

A Literature Review of Emotion Regulation in the Works of Classical Islamic Scholars: Practical Insights from a Spiritual-Ethical Tradition

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Abstract:

This article provides a theoretical overview of emotion regulation as presented in the works of three influential classical Islamic scholars: Al-Balkhi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Khaldun. extracted from their original work and interpretations within Islamic intellectual tradition, the study analyze how each scholar conceptualized emotional processes, self-regulation, and psychological balance in light of faith, reason, and moral development. By situating their insights, the article highlights the convergence between classical Islamic thought and contemporary understandings of emotional well-being. Core themes such as cognitive reframing (Al-Balkhi), spiritual purification and control of the nafs (Al-Ghazali), and the psychosocial influence of environment and education (Ibn Khaldun) are examined to extract relevant, applicable principles for today's self-help and therapeutic models. This literature-based analysis underscores the richness of Islamic intellectual heritage in addressing emotional challenges and offers pathways for integrating classical wisdom into modern psychological discourse. The article aims to bridge historical perspectives and contemporary needs, contributing to both Islamic psychology and global emotion regulation research.

Keywords: emotion regulation, Islamic scholars, Al-Balkhi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn-e- Khuldun

Introduction:

Islamic scholars and psychologists have played a crucial role in understanding the mental health and emotion regulation, offering profound insights that precede modern psychological theories. Thinkers such as Abu

Zayd al-Balkhi (d. 934), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Ibn-e-Khaldun (1332-1406) and Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) contributed significantly to the field of psychology by integrating spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral approaches to mental well-being. Their works addressed psychological disorders such as depression (*al-huzn*), anxiety (*al-qalaq*), obsessive thoughts (*waswasah*), and mood disturbances (*ikhtilal al-mizaj*), advocating therapeutic interventions that combined cognitive restructuring, behavioral techniques, and spiritual healing. Al-Balkhi, for example, in *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus* (The Sustenance of Bodies and Souls), distinguished between reactive sadness (*huzn tabi'i*) and clinical depression (*huzn maradhi*), emphasizing a holistic approach that included diet, exercise, and cognitive therapy.

Ibn al-Qayyim, in *Madarij al-Salikin*, outlined methods to regulate emotions through self-awareness, moral reasoning, and spiritual devotion, presenting a framework that aligns with contemporary cognitive and behavioral therapies. Additionally, Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* highlighted the role of dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and muraqabah (self-vigilance) as tools for emotional stability. These contributions highlight the depth of Islamic scholarship in mental health, underscoring its relevance to modern psychological discourse and therapeutic interventions. This article examines the foundational contributions of classical Islamic scholars (Abu Zayd al-Balkhi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn-e-Khaldun) to the understanding of emotion regulation, highlighting key theoretical concepts and practical strategies that can inform and enrich contemporary self-help and emotional well-being practices.

Method of Research

This article will employ a **qualitative research approach**, focusing on the primary works of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars to extract their theories and insights on emotion regulation. A thorough **textual analysis** will be conducted to identify key psychological concepts, theoretical frameworks, and practical strategies related to emotion regulation.

Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (850-934):

Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's *Sustenance of the Body and Soul* presents an early conceptualization of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), structured as a self-help manual. His systematic approach to mental well-being enhances the psychological significance of the text, demonstrating its value in both historical and contemporary discourse.

About his work Malik Badri Writes:

“Without introspective, analytical thought, and penetrative clinical perception al-Balkī would not, in the 9th century, have been able to write in such detail about psychosomatic disorders, to be able to differentiate

between psychoses and neuroses, to categorize depression as normal, reactive and endogenous, or to give a detailed exposition on the use of cognitive therapy in treating psychological disorders.”¹

Al-Balkhi’s uplifting golden words provide a crucial foundation for restoring psychological balance and resilience in the face of emotional disturbances.

“Whenever a disease or disorder whether physical or psychological Allah has not created a disease of the body or a disorder of the soul without creating its anti-dose”² “Reducing the severity of a symptom is much better than leaving it untreated until it worsen and causes much more harm”³

The following is a summary of Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's contributions to the understanding of emotions in his work. Neurosis are of four types:

1. Fear and Panic (الخوف والفرع)
2. Anger and Aggression (الغضب)
3. Sadness and Depression (الحزن والجزع)
4. Obsessions (الوسوسة)

Al-Balkhi proposes the application of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for treating each of the psychological disorders he classifies, providing a detailed framework for self-administered CBT interventions.

Individual Differences:

Human beings comprise both body and soul, making them susceptible to strengths and vulnerabilities in both dimensions. Just as the body experiences physical ailments such as fever, headaches, and various forms of pain, the mind and soul are also subject to psychological disturbances, including anger, sorrow, fear, and panic. Individuals vary in their capacity to perceive and regulate the intensity of these emotional responses. Each individual possesses a unique temperament, with their constitutional framework shaped by inherent strengths and weaknesses. As a result, some individuals exhibit heightened fearfulness, while others display a diminished fear response. However, when any aspect of an individual's temperament deviates from balance, al-Balkhi provides therapeutic interventions to restore equilibrium.

Tranquility of Soul:

The well-being of the soul is intrinsically linked to emotional stability. Therefore, the first step is to maintain its health, and the second step is to restore it if it becomes impaired.

“One who wishes to preserve the calmness and harmony of his soul should avoid stirring up any of its faculties.”⁴

There are two ways discussed by Balkhi to maintain the soul: External way, Internal way. Externally is to protect the soul from outside

elements such as to see or hear a thing that worry or disturb him causing “Arousal of Emotion” that includes anger, panic, sadness or fear. Internally to protect the soul from internal symptoms of “Negative Thinking”. Because Persistent negative thinking contributes to the development of emotional and psychological disorders, ultimately leading to anxiety and distress.

Ways of CBT as a self-help style manual:

When feeling peaceful use this time for cognition. “Convince the heart(mind)” and remind oneself about the reality of things. As He stated: “This World has not been created to give people whatever they wish or desires without their being subjected to anxieties and worries or harmful un welcome symptoms”⁵

Malik Badri said that there are four Modern Therapeutic techniques used in it:

- i. Guiding emotional disorder patients to use timely self-persuasion through internal dialogue.
- ii. Use of Reciprocal Inhibition
- iii. Rational Cognitive therapy to change thinking and believes
- iv. Psycho-spiritual religious cognitive approach

According to Al-Balkhi second treatment is “learn to ignore the annoying (Anxiety- Producing) elements” ⁶An individual should cultivate self-discipline to avoid overreacting to minor incidents or sensory stimuli. Through habitual exposure to such experiences, emotional resilience can be strengthened, enabling greater tolerance for more distressing situations. This process involves training oneself to endure physical discomforts, such as heat, harsh weather, and bodily pain, with patience and composure. Malik Badri provides a psychological analysis of this concept, offering critical insights into its implications and applications.

“Balkhi is using Gradual hierarchy of systematic De-sensitization therapy”⁷

Al-Balkhi cautions that individual differences in emotional sensitivity must be considered when applying this technique, emphasizing the need to assess one’s capacity for endurance. As a therapeutic approach, excessive application may lead to adverse effects, similar to the harms of an overdose in medical treatment.

“Every individual has a different level of endurance; the strength of his heart or its weakness (in facing anxiety) and the breadth of his chest or its constricted nature (in facing frustration with patience.)”⁸

Al-Balkhi outlines ways of regaining psychological well-being when it becomes disrupted, recognizing that the soul cannot remain in a constant state of peace and tranquility. By its nature, the soul is subject to fluctuations, encountering emotional disturbances such as anger and fear. Just as the body experiences illness and requires treatment through nutrition and medicine,

the soul similarly necessitates therapeutic intervention to restore its equilibrium.

“The treatment of the disordered soul (Psychic) that complains of psychological symptoms requires a spiritual kind of therapy that is non-physical nature”⁹

There are two methods to treat this internally and externally. For treatment internally by developing within soul thoughts that neutralize the symptoms and desensitize their provocation.

Method of internal treatment: “these thoughts shouldn’t be generated during illness but nurtured during psychological health and relaxation stored in memory bring them back to consciousness when afflicted with emotional symptoms”¹⁰

Externally one can listen to the advice of another whose discussion would be calm the agitated soul and treats its abnormality.¹¹

The advantage of this approach is humans often accept from others what they reject for themselves, as their reasoning is intertwined with emotions. Those experiencing psychological distress become consumed by their suffering, limiting their clarity. Therefore, external guidance is essential for their recovery.

Emotion Regulation:

Al-Balkhi explores fundamental emotions that underlie anxiety, along with their opposing states, highlighting that recognizing the intensity of a harmful emotion is essential for its effective regulation and management.

“Core of all harmful emotional symptoms lies in distress or anxiety, al-ghamm”¹²

Just as anxiety forms the basis of anger and serves as its trigger, distress is similarly embedded within every fear-inducing situation. Anxiety is intertwined with various negative emotional states. Rage and anger contribute to nervousness, while terror and panic can impair rational thinking. Excessive sadness, including depression and melancholy, arises from loss and leads to helplessness and impatience (*jaza*). Obsession, rooted in persistent inner dialogue or soul’s whispers, generates repetitive impulsive or immoral thoughts, resulting in apprehension and distress. So, Protecting the soul from anxiety and distress is essential for effective emotion regulation.

“The opposite state of this distress is happiness and joyfulness”¹³ Happiness serves as the foundational source of all positive emotional states.

Anger Management:

Al-Balkhi links anger management to self-awareness (individual differences), highlighting its intensity in naturally intolerant or hot-tempered

individuals. Al-Balkhi's approach to anger management integrates external guidance and internal cognitive strategies. An external advisor facilitates awareness of anger's detrimental effects, while internal techniques involve cognitive restructuring, mindfulness, and self-reflection to regulate emotional responses. Contemplating historical examples of destructive anger enhances perspective-taking, while emotional awareness fosters self-regulation and psychological resilience.¹⁴

Terror:

Unfamiliar and distant threats induce distress, anxiety, and worry, whereas direct encounters with danger provoke terror. Real fear and terror are immediately experienced when an individual faces an impending threat that may result in unbearable pain or death.¹⁵

According to Al-Balkhi, terror induces a state of extreme urgency in some individuals, rendering strategies such as deliberate calm thinking and external guidance ineffective for their regulation the reason is:

“his behavior will be dominated by their instinctive natural response to flee”¹⁶

They should employ cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques to achieve emotional regulation and calmness, by training himself to understand that:

“Most of what you fear will not harm you and most of terrors comes from the anticipation of terrors”¹⁷

Al-Balkhi outlines the following cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques, Terror often arises from exaggerated and unfounded faulty thinking¹⁸. Wise individuals learn by observing those who have successfully navigated fear-evoking situations.¹⁹ Emotional regulation can be achieved by channeling one emotion through another, such as replacing fear with pride.²⁰ Additionally, repeated exposure to terrifying incidents fosters habituation, gradually diminishing fear with each occurrence.²¹

Among these techniques, **exposure therapy** is the most effective for managing terror. Due to ignorance, individuals often exaggerate their responses to fear-inducing situations. In contrast, repeated exposure fosters desensitization, as seen in soldiers who become accustomed to witnessing injuries and doctors who routinely treat wounds.

“Ignorance concerning the real nature of things is behind most human fears and terrors and that educating people what they wrongly fear would help to heal them”²²

Sadness and Depression:

Depression is an extreme form of grief and sadness. Fear is directed to future and sadness to past. Depression in its Acute form like a blazing coal

fire while sadness is analogous to coal that remains glowing after the fire has subsided.²³

Al-Balkhi distinguishes between two types of sadness: one arising from a clear, identifiable cause²⁴ and another occurring without an apparent reason²⁵.

“it is sudden distress and gloom that descends over the affected person preventing him most of the time from exuberance of activity and the enjoyment of unusual pleasure of this world. The person afflicted is generally unaware of any clear reason for his dejection”²⁶

Clinical depression, when rooted in physiological factors, may result from blood impurities, excessive coolness, or alterations in its composition. Al-Balkhi emphasizes a dual approach to treatment: physiological interventions focus on purifying the blood, increasing its temperature, and enhancing its fluidity, while psychological strategies involve gentle, encouraging dialogue²⁷ to restore emotional balance. Additionally, exposure to aesthetically pleasing stimuli, such as uplifting sounds or imagery, helps evoke warmth and counteract emotional gloom.²⁸

Sadness and Depression that has known reasons²⁹ Externally and internally treated. Externally talk to a specialized “Counselors” and “Wise preachers” “whose job is to raise morale and heal the sadness”.³⁰ Internal strategies concern a number of mental mechanisms based on optimistic thought with soul to train himself to overcome sorrowful feelings. One should observe those who are in more adverse conditions and less fortunate, fostering a sense of gratitude and contentment with one's own circumstances.³¹

A wise person should train himself to face the misfortune with “disciplined endurance” until it becomes a usual pattern³² of confronting future mishaps.³³ In self-help, individuals can find strength by observing others who are enduring similar challenges, drawing resilience from their experiences. It is a fundamental aspect of human nature to derive solace from shared hardship, as recognizing that one's struggles are not unique fosters a sense of solidarity and emotional relief.

Remind oneself in moments of intense grief that its effects are initially fresh,³⁴ but human nature has the capacity to heal and gradually diminish its impact over time until it eventually fades away.³⁵

Emotion Disturbance due to OCD and its treatment:

Balkhi describes **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** as the **whispers of the heart** and the **obsessive inner speech of the soul**. While self-dialogue is a natural aspect of human cognition, it becomes pathological when it turns compulsive, interfering with daily functioning and generating distressing, intrusive thoughts. He distinguishes between inherited and experience-

induced OCD, noting that **genetically predisposed cases tend to be less distressing**, whereas those arising from **negative life experiences** are often more severe and anxiety-provoking due to the reinforcement of intrusive thoughts. According to Balkhi, **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** and **harmful inner monologues** are complex conditions with **uncertain causes** and **challenging treatment**. They may stem from **personal attachments, unfulfilled desires, or emotional bonds**, but they become pathological when an individual is consumed by **threatening and fearful thoughts**. When fear reaches an extreme level, **cognitive functioning deteriorates**, leading to **social withdrawal, an inability to experience joy, and a pervasive sense of pessimism toward one's surroundings**. In such cases, obsessive thoughts dominate the mind, severely impairing emotional and psychological well-being. As a therapeutic strategy, Balkhi emphasizes **engaging in meaningful activities** to divert attention and break the cycle of obsessive rumination.

“He may feel better and momentarily forget his problem whenever he is very busy with important issues”³⁶

Second treatment is to avoid idleness and un-employment if one doesn't take up an activity that externally consumes one's time, his soul naturally turns to internal activity which lead to harmful.³⁷

Al-Ghazali (1058-1111):

According to Al-Ghazali, personality grooming is rooted in the cultivation of moral character, self-discipline, and spiritual purification. He emphasizes that true refinement of the self requires a balance between knowledge (*'ilm*), action (*'amal*), and introspection (*muhāsabah*). Ghazali asserts that virtues such as patience (*ṣabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), and sincerity (*ikhhlās*) are essential for personal development, as they align the soul with divine guidance and ethical conduct. He further argues that ethical training and habituation (*ta'wīd*) play a crucial role in shaping an individual's character, ensuring that one's actions reflect inner virtues rather than mere external conformity³⁸

Understanding Al-Ghazali's theory of emotion regulation requires familiarity with key terms such as *qalb* (heart), *ruh* (soul), *nafs* (self), and *'aql* (intellect). Al-Ghazali defines these concepts and explains their functions, illustrating how each influences human emotions and contributes to the regulation of one's inner state.

Qalb (Heart): It is a physical organ that contains blood and is present in animals as well. However, in humans, it also serves as a spiritual and divine subtle entity (*latīfah rabbāniyyah*) that is connected to the physical heart. Its relationship with the bodily heart is similar to the relationship between attributes and the entity they describe.

Rūḥ (Soul): It is a subtle body (*jism laṭīf*) whose source lies in the cavity of the physical heart. From this central point, the soul spreads throughout the body via veins and arteries, illuminating the bodily organs and endowing the five senses with the capacity for perception.

Nafs (Self): The *nafs* is the entity within a person that encompasses both the faculties of anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*). In another sense, *nafs*, *insān* (human self), and *dhāt* (essence of a person) are essentially the same. However, it manifests different attributes depending on various states and conditions. It is classified into different types based on its moral and psychological dispositions.

‘Aql (Intellect): *‘Aql* refers to the knowledge of the realities of matters. At times, it also denotes the faculty of perception (*madārik al-‘ulūm*), meaning the entity that comprehends and grasps knowledge.³⁹

The **external forces of the qalb (heart)** are the limbs and bodily organs, while the **body serves as its vehicle**. Knowledge (*‘ilm*) is its provision for the journey, and righteous actions (*a‘māl ṣāliḥah*) are the means to acquire this provision. The ultimate purpose of these faculties is to attain **divine knowledge (*ma‘rifah*)** and nearness to Allah. Since the body is the vehicle, its protection is also essential. For this purpose, **desire (*shahwah*)**—an intrinsic force—has been placed within, and to fulfill this desire, an external physical form has been granted. Similarly, **anger (*ghaḍab*)** has been instilled in the heart to enable self-defense and to repel harm, ensuring survival and justice by retaliating against enemies when necessary.⁴⁰

When the **two servants of the heart—anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*)—remain obedient**, they provide significant support on the spiritual path (*tarīq al-sulūk*). However, when they rebel, they lead to the **destruction of the heart**. If *shahwah* and *ghaḍab* incline toward rebellion, the heart should not fall into despair; rather, it should seek assistance from its other faculties. This struggle can be likened to the **Greater Jihad (*jihād al-akbar*)**, where self-discipline is essential for inner harmony.⁴¹

In Al-Ghazali’s framework, **emotion regulation is a disciplined balance between the faculties of desire (*shahwah*), anger (*ghaḍab*), and intellect (*‘aql*)**. When properly governed, these forces serve the heart (*qalb*), aiding in spiritual growth; when uncontrolled, they lead to inner turmoil. True regulation is achieved by following **intellect’s guidance** and ensuring that anger enforces restraint, allowing the self to navigate the path of righteousness and wisdom.

Importance of Knowledge for Emotion Regulation:

The **heart (*qalb*) performs certain functions** that distinguish humans and grant them superiority. The **human heart has the capacity for**

acquiring knowledge and exercising **willpower** (*irādah*), which stands in opposition to **desire** (*shahwah*). Desire arises when emotions become dysregulated, influencing human behavior. However, through this dynamic, **the intellect** (*‘aql*) **is stimulated**, allowing it to guide actions in accordance with reason and wisdom.

“Acquire knowledge through the *nafs* (self) and seek assistance from the body.”⁴²

The Role of Human Dispositions in Emotion Regulation: Balancing Instincts Through the Heart

The creation and composition of the human being involve a **blend of four elements**, resulting in the presence of **four distinct attributes: beastly** (*sabu ĩ*), **animalistic** (*bahīmī*), **satanic** (*shayṭānī*), and **divine** (*rabbānī*). The **beastly nature** leads to the dominance of **anger** (*ghaḍab*), while the **animalistic nature** gives rise to **desire** (*shahwah*), manifesting in greed, covetousness, and envy. The **divine aspect** inclines a person toward self-exaltation, arrogance, superiority over others, exclusivity, and individualism. However, **humans possess the faculty of discernment** (*quwwat al-tamyīz*), which enables them to regulate these inclinations.

“The **heart** (*qalb*) **serves as the center of this discerning faculty**, guiding individuals toward moral and intellectual refinement.”⁴³

The reasons why knowledge does not enter the heart are that the heart becomes polluted with the impurity of sins and the filth of desires, or the heart deviates from the direction of the sought reality, meaning that a person may be righteous but does not pay attention to acquiring knowledge, or there is a barrier due to a belief that has been deeply ingrained in the mind since childhood as a result of blindly following ancestral traditions. Here, Imam al-Ghazālī describes acquiring knowledge, transforming one’s actions, and recognizing an illness as means to the soundness of the heart, and he considers the soundness of the heart as a means to the soundness of emotions.

“The heart is like a mirror; the effect of immoral traits upon it is similar to how smoke tarnishes the clear and pure surface of a mirror. Virtuous qualities enhance the radiance of the heart’s mirror, increasing its brilliance and luster.”⁴⁴ According to Imam al-Ghazālī, the purification of the heart is possible through Sharia-based sciences, as these sciences encompass the training of the self, the soul, and the refinement of morals and character, which are essential for emotional regulation. The knowledge received through divine revelation provides a proper understanding of the human being, offers remedies for its ailments, safeguards the heart, and strengthens it.

“The soundness and well-being of the heart depend solely on religious sciences, as rational sciences are insufficient for this purpose,

though their necessity cannot be denied. Rational sciences are like nourishment, while Sharia-based sciences serve as medicine.”⁴⁵

According to Imam al-Ghazālī, the heart experiences various states—sometimes influenced by external senses and sometimes by internal senses. These thoughts and reflections are known as **khawāṭir** (passing thoughts). It is through **khawāṭir** that intentions are stirred, as **intention (niyyah)**, **determination (‘azm)**, and **will (irādah)** arise only after a thought occurs. The initiation of actions begins with **khawāṭir**—from a thought arises inclination (**raghbah**), from inclination comes determination (‘**azm**), from determination emerges intention (**niyyah**), and from intention, the bodily organs are set into motion. Therefore, it is necessary to work on **khawāṭir** to ensure that the emotions they generate remain balanced. The corruption of **khawāṭir** is caused by **Shayṭān**, who instills such emotions in a person to gain dominance over them, leading to feelings such as **anger (ghaḍab)**, **lust (shahwah)**, **greed (hirs)**, and **envy (ḥasad)**. Hence, it is essential to protect oneself from these emotions, for which Imam al-Ghazālī provides a remedy. “The remembrance of Allah (**dhikr**) and spiritual struggle (**mujāhadah**) are essential for driving Shayṭān away. Merely engaging in dhikr with the tongue is like taking medicine without adhering to dietary restrictions. **Taqwā** (God-consciousness) is the restriction—first, observe the discipline of taqwā, and then use the remedy of dhikr. Shayṭān will fear you in the same way he feared ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه).”⁴⁶

Imam al-Ghazālī emphasizes that negative traits and the emotions arising from them can be transformed, but this requires **mujāhadah** (spiritual struggle). If such transformation were impossible, the very purpose of sending the prophets would be rendered void. Completely eliminating **anger (ghaḍab)** and **desire (shahwah)** is not within our control, but we can regulate them, and this is what we have been commanded to do.

The Subtleties and Principles of *Mujāhada* (Spiritual Struggle)

The refinement of *mujāhada* lies in achieving inner excellence (*bāṭinī ḥusn*), which is based on four fundamental faculties that Allah has bestowed upon humans:

1. **The Faculty of Knowledge (*Quwwat al-‘Ilm*)**
2. **The Faculty of Anger (*Quwwat al-Ghaḍab*)**
3. **The Faculty of Desire (*Quwwat al-Shahwah*)**
4. **The Faculty of Justice (*Quwwat al-‘Adl*)**

Imam al-Ghazālī discusses the balance (*i’tidāl*) of each faculty and highlights the consequences of their excess (*ifrāt*) and deficiency (*tafrīt*). He then prescribes the method of *mujāhada* (spiritual striving) to restore these faculties to moderation. When these faculties attain balance, a

person remains free from negative emotions, and positive emotions flourish within them.

The Virtue and Moderation of Human Faculties

The excellence and moderation of the **faculty of anger** (*Quwwat al-Ghaḍab*) is known as **courage** (*Shajā‘ah*). Its deficiency (*tafrīṭ*) leads to **cowardice** (*Buzdilī*), while its excess (*ifrāt*) results in **recklessness** (*Tahawwur*), both of which constitute imbalance.

Similarly, the **moderation of the faculty of desire** (*Quwwat al-Shahwah*) is termed **chastity** (*Iffah*). Excess in this faculty leads to **vice** (*Shar*), fostering negative emotions, while its deficiency results in **lethargy** (*Jumūd*), causing emotional dullness and inertia.

The **excellence and balance of the faculty of knowledge** (*Quwwat al-‘Ilm*) is called **wisdom** (*Hikmah*). When this faculty is used excessively (*ifrāt*), it leads to **deception and malice** (*Faraib, Khubth*), whereas its deficiency (*tafrīṭ*) results in **foolishness** (*Bewaqufī*).⁴⁷

The regulation of good character and emotions is based on the **balanced use of the faculty of intellect** (*Quwwat al-‘Aql*). This requires:

- Adopting **prudence** (*Husn al-Tadbīr*)
- Exercising **sharpness of mind** (*Jūdat al-Dhihn*) and **sound judgment** (*Iṣābat al-Ra’y*)
- Maintaining **self-awareness** (*Nazar ‘alā al-Nafs*)
- Being vigilant about the **hidden afflictions and subtle actions of the soul** (*Makhfī Āfāt wa A‘māl al-Nafs*)⁴⁸

Method of Mujāhada (Spiritual Struggle)

The process of *mujāhada* begins with unwavering faith in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), without any doubt or hesitation. This strengthens conviction (*yaqīn*), which is the fruit of intellect (*‘aql*) and the pinnacle of wisdom (*ḥikmah*). To regulate the faculty of desire (*quwwat al-shahwah*), one must discipline oneself by spending wealth—something inherently beloved and sought after—in the way of Allah. This practice gradually cultivates self-control over desires. Similarly, courage (*shajā‘ah*) is attained through self-discipline, which involves employing the faculty of anger (*quwwat al-ghaḍab*) within the boundaries set by reason (*‘aql*). When these faculties function within the framework of moderation, they contribute to a balanced and regulated emotional state, leading to moral and spiritual excellence.⁴⁹

Imam al-Ghazālī emphasizes that the emotions arising from bad character can be transformed, but this requires *mujāhada* (spiritual striving). If such transformation were impossible, the very purpose of sending the prophets would be rendered meaningless. While it is not within human capacity to completely eradicate anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*), it is

possible to regulate and control them. This regulation is precisely what has been commanded, ensuring that these faculties function within the bounds of moderation rather than excess or deficiency.

“Completely eradicating anger (*ghaḍab*) and desire (*shahwah*) is unnatural and not the objective of Shariah. Rather, Shariah seeks to bring these two faculties to a state of moderation, where reason (*‘aql*) maintains dominance and control over them. At times, desire can become so overwhelming that reason is unable to restrain it. However, through disciplined spiritual training (*riyāḍah*), it is possible to restore these faculties to a balanced state, ensuring that they function in harmony with intellect and ethical principles.”⁵⁰

Recognition of One’s Condition and the Process of *Mujāhada*

The nature of a person's state and illness can vary, and the more one understands their condition and stage, the easier it becomes to engage in *mujāhada* (spiritual striving) and self-improvement. Imam al-Ghazālī explains this by stating that

“Some temperaments readily accept change, while others take longer to do so.”⁵¹

Imam al-Ghazālī's therapeutic approach integrates cognitive restructuring, self-awareness, and disciplined practice, aligning closely with contemporary **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** and **Mindfulness-Based Therapies**. While CBT focuses on rational thought correction and behavioral change, al-Ghazālī emphasizes spiritual purification alongside cognitive discipline. His method, like modern psychology, acknowledges individual differences in emotional regulation but uniquely incorporates divine consciousness as a core component of transformation.

Ibn-e-Khaldun (1332-1406):

Ibn Khaldun is considered a pioneer in the field of sociology. While his work is not directly focused on psychology, he indirectly explores the psychology of societies through his discussions on social dynamics. Therefore, he examines the psychology of individuals, groups, societies, and civilizations in his analysis. Ibn Khaldun discusses the concept of social solidarity, emphasizing the importance of balanced leadership principles. He highlights the need to channel emotions towards constructive goals and underscores the role of education in regulating emotions. Additionally, he introduces the concept of *fitrah* (innate nature) and the influence of the environment in managing emotional states. As a sociologist, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes external factors more than internal ones, highlighting their impact on human personality and emotions.

Ibn Khaldun's Theory on the Impact of Seasons on Human Emotions

Ibn Khaldun's theory suggests that the climate influences human emotions. He argues that people living in warmer regions tend to be happier due to the dominance of heat in their temperament and nature. In contrast, the inhabitants of colder, mountainous, and high-altitude areas, where coldness prevails, are often more contemplative and reserved. As a result, they tend to focus on the outcomes of their actions. This difference is explained by the fact that, during moments of joy, the animal spirit expands and becomes more expansive, while in moments of sorrow, it contracts. Heat causes air and vapors to spread, creates permeability, and increases volume, which in turn affects emotional states.⁵²

Ibn Khaldun's perspective on the impact of climate on human behavior offers an early form of environmental determinism, highlighting the role of environmental factors in shaping societal and individual characteristics. While contemporary psychology recognizes the influence of the environment on behavior, it emphasizes a more complex interaction between genetic, environmental, and personal factors. Modern research supports Ibn Khaldun's insight into the relationship between environment and behavior, yet it cautions against overly deterministic views, suggesting a need for a more integrative approach to understanding human psychology and societal development.⁵³

Environment:

Ibn Khaldun identifies the environment as a significant factor influencing human temperament and emotions. He illustrates this by stating that individuals living in rural areas, accustomed to hardship and simple diets, tend to be stronger. Regions where the diet is simple, consisting mainly of milk and dates, produce individuals who are both physically robust and intellectually sharp. In contrast, an excess of food, along with the accumulation of rotten and corrupted humors and an abundance of bodily fluids, leads to the formation of waste products in the body. These humors affect the mind and thoughts, resulting in sluggishness and dullness of intellect.⁵⁴

The environment also influences *fitrah* (innate nature). The habits that first take root in one's nature, whether good or bad, determine how much the *fitrah* moves away from other habits. The development of habits is significantly influenced by the environment.

“The abundance of urban pleasures, the ease of indulgence in luxuries, the excess of worldly possessions, and the prevalence of sensuality often lead individuals to develop negative traits. In contrast, rural

inhabitants, with their basic needs being limited and without a penchant for luxury, remain closer to their innate nature (*fitrah*). As a result, they tend to embrace simplicity and are more inclined towards self-improvement.”⁵⁵

According to Ibn Khaldun, education and governance play a crucial role in shaping human emotions, particularly those involved in decision-making. Authoritarian behaviors, whether exhibited by the government or in the upbringing of children, suppress the feelings of self-respect among individuals.

“If disciplinary and educational measures are enforced from childhood, they have a lasting impact on people, as their upbringing is centered around fear and obedience. Consequently, this leads to the erosion of self-esteem and a diminished sense of dignity.”⁵⁶

Ibn Khaldun explains that the courage of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) stemmed from the way the Prophet (PBUH) taught them through encouragement and deterrence. The Prophet (PBUH) would impart not only the basic teachings and etiquettes of the religion but also instill deep-rooted beliefs in the form of doctrines and faith. He would eliminate the fear of all powers except Allah from their hearts, focusing solely on the reverence of Allah. This is why they became steadfast in their courage. The saying of Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA) highlights that "whoever does not learn discipline from the Shariah, his reform is impossible." This means that individuals should hold themselves accountable, adhere to the teachings of the Shariah, and trust that the Shari'ah (legislation) provides for the welfare of the people. In essence, they should focus on self-reformation and use the roadmap provided by the Shariah.⁵⁷

Ibn Khaldun highlights some key points for controlling emotions, in which he emphasizes the role of the environment, governance, and society as important factors.

Human inclination towards injustice: Humans have a tendency towards injustice, so in order to control negative emotions, it is essential that the government in cities is just. In contrast, among the Bedouins, their elders and leaders must prevent them from committing injustices. Furthermore, the protection of small villages is only possible when there is a blood relation within the community, as familial bonds provide strength and stability, creating a sense of authority over the people.⁵⁸

Ibn Khaldun mentions that in order to keep negative emotions in society under control, some form of restriction is necessary. This restriction can be established through a good system of governance. Gradually, individuals' minds become attuned to which positive emotions are desirable within

society and which ones should be avoided. This understanding then becomes ingrained as a second nature for the individuals.

Noble morals guide a person towards positive emotions, and good governments flourish.

"Ruling is a natural trait of humans; governance and politics are essential for humanity. Good habits are fitting and appropriate for the dignity and grandeur of governance and politics."⁵⁹

The environment exerts a profound influence on an individual's character, and virtuous ethics naturally lead to the cultivation of positive emotions. Ibn Khaldun provides an illustrative example, asserting that human habits and dispositions are largely shaped by one's environment and experiences. Power and dominance are attained through qualities such as courage, resolve, and bravery. Consequently, individuals who are immersed in Bedouin life and exhibit extreme savagery are more likely to approach dominance than others, as the environment nurtures emotions such as bravery and dispels fear. When power is achieved through tribal solidarity, it opens the doors to comfort, thereby transforming the societal milieu. Over time, these environmental shifts become ingrained in the collective consciousness, causing individuals to fall into indulgence, ultimately leading to the dissolution of tribal solidarity. In contrast, a government that instills fear undermines the human spirit, reducing individuals to a state of humiliation and subjugation. This can be exemplified by the experience of the Children of Israel when Prophet Musa (PBUH) invited them to the land of Sham. Under the oppressive rule of Pharaoh, they had been weakened to the point where they were unable to assert their rights. Overwhelmed by despair, they had become accustomed to a life of slavery and submission. Thus, it is evident that the environment profoundly shapes human emotions, reinforcing the significant role it plays in emotional development.⁶⁰

Conclusion:

According to Al-Balkhi To regulate emotions effectively, it's important to recognize the difference between normal sadness and clinical depression, using self-dialogue to rationalize thoughts during calm moments. Avoiding negative thinking patterns helps prevent emotional disturbances, while gradually building emotional tolerance through exposure to discomforts strengthens resilience. Seeking external advice when reasoning becomes clouded and replacing harmful emotions with their opposites, such as fear with pride, can be beneficial. Understanding that most fears are exaggerated or unfounded and engaging in repeated exposure to desensitize fears are practical techniques for emotional regulation. Distraction through purposeful activities and avoiding idleness helps prevent negative, inwardly focused thoughts. Optimistic thinking and gratitude,

along with observing those in more difficult situations, promote contentment and overcome sadness. It's crucial to remember that grief fades with time, and using gentle, uplifting speech can help treat emotional gloom. A balance between physical care (diet, exercise) and mental therapy is vital for emotional well-being, and cultivating patience (sabr) and reliance on Allah (tawakkul) provides strength. Dhikr and muraqabah can maintain inner calm, while avoiding emotional triggers and accepting emotional disturbances as natural parts of life lead to effective emotional management and healing.

Al-Ghazali's theory of emotion regulation emphasizes the purification and refinement of the self through a balanced integration of knowledge, action, and introspection. He stresses the importance of cultivating virtues such as patience, gratitude, and sincerity, which align the soul with divine guidance. Al-Ghazali identifies key faculties—heart (qalb), soul (ruh), self (nafs), and intellect ('aql)—that influence human emotions. He advocates for the regulation of desires (shahwah) and anger (ghaḍab) through intellect, ensuring that these faculties support spiritual growth and the well-being of the heart. In practical terms, individuals can regulate their emotions by balancing these faculties, particularly by strengthening the intellect to moderate anger and desire. Engaging in spiritual practices such as dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and mujāhadah (spiritual struggle) is essential for maintaining emotional balance. Cultivating virtues like patience and sincerity enhances self-discipline, while mindfulness of passing thoughts (khawāṭir) allows for better self-regulation and decision-making. Regular introspection and self-awareness help individuals recognize emotional imbalances and take corrective actions. Al-Ghazali's therapeutic approach, which integrates cognitive restructuring with spiritual purification, offers a comprehensive method for emotional regulation, grounded in divine consciousness and disciplined self-control.

Ibn Khaldun, a foundational figure in sociology, emphasizes the influence of social dynamics, environment, and governance on human emotions. He highlights the importance of a just leadership that channels emotions positively and the impact of the environment, such as climate and lifestyle, on emotional states. Ibn Khaldun argues that simplicity and hardship, found in rural areas, strengthen character and promote emotional stability, while indulgence in urban luxuries leads to negative traits. Education and self-discipline, rooted in moral and spiritual teachings, play a crucial role in regulating emotions. He also stresses that effective governance, based on justice and fairness, fosters positive emotions and helps individuals cultivate virtues like courage and resilience. In essence, Ibn Khaldun's work suggests that emotional regulation can be achieved through balanced leadership, mindful environmental influences, and disciplined education.

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- 2 Sustenance of Soul, pg:50
- 3 Ibid
- 4 Sustenance of the Soul, pg:31
- 5 Ibid, pg:31
- 6 Sustenance of Soul, pg:32
- 7 Ibid, pg:32
- 8 ibid
- 9 Ibid, pg:34
- 10 Sustenance of soul, pg:36
- 11 Ibid,pg:35
- 12 Ibid, pg:37
- 13 Ibid, pg:37
- 14 Sustenance of soul, pg: 42
- 15 Ibid,pg:45
- 16 Ibid, pg:45
- 17 Ibid, pg:46
- 18 Cognitive Restructuring: a technique used in cognitive therapy and cognitive behavior therapy to help the client identify their self-defeating beliefs or cognitive distortions, refute them, and then modify them so that they are adaptive and reasonable. <https://dictionary.apa.org/cognitive-restructuring>
- 19 Observational learning/Modeling the acquisition of information, skills, or behavior through watching the performance of others, either directly or via such media as films and videos. <https://dictionary.apa.org/observational-learning>
- 20 Emotional Substitution technique: In psychology, emotional substitution refers to the redirection of emotional energy from one object, action, or desire to another. It's a defense mechanism where an individual replaces an unacceptable or unattainable emotion or goal with a more acceptable or achievable one.
- 21 Exposure Therapy (Habituation): Exposure therapy involves exposing the patient to the anxiety source or its context. Doing so is thought to help them overcome their anxiety or distress.
- 22 Sustenance of Soul, pg:48
- 23 Sustenance of Soul, pg:49
- 24 Reactive (Situational) Depression:
- 25 Endogenous (Clinical) Depression: depression that occurs in the absence of an obvious psychological stressor and in which a biological or genetic cause is implied. Compare reactive depression. <https://dictionary.apa.org/endogenous-depression>
- 26 Sustenance of Soul, pg50

- 27 Supportive Psychotherapy: a type of therapy that focuses on providing emotional support, encouragement, and validation to help individuals cope with difficult life circumstances or psychological challenges.
- 28 Sustenance of Soul, pg:50
- 29 Post Traumatic Disorders: a mental health condition that's caused by an extremely stressful or terrifying event — either being part of it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.
- 30 Counselling and guidance; Psycho education: a therapeutic intervention that provides individuals and their families with information and support to better understand and cope with mental health conditions
- 31 Gratitude therapy: involves cultivating an attitude of thankfulness and appreciation for the good things in one's life.
- 32 Acceptance and Commitment therapy: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a form of cognitive-behavioral therapy that helps individuals stop trying to control negative thoughts and instead accept them as part of life. It encourages clients to align their actions with personal values and goals. ACT promotes flexible thinking and behavior in response to challenges. Based on relational frame theory, it views rigid verbal rules as a source of psychological distress. <https://dictionary.apa.org/acceptance-and-commitment-therapy>
- 33 Sustenance of Soul, pg:52
- 34 Time perspective therapy: Time Perspective Therapy (TPT) is a cognitive therapy that helps individuals rebalance their focus on the past, present, and future to improve mental well-being. It is especially effective for treating PTSD, depression, and anxiety by shifting negative time biases.
- 35 Sustenance of Soul, pg:53
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- 41 Ahyae Uloom Ul dean, Vol:3, pg:23
- 42 Ibid, Vol:3, pg:25
- 43 Ahyae Uloom Ul Din, Vol:3, pg:27
- 44 Ibid, Vol:3, pg:26
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- 51 Ahya al Uloom Deen, Vol:3, pg:98
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54 MUqadma Ibn E Khuldun, Vol:1, pg:196
55 Ibid, pg:234
56 Ibid, pg:237
57 Muqadma Ibn E Khuldun ,pg:237
58 Ibid, pg:238
59 Ibid, pg:258
60 This discussion is derived from the Muqadma Ibn E Khuldun and is presented in summary form, Vol:1, pg:238-258