

Anxiety Therapy By Practising And Reciting *Al-Fatiha Sura* : An Alternative Remedy

Mohd Safri Ali, Mohd Sani Ismail, Wan Hishamudin Wan Jusoh, Syed Hadzrallatfi Syed Omar, Mohd Shaifulbahri Abdullah & Roslida Abdul Razak

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak Campus, 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia.

Email: msafri@unisza.edu.my

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Abstract

Anxiety represents as a psychological problem and exists inside every soul. This is a normal feeling. Nevertheless, extreme anxiety will increase problems. Such situation requires a solution to prevent it from spreading among the communities today. Therefore, the article attempts to highlight anxiety therapy by practising *al-Fatiha* as an alternative spiritual remedy. This sura is selected because it has a lot of privileges. In the meantime, the article tries to answer a question on how to overcome anxiety trouble through an alternative way?. Data are collected through qualitative method by exploring documents, books, articles, past studies and interviews. The tool to analyse the data is content analysis and is described descriptively. The findings show that *al-Fatiha* has positive impact on those who practice it. Hence, *al-Fatiha* persists a beneficial remedy as an alternative to cure anxiety.

Keywords: Quran, Al-Fatiha, Islamic Therapy, Anxiety, Alternative Treatment.

Introduction

Anxiety is a problem to every person. There are various factors causing this problem (Yusof et.al., 2016). Such factors may cause disruption to life. In the contemporary times, this problem seems affecting community minds. This situation is obviously visible through individual's attitudes and emotions. Consequently, everyone is exposed to extreme anxiety. If the symptoms of anxiety are not treated properly, the health is in danger (Alias, 2016). It can be even worse, when the anxiety was triggered from a weak faith. In fact, this is a reason of psychological problems and mental retardations overwhelming in contemporary society (Ali et.al., 2017). Relieving anxiety that originates within a person is not an easy matter, thus a comprehensive therapy should be discovered (Suryaningrum, 2013).

The anxiety itself does not start from the outside alone. In fact, it is rooted within a person whose heart and soul are weak. As truly said by Allah :

﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ۙ ١٩ إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ۙ ٢٠ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ۙ ٢١ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ۙ ٢٢﴾

Translation: "Indeed, man was created impatient (and niggardly). When evil befalls him he is despondent. And blessed with good fortune he grows niggardly. Except those devoted to prayer" (al-Ma`arij : 19-22).

Al-Qurtubi (2010) and Khatib et al. (2007) quote and interpret the word "*al-hala*" mentioned in the verse as "very nasty anxiety". Ibn Kathir (2008) and al-Athari (2006) add that the verse is directed to those anxious, frightened and surprised when they afflicted with difficulty. Whereas, when they are given a pleasure, they turn into a sting and do not fulfill their rights as the servants of God.

The Prophet PBUH mentions stinginess and nervousness are two hidden characters in human being. He says:

شَرُّ مَا فِي رَجُلٍ شُحٌّ هَالِعٌ وَجُبْنٌ خَالِعٌ

Translation: The worst natures that are hidden are the uneasiness of anxiety and coward man (Narrated by Abu Dawud).

Fundamentally, anxiety derives from a mental disorder person. An impressive quick step needs to be taken to overcome the problem. It has emerged among the communities rapidly. Therefore, an appropriate alternative practising therapy has to be considered. This article adopts Sura *al-Fatiha* to experience as an option therapy for anxiety treatment. This article will covers on the concept of anxiety, the privileges of Sura *al-Fatiha*, anxiety therapy through Sura *al-Fatiha* and a conclusion.

What Is Anxiety?

In order to understand the concept of anxiety, there are various definitions portrayed, but all refer to the inner feelings of a human being.

According to al-Ghazali (1982), anxiety equates with the sense of fear or an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. For him, fear here means that a human fear of Allah's punishment, fear of death, fear of property loss and fear of poverty. Usually, anxiety is related to the emotional reactions that individuals experience when they feel threatened (Hassan, 1990). The nature of anxiety posses by a man only occurs simultaneously after its creation is perfect (al-Zuhayli, 1991).

Anxiety basically, is a feeling of worry that appears to fit human internal responses. It is regarded as natural. As acclaimed by Muhammad (2000) and Sidi (2012), anxiety may benefited those who are in a stressful situation as it triggers them to perform better. Zarrina (2001) in other hand, pictures anxiety as an emotional pain and suffering, in the sense of spirituality in which the reaction that occurs is caused by neuronal processes in the body (Freud 2013).

From the above definitions, anxiety is a reflection of feelings and emotions affecting a person's psychology and it happens to any ordinary being. Anxiety derives from various circumstances and influences almost every person in this world. It shall convey a negative impression if the patient is constantly entertaining the feeling. For this reason, therapy through Sura *al-Fatiha* is an appropriate option to repress anxiety problems from a person.

Privileges of *al-Fatiha*

The verses of Quran deliver benefits in absolute terms. Rendering to al-Tabari (2010), the Prophet PBUH stated that Quran descends on seven alphabetical characters. The letters in it can relieve a person from disease symptom or an appalling condition. God Almighty promises the verses of Quran as a healing for those who believe. They obtain healing with all its teachings physically or mentally such as anxiety or Satanic whispers. For Muslim, they believe only Quran can treat troubles lodged in the chest or any bad whispers in the heart.

Al-Fatiha presumes among the earliest *suras* revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH through the mediation of Gabriel (Manan, 2017). It has various names. According to al-'Adawi (1996), apart from *al-Fatiha*, it's also known as *Fatiha al-Kitab*, *Umm al-Kitab*, *Umm al-Quran*, *al-Hamd* or *al-Hamd lillah Rabal-'Alamin*, *al- Solat*, *al-Sab` al-Mathani* *waal-Quranal-'Azim* and *al-Ruqyah*.

Based on its names, this *sura* certainly has many privileges. Among of these privileges, it has seven verses which are praised to Him. Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ٨٧

Translation: And We have given you (O Muhammad) the seven most-repeated verses, and the glorious Quran. (al-Hijr 15 : 87)

al-Hanbali (1427H) states, there are several causes of *al-Fatiha* is identified as *al-Sab`al-Mathani*. This *sura* revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his people only. There is no chapter alike conferred to the former prophets and their followers. The *sura* comprises verses recited in every prayer. There are absolute praises to Allah the Almighty. Lastly, this *sura* is divided into two parts. The first part is for Him and another part is for His servants.

Furthermore, Prophet PBUH has said the excellences of *al-Fatiha*:

مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ مِثْلَهُمُ الْقُرْآنِ

Translation: Allah has never descended in the Torah and the Gospel a chapter which equals with the *Umm al-Quran (al-Fatiha)* (Narrated by al-Tirmidhi: 5: 3125).

With these specialities, it has encouraged the Prophet companions to learn it directly from him. So they get knowledge on how to recite, practice and act it straightly from him (Mujahid, 1989). Syed Qutb (1982) states, even though *al-Fatiha* is short but it contains Islamic faith fundamentals in terms of His divinity (*uluhiyyah*) and Lordship (*rububiyyah*).

Al-Qushayri (2007) believes, its name as *Umm al-Kitab* (Mother of the Book/Qura) is a privilege. Because it stands as the most important *sura*. It works as a leader in a country who

is always in the most upfront position. Likewise this chapter is set in the earliest position. This position is the same as the position of a country leader. Both of them are always in the prime position. It contains worship and praises to Allah on His Divine beauty as well.

Bey Arifin (2002) expresses that this chapter was acknowledged by the Prophet PBUH as the most glorious chapter and only he received this kind of *sura*. Alcaff (n.d.) writes, reciting this *sura* regularly, will impress calmity. The reciter will be protected from any misfortune that might awaits. In addition, *al-Fatiha* is a chapter that comes directly from the Throne of God. Therefore, it can be employed as an alternative remedy or as a psychiatric therapy for anxiety problem. It has to be practiced according to Islamic guidelines

Summarilly, there are a lot of privileges found in *al-Fatiha*. These have proven that, *al-Fatiha* is regarded as the best and important *sura* to be recited regularly. In the normal Islamic tradition, reciting *al-Fatiha* is recognized as a therapy in dealing with psychological and emotional disturbances.

Anxiety Therapy Through *al-Fatiha*

Bey Arifin (2002) has interpreted the verses from *al-Fatiha* which correspond to anxiety therapy as follows:

<i>al-Fatiha</i>	Corresponding to Anxiety Therapy
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ١ In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.	Contains the names of God and His greatness. Bless action begins with addressing Allah' names. Reciting <i>Bismillah</i> benefits the mind peace. 4. Incompetence practice of Reciting <i>Bismillah</i> at the work rootage affects anxiety and panic.
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٢ Praise be to Allah, the Lord who safeguards and governs the entire worlds.	Realising the universe is under the protection of God and His authority brings peace to mind. <i>Al-Hamdulillah</i> is one of four words favoured by Allah. It is a remembrance (<i>dhikr</i>) and a hope for His consent. Remembrance (<i>dhikr</i>) by praising Him are very much influential and beneficial. It will delights the human soul.
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ٣ Most Gracious, Most Merciful.	Mankind lives in Gracious (<i>al-Rahman</i>) and Merciful (<i>al-Rahim</i>) of Allah. <i>Al-Rahman</i> a beautiful name of Allah is a blessed to mankind in this world. <i>Al-Rahim</i> another lovely name of Allah is a combination of grace and love. His grace and love are gifted to certain people in this world and hereafter. When the graces bestowed by God in this world such as air, light, water, food and drinks are appreciated, a gratitude inside ourselves will arise. Allah grants His graces in physical and spiritual to His creatures.
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ٤ Master of the Day of Judgment (the Hereafter).	Contain two significant meanings: the only God and entire human in the hereafter. When humans understand the true nature of life, this world presumably just as small as a water drop. While afterlife is as huge as a vast ocean.

	<p>Humans are composed from two main elements, physical and mental. The physical is derived from the ground. While the mental is the spirit.</p> <p>The spirit includes mind, heart and self desire. Humans will feel prior to live in this world with a strong understanding of the spiritual meaning. He is capable to eliminate anxiety in the hereafter through good deeds.</p>
<p>إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ٥ It is You alone (O! Allah) we worship, and to You alone we look for help.</p>	<p>Knowledge and gnosis, practices and circumstances will cure heart illness and bad intentions.</p> <p>This verse contains three components: worshiping to Allah the Almighty, His commands and prohibitions, and seeking helps from Him.</p> <p>Only He can bring goodness and avoid harm to the mankind.</p> <p>Confessing every mistakes while performing prayer leads to the peace of heart.</p>
<p>أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ٦ Guide us to the Straight Path.</p>	<p>A straight path means a way leads to happiness and lucks in the world and in the hereafter..</p> <p>When pleading to God, surely Allah will provide unlimited helps including physical and mental relief.</p> <p>Asking further help from Him, invites more loves from Him.</p> <p>A person must distinguish between good and evil consistently.</p> <p>When he succeed in resolving between both conditions, his heart will be filled with happiness and peace.</p>
<p>صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ٧ The path of those on whom You bestowed Your eternal grace, not (the path) of those who invited Your wrath, nor those who have gone astray.</p>	<p>A person with physical and spiritual strength, highest morality and mind, purest blood and descendants, resistant and steadfast soul, is hard to be defeated by any attempts in terms of weapons or pleasures in life.</p> <p>The bless men are prophets, the apostles and their followers.</p> <p>Astray persons are refusals, denials and despisers of the apostles and scriptures taught.</p> <p>A person who breaks His commands will be punished in the Hereafter. While the devoted will enjoy peace of mind and salvation of the soul.</p>

Such idea ever delivered by Shaykh Yusuf during consultation with him at his residence in Haiyy al-Safarat, Cairo, on March 13, 2018. He believes that Quran entirely is a cure for wellness. He urged to recite certain verses daily likes *Ayat al-Kursi*, *Sura al-Samad*, *Sura al-Falaq* and *Sura al-Nas*.

Al-Fatiha verses explain a strong relationship between the Creator and His servants. This is the main point in the sura. The strong reliance on the Creator is believed to ease anxiety from human soul (Hisham & Sa`ari, 2009; Omar & Sa`ari, 2011). The verses contain onights to replace anxiety with tranquility in the mind. At the meantime, it resolves and strengthens the mind and soul.

Previous and today's scholars argue that *al-Fatiha* is capable of treating spiritual and physical illnesses. Reading *al-Fatiha* with an intense appreciation penetrates tranquility into

the soul. *Al-Fatiha* will also reminds blessings bestowed by Allah to His servants since the beginning of time. For example, air, water, food, drinks and so on (Sin & Yusoff, 2012; Bawa`ud 2014).

There are several studies using *al-Fatiha* as an alternative therapy. Purwoko (2012) in his research uses *al-Fatiha* as mediation to approach his clients. He argues, using *al-Fatiha* for therapy, actually is a spiritual therapy. It treats the clients' soul. Mudzkiyyah et. al (2014) in their studies entitled "Zikir al-Fatiha Therapy In Improving the Wellness of Drug Addicts During Recovery" states, reciting *al-Fatiha* has positive impacts on drug addicts who are on undergoing recovery phase. They become more calm, can control their emotions, feeling attentive to God and more diligent in performing daily prayers.

Julianto and Subandi (2015) in thier studies entitled "Reading al-Fatiha Intuitive Reflective to Lower Pressure and Increase Immunity" say *al-Fatiha* provides calmness and positive spirit in life, decreases depression dan increases inner immunity, if it is read repeatedly. These changes can not be separated from a sense of calm after reading the Quran.

Yusof and Wahab (2016) through their studies "The Impact of Surah al-Fatiha Meditation Therapy Through Biofeedback Testing In Reducing Pressurized Teen Stress at the Technical Training Institute" show that the method of *al-Fatiha* meditation reduces pressure much more than the method of music meditation.

Those findings coincide with Ibn `Atiyyah's (1422H) opinion. According to him, the guardian of the hell, get their strength by reciting *Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim* which is the first verse in *al-Fatiha*. Thus, it can be certified that the truth of *al-Fatiha* has privileges and confirm it as an alternative way to cure anxiety problem.

In pertinent, reading the whole sura *al-Fatiha* will ultimately affect any illness including anxiety problem. This *sura* expresses a form of praying and seeking help from Allah the Almighty. Thus, a Muslim should believes that every verse of the Quran is a cure. (Interview with Shaykh Yusr Jabr March 14, 2018).

Conclusion

Al-Fatiha is the earliest sura in the Quran. This sura is a special gift delivered to the Prophet Muhammad with it's special features. Among others, the verses contain tauhid, mercy and guidance. In addition, *al-Fatiha* gives peace of mind to those who recite it. Several studies have proved success by practicing *al-Fatiha* to overcome mental anxiety. Islam offers this option as an alternative way to treat anxiety. Though, the practice of reading *al-Fatiha* and the Quran has relationship and fitted to treat anxiety problem.

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