanding seriously.⁵¹ This article contributes from an earlier point in the chain. Before asking how Islamic concepts may be integrated into clinical settings, it asks how classical tafsir itself constructs mechanisms of healing. In this respect, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* becomes not only a source of scriptural interpretation, but also a textual site for theorizing psychospiritual care.

This also distinguishes the present study from empirical research on religious or spiritual interventions. Studies on religious coping, spiritually integrated psychotherapy, faith-adapted therapy, and religion-adapted cognitive behavioral therapy show that religious belief and practice may be meaningfully engaged in mental health care.⁵² Other studies examine prayer, meditation, Qur'anic recitation, and Islamic spiritual practices as measurable interventions for psychological well-being.⁵³ These works are relevant because they show that religion is not external to mental health. Yet the present article moves at a different level: it does not measure the effect of a practice, but examines how tafsir constructs the meaning and mechanism of healing.

⁵¹ Hooman Keshavarzi and Amber Haque, "Outlining a Psychotherapy Model for Enhancing Muslim Mental Health Within an Islamic Context," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 23, no. 3 (July 2013): 230–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508619.2012.712000>; Abdallah Rothman and Adrian Coyle, "Conceptualizing an Islamic Psychotherapy: A Grounded Theory Study," *Spirituality in Clinical Practice* 7, no. 3 (September 2020): 197–213, <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000219>; Fahad Khan and Hooman Keshavarzi, "Theoretical Foundations and Clinical Applications of Traditional Islamically Integrated Psychotherapy," in *Handbook of Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapies*, ed. P. Scott Richards, G. E. Kawika Allen, and Daniel K. Judd (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2023), 193–212, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000338-010>.

⁵² de Abreu Costa and Moreira-Almeida, "Religion-Adapted Cognitive Behavioral Therapy."

⁵³ J. P. B. Gonçalves et al., "Religious and Spiritual Interventions in Mental Health Care: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Clinical Trials," *Psychological Medicine* 45, no. 14 (2015): 2937–49, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291715001166>; Naomi Anderson et al., "Faith-Adapted Psychological Therapies for Depression and Anxiety: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Affective Disorders* 176 (May 2015): 183–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.01.019>; Farah R. Zahir and M. Walid Qoronfleh, "Traditional Islamic Spiritual Meditative Practices: Powerful Psychotherapies for Mental Wellbeing," *Frontiers in Psychology* 16 (2025): 1538865, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1538865>.

The limits of the model must therefore be stated clearly. This is a textual and conceptual study, not a clinical trial. It does not test whether al-Ālūsī's interpretation reduces anger, anxiety, grief, or obsessional symptoms in patients. Nor does it reduce Sufi concepts such as *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *fanā'*, *ma'īyyah*, or *takhallī-taḥallī* to psychological techniques. Its contribution is more modest but still significant: it shows that classical Sufi tafsir can organize Qur'anic healing through cognitive-spiritual reorientation, God-centered meaning reconstruction, and disciplined psychospiritual formation. The result is a cognitive-Sufi model that can enrich Islamic psychology, Sufi healing studies, and contemporary discussions of culturally meaningful mental health care without collapsing classical tafsir into modern psychotherapy.

Conclusion

This article has shown that al-Ālūsī's commentary on selected Qur'anic emotional verses can be read through al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul as a cognitive-Sufi model of Qur'anic psychospiritual healing. Used as an analytical lens, al-Balkhī's psychology of the soul helps illuminate how al-Ālūsī's *ishān* exegesis organizes Qur'anic meaning into a structured account of the soul's emotional transformation. Four healing mechanisms emerge: forgiveness-based regulation for anger, cognitive reassurance for fear, graded patience through the vertical ladder of *ṣabr* for grief, and divine refuge with attentional reorientation for *waswās*. These mechanisms converge into three broader patterns: cognitive-spiritual reorientation, God-centered meaning reconstruction, and disciplined psychospiritual formation. Qur'anic healing in al-Ālūsī is therefore not limited to recitation, *ruqyah*, or devotional consolation; it also works through the reshaping of perception, the reconstruction of meaning under divine presence, and the formation of the soul through sustained Sufi discipline.

The contribution of this study is textual, conceptual, and hermeneutical. It positions classical Sufi tafsir as a site of psychospiritual theory and brings Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic psychology, and contemporary discussions of mental health into a disciplined dialogue.

This study has several limitations. First, its textual corpus is restricted to selected passages from al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* and therefore does not claim to exhaust the exegete's treatment of emotional and psychospiritual themes. Second, al-Balkhī is employed as an analytical lens rather than as evidence of historical influence or intellectual dependence, so the correspondences proposed here remain interpretive rather than genealogical. Third, the study does not

attempt to trace systematically the transmission history of the Sufi formulations cited by al-Ālūsī. Fourth, the four healing mechanisms identified here are conceptual constructions derived from textual analysis and do not establish clinical efficacy or measurable psychological outcomes.

These limitations suggest several directions for future research. The model may be extended through a wider reading of *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* and comparative analysis of other Sufi tafsirs, such as those of al-Qushayrī or Ibn 'Ajība, as well as through engagement with other classical theories of the soul. Future studies may also investigate how these psychospiritual concepts relate to contemporary Islamic counseling and, where appropriate, examine their psychological relevance through empirically informed research.

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