

The Representation of Sadness in the Qur'an: A Semiotic Analysis of Prophetic Narratives

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Abstract:

This study examines the representation of sadness in the Qur'anic stories of the prophets using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework integrated with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutics and Pargament's Positive Religious Coping theory. Employing a qualitative content analysis design, the study analyzes four prophetic narratives selected through purposive sampling based on themes of family relationships and experiences of suffering. The findings reveal that the Qur'an constructs sadness through three interconnected levels of signification. At the denotative level, different lexical signifiers represent distinct forms and intensities of sadness. At the connotative level, sadness is transformed into a spiritual process oriented toward patience, surrender, and trust in Allah. At the mythological level, the Qur'an constructs a counter-myth that redefines emotional responses to suffering. Rather than legitimizing the pre-Islamic tradition of hysterical mourning, the narrative of Prophet Ya'qub naturalizes somatic sadness as a legitimate human condition without diminishing faith, while the story of Prophet Nūḥ reconstructs the concept of family by prioritizing the bond of faith over biological lineage. Furthermore, the prophetic narratives embody four forms of Positive Religious Coping: Collaborative Religious Coping, Benevolent Religious Reappraisal, Religious Surrender, and Spiritual Connection. These findings contribute to Arabic language pedagogy by demonstrating how lexical-semantic and semiotic analyses of Qur'anic discourse can enrich the teaching of Qur'anic Arabic, semantics, and discourse interpretation while fostering students' emotional and spiritual literacy.

Keywords: Al-Qur'an; Narratives of the Prophets; Positive Religious Coping; Roland Barthes' Semiotics; Sadness.

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Representasi Kesedihan dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Semiotika terhadap Narasi Para Nabi

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Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis representasi kesedihan dalam kisah-kisah para nabi di dalam Al-Qur'an menggunakan kerangka semiotika Roland Barthes yang diintegrasikan dengan hermeneutika Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd dan teori *Positive Religious Coping* Kenneth Pargament. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis isi kualitatif terhadap empat narasi para nabi yang dipilih secara *purposive* berdasarkan tema hubungan keluarga dan pengalaman penderitaan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Qur'an membangun representasi kesedihan melalui tiga tingkat pertandaan yang saling berhubungan. Pada tataran denotatif, Al-Qur'an menggunakan pilihan leksikal yang berbeda untuk merepresentasikan ragam bentuk dan intensitas kesedihan. Pada tataran konotatif, kesedihan ditransformasikan menjadi proses spiritual yang mengarahkan manusia kepada kesabaran, kepasrahan, dan kepercayaan kepada Allah. Pada tataran mitologis, Al-Qur'an membangun *counter-myth* yang merekonstruksi respons manusia terhadap penderitaan. Alih-alih melegitimasi tradisi meratap histeris pada masyarakat Arab pra-Islam, kisah Nabi Ya'qub menaturalisasikan kesedihan somatik sebagai bagian yang wajar dari fitrah manusia tanpa mengurangi kualitas keimanan, sedangkan kisah Nabi Nuh merekonstruksi konsep keluarga dengan menempatkan ikatan akidah di atas hubungan biologis. Selain itu, narasi para nabi merepresentasikan empat bentuk *Positive Religious Coping*, yaitu *Collaborative Religious Coping*, *Benevolent Religious Reappraisal*, *Religious Surrender*, dan *Spiritual Connection*. Temuan ini berkontribusi terhadap pedagogi bahasa Arab dengan menunjukkan bahwa analisis leksikal-semantik dan semiotik terhadap wacana Al-Qur'an dapat memperkaya pembelajaran bahasa Arab Al-Qur'an, semantik, dan interpretasi wacana, sekaligus mengembangkan literasi emosional dan spiritual peserta didik.

Keywords: Al-Qur'an; Kisah para nabi; *Positive Religious Coping*; Semiotika Roland Barthes; Kesedihan.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious texts are no longer understood merely as sources of spiritual guidance but are increasingly regarded as frameworks for understanding the dynamics of human emotions and mental well-being. Within this perspective, sadness and crying are not merely emotional responses to suffering but constitute spiritual experiences that reflect the depth of the relationship between human beings and God. From a religious perspective, tears are viewed as a means of spiritual purification and a sincere expression that connects human emotions with the awareness of God's presence (Kirin et al. 2024). Both the Qur'an and the Hadith portray emotions such as sadness as possessing positive spiritual dimensions when accompanied by patience, reliance upon God, and complete submission to Allah. Rather than depicting sadness solely as a negative psychological condition, the Qur'an presents it as an integral aspect of human emotional experience that strengthens faith and leads to inner tranquility through self-restraint and total trust in Allah (Zulkarnain 2018). Furthermore, within the Prophetic tradition, tears frequently symbolize humility and the acknowledgment of human limitations before God. Consequently, the meaning of sadness in the religious context extends beyond the psychological dimension and represents a spiritual process that guides believers toward inner peace, purification of the heart, and closeness to Allah.

Nevertheless, in contemporary religious life, a gap remains between religious understanding and religious practice in responding to sadness. Many believers perceive sadness as a negative emotion that should be suppressed, avoided, or quickly forgotten. In contrast, the Qur'an portrays sadness as an inseparable part of humanity's spiritual journey, as reflected in the narratives of the prophets who endured trials involving loss and separation. From the Qur'anic perspective, sadness is not interpreted as evidence of weak faith but rather as a manifestation of human nature that directs individuals toward patience, trust in God, and acceptance of His divine decree (Zamimah and Putri 2021). Moreover, Khandani, Nia, and Akbarizadeh (2020) argue that sadness possesses a transcendent meaning, reflecting the depth of spiritual consciousness and the relationship between humanity and the Creator. However, these meanings remain largely overlooked because studies examining the linguistic and symbolic representations of sadness in the Qur'an are still limited.

Previous semiotic studies of the Qur'an demonstrate the considerable potential of this approach to uncover profound meanings embedded within the linguistic structure of divine revelation. Al-Daghistani (2016) in *Semiotics of Islamic Law, Maṣlaḥa*, and Islamic Economic Thought, interprets the concept of *maṣlaḥah* as a system of signs linking Islamic law, ethics, and economics, emphasizing that meaning in Islam is not merely normative but also symbolic and ethical. Likewise, Kamil, Handayani, and Abdurrosyid (2023) argue that semiotics is compatible with the principles of *balāghah* and *naẓm* in the classical exegetical tradition, making it an appropriate approach for deepening contextual interpretations of Islamic texts. Similarly, Alruwaili et al. (2025) found that the Qur'anic concepts of *al-birr* and *al-qist* establish vertical and horizontal sign relations representing the balance between spiritual and social dimensions, thereby expanding the application of semiotics within Qur'anic ethical studies.

At the same time, semiotic studies of the narratives of the prophets have increasingly developed toward symbolic and narrative interpretation. Abbasi and Ghafourian (2025) employed Greimas's semiotic square to explain the semantic



opposition between *'izzah* and *dhillah* in the story of Prophet Yusuf, illustrating a spiritual transformation from humiliation to honor. Nakisa, Mirahmadi, and Noorsideh (2021) interpreted the symbolism of the four natural elements water, fire, earth, and air in the story of Prophet Musa and Pharaoh as signs representing the struggle between faith and arrogance. Likewise, Belhaj (2023) analyzed the story of Prophet Nuh in Surah Hūd through the concept of rupture and concluded that the Great Flood symbolizes the moral and spiritual separation between truth and falsehood. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that semiotics effectively reveals the moral, spiritual, and ideological dynamics embedded within the Qur'an's system of signs.

Despite these developments, most previous studies have employed semiotics primarily to uncover narrative structures or first-order meanings in the Qur'anic text. Roland Barthes's concepts of denotation, connotation, myth, and naturalization, however, provide a more comprehensive framework for explaining how narratives construct ideological meaning through second-order signification. Kamil, Handayani, and Abdurrosyid (2023) further argue that semiotic approaches are compatible with the Islamic exegetical traditions of *naẓm* and *balāghah*. Their study also demonstrates that semiotics has been adopted by several Muslim scholars, including Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, in Qur'anic studies. Abu Zayd regarded the Qur'an not merely as a text but as a discourse that continuously interacts with its readers and their socio-cultural contexts. This perspective suggests that the meanings of the Qur'an extend beyond the literal level and may also be explored through symbolic and connotative interpretation. Wekke, Amiruddin, and Firdaus (2018) Building upon this perspective, the present study employs Abu Zayd's humanistic hermeneutics as the conceptual foundation for applying Barthes's semiotic framework to the Qur'an. Within this framework, Barthes's concepts of myth and naturalization are utilized not to question the truth or sacredness of divine revelation but rather to examine how Qur'anic narratives construct the Islamic worldview concerning sadness and suffering.

Studies exploring the emotional dimensions of the Qur'an have recently begun to emerge. Al Zomor (2024) for instance, investigated the semiotic representation of fear in the story of Prophet Musa's mother and found that fear undergoes a transformation from a purely human emotion into a spiritual sign symbolizing surrender to the will of Allah. Nevertheless, studies specifically examining the representation of sadness in the narratives of the prophets remain scarce. Classical Qur'anic exegesis and contemporary hermeneutical studies have provided comprehensive interpretations of Qur'anic verses through linguistic, theological, and moral approaches. However, these approaches generally emphasize legal, ethical, or first-order textual meanings. It is at this point that Barthes's concept of myth offers a distinctive analytical advantage absent from conventional exegesis, namely its capacity to explain the process of naturalizing meaning. Through myth analysis, this study seeks to demonstrate how the Qur'an reconstructs sadness—which in certain pre-Islamic Arab traditions was expressed through excessive mourning over loss Rao, Nor, and Khan (2021) into a counter-myth that naturalizes suffering as a meaningful and rational spiritual necessity.

To ensure that these mythological findings do not remain at the level of theological abstraction, the analysis is subsequently integrated with Kenneth Pargament's Positive Religious Coping theory to explain how these narratives function psychologically as adaptive mechanisms of emotional coping. According to



Pargament, religious beliefs and practices can be mobilized as psychological resources for confronting life's adversities, fostering resilience, and discovering meaning in experiences of loss. Consistent with this perspective, Çınaroğlu (2024) argues that Islamic principles such as *tawakkul*, *qadr*, and *yaqīn* function as religious coping mechanisms that help individuals manage sadness, reduce psychological distress, and cultivate resilience through acceptance and meaningful interpretation of life's hardships. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that these Islamic concepts closely correspond to Pargament's theory regarding the role of religious beliefs as psychological resources in coping with life's challenges.

Based on these research gaps, this study examines the representation of sadness in the narratives of the prophets through Roland Barthes's semiotic framework, interpreted in dialogue with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's thought and integrated with Positive Religious Coping theory. It contributes to Qur'anic semiotic studies by demonstrating that sadness functions not only as a theological sign system but also as an adaptive mechanism of emotional regulation. From the perspective of Islamic psychology, the narratives of the prophets provide models for understanding and coping with emotional suffering. As noted by Rassool and Keskin (2025) stories such as the patience of Prophet Ayyub and the sorrow of Prophet Ya'qub illustrate how emotions can be managed through psycho-spiritual resources, including *ṣabr*, *dhikr*, *ṣalāh*, *shukr*, and *tawakkul*, which foster resilience and psychological well-being. Thus, the Qur'anic representation of sadness serves not only as a theological message but also as a form of adaptive emotional education for believers.

METHOD

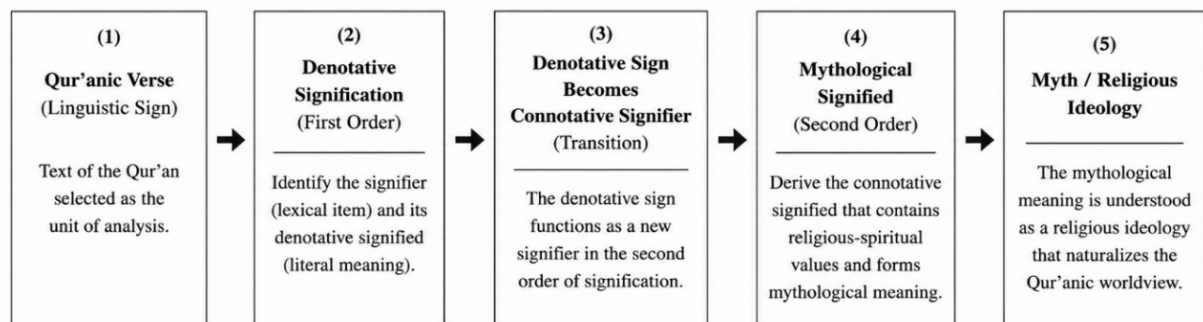
This study employs a qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis design that integrates Roland Barthes' two-stage signification semiotic framework. This approach was selected as it aligns with the research objective to unpack implicit, symbolic, and ideological constructions within the Qur'anic text, rather than relying on quantitative measurements. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's humanistic hermeneutics serves as the philosophical foundation for viewing the Qur'anic text as a discourse engaging in dialogue with human emotional reality, which is subsequently synthesized with Kenneth Pargament's Positive Religious Coping theory to explain its psychological functions. Data for this study were sourced from the Qur'anic text as primary data, alongside classical and modern exegesis such as *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* and *Tafsir al-Munir* by Wahbah al-Zuhayli and supporting literature in semiotics and Islamic psychology as secondary data. Sample selection was conducted purposively by applying strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria encompassed verses containing narratives or emotional linguistic signs related to the prophets' sadness due to separation, loss, or threats to family members. Based on these criteria, the analyzed sample focuses on the narratives of Prophet Ya'qub (QS. Yusuf [12]: 84, 86), Prophet Nuh (QS. Hud [11]: 42-46), Prophet Ibrahim (QS. Ash-Shaffat [37]: 102-107), as well as Prophet Musa and his mother (QS. Al-Qashash [28]: 10). Conversely, general verses on sadness outside the context of faith testing or prophetic family dynamics were excluded from the analysis.

In this qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary human instrument who operationalizes key concepts into clear analytical categories. These concepts include: (1) Linguistic or Denotative Signs of Sadness, referring to words or grammatical structures explicitly indicating sad emotions; (2) Connotation and



Myth or Counter-Myth, representing second-order meanings wherein sadness is naturalized from a perceived sign of weak faith into a process of spiritual purification; and (3) Positive Religious Coping, constituting the adaptive psychological manifestations of this meaning, such as patience, prayer, and reliance upon God. To ensure validity and trustworthiness, this study applies a theoretical triangulation strategy by combining hermeneutical, semiotic, and psychological perspectives of religion. Data analysis was systematically operationalized through a three-stage coding process. The first stage, Denotative Coding, involved identifying Denotative Signifiers and determining Denotative Signifieds based on lexical meanings and foundational exegetical interpretations. The second stage, Connotative Coding, linked these signs to the emotional narrative contexts of the prophets to extract Connotative Signifieds. The third stage, Mythological Coding, treated the connotative signs as new signifiers to extract Mythological Signifieds namely, the Qur'an's ideological reconstruction of sadness which were subsequently mapped onto the indicators of Positive Religious Coping.

Figure 1: Operationalization of Barthes' Two-Stage Semiotic Analysis



Source: Processed by author

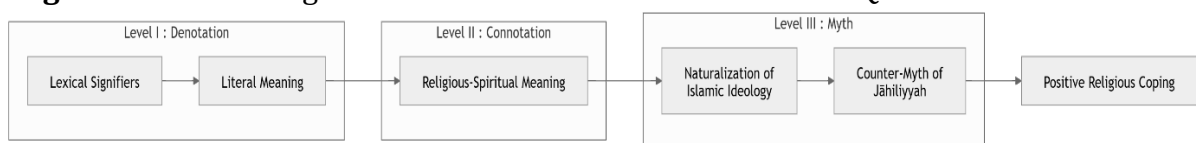


RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

	Figure	Data	Denotative	Connotative	Mythological
QS.[28]:10	Mother of Prophet Musa	<i>fu'ād, rabaṭn ā'alā qalbiḥā</i>	An intense emotional turmoil of the heart accompanied by divine reassurance	A mother's psychological anxiety is transformed into inner peace through trust in Allah's promise.	Naturalization: Inner peace is naturalized as originating from divine intervention. Counter-Myth: Destructive panic is reconstructed into surrender to Allah.
QS.[11]: 42-46	Prophet Nuh	<i>yā bunayya, innahu laisa min ahlik</i>	An affectionate paternal address accompanied by the affirmation of the boundaries of faith.	A father's emotional struggle that ultimately prioritizes faith over biological kinship.	Naturalization: The bond of <i>tawḥīd</i> is superior to blood relations. Counter-Myth: Tribal loyalty is deconstructed into commitment to <i>tawḥīd</i> .
QS.[37]:102-103	Prophet Ibrahim	<i>if'al mā tu'mar, aslamā</i>	Expressions of divine command and complete submission.	Grief is sublimated into total obedience and surrender to Allah's will.	Naturalization: Obedience is presented as the appropriate response to the greatest trial. Counter-Myth: Emotional lamentation is replaced by obedience expressed through action.
QS. [12]:84, 86	Prophet Ya'qūb	<i>'āsaf, kaẓīm, baṭṭ</i>	Intensified grief, emotional restraint, and the outpouring of sorrow.	Profound grief is directed exclusively to Allah as an expression of spiritual reliance.	Naturalization: Somatic manifestations of grief are presented as part of human nature. Counter-Myth: Hysterical mourning is reconstructed into spiritually oriented supplication to Allah.

Table 1: Semiotic Analysis Representation of Sadness in Prophets' Narratives

Figure 2: Semiotic Signification Framework of Sadness in the Qur'anic Narratives



To facilitate the understanding of the multi-layered meaning-making structure presented in Table 1, Figure 2 illustrates the semiotic signification process operating within the narratives of the prophets' sadness. Structurally, the Qur'an constructs meaning by transforming lexical signifiers from the denotative level to the connotative level. At the mythological level, these linguistic choices function to naturalize sadness as an inherent aspect of the human condition oriented toward surrender to Allah. Simultaneously, they operate as a counter-myth that deconstructs the pre-Islamic tradition of hysterical mourning.

Denotative Meaning of the Linguistic Signifiers of Sadness

Based on the mapping presented in Table 1 and the semiotic signification framework illustrated in Figure 2, the Qur'an does not represent the prophets' sadness through a single, uniform linguistic signifier. Instead, it employs diverse lexical choices (Signifier 1) and dynamic narrative structures. This variation



demonstrates that, within the Qur'an, sadness is not portrayed as a monolithic concept but rather as an emotional experience characterized by varying degrees of intensity, modes of expression, and spiritual orientations. This finding is consistent with Uyuni et al. (2026) who argue that emotional expressions in the Qur'an are conveyed through lexical variations carefully adapted to their narrative contexts and rhetorical purposes, allowing each expression to convey a distinct semantic nuance.

A close semantic-lexical analysis reveals why the Qur'an deliberately avoids employing the general term for sadness, *ḥuzn*, in certain contexts and instead selects more specific linguistic signifiers.

1. Exploring *Fu'ād* and *Rabaṭnā* in the Story of the mother of Prophet Mūsā

In the story of the mother of Prophet Mūsā (QS.[28]:10, 13), the Qur'an does not portray sadness through the common lexical item *ḥuzn*. Instead, it employs the somatic signifier *fu'ād* and the verbal expression *rabaṭnā 'alā qalbiḥā*. From a lexical-semantic perspective, *fu'ād* differs from the more general term *qalb*. According to *Lisān al-'Arab* (Manzhur 1993), *fu'ād* refers to *al-qalb li-tafa'udihi wa tawaqqudihi*, a heart burning with intense emotional agitation. Denotatively, the choice of *fu'ād* represents the sudden anxiety and fear experienced by a mother facing the possible loss of her child. Meanwhile, the signifier *rabaṭnā* denotes Allah's act of strengthening her heart and inspiring patience so that it would not collapse under emotional distress. These lexical choices demonstrate that the Qur'an presents inner tranquility as a direct manifestation of divine intervention and grace.

2. The Lexical Progression of '*Āsaf*, *Kaẓīm*, and *Baṭṭ* in the Story of Prophet Ya'qub

Unlike the sudden anxiety experienced by the mother of Mūsā, the sadness of Prophet Ya'qub (QS.[12]:84, 86) is represented through a progressive sequence of three lexical signifiers: '*āsaf*, *kaẓīm*, and *baṭṭ*. The Qur'an employs the expression *yā 'āsafā* instead of the more general *ḥuzn* because, lexically, '*āsaf* conveys profound sadness intensified by suppressed anger arising from an unjust situation. This emotional progression continues with *kaẓīm*, which denotatively refers to restraining, containing, and concealing emotional turmoil from others. The sequence culminates in *baṭṭ*, derived from the root meaning to spread or to pour forth something that has overflowed beyond its container (Manzhur 1993). Together, the lexical progression of '*āsaf*, *kaẓīm*, and *baṭṭ* portrays Prophet Ya'qub's sadness as a dynamic psycho-spiritual process, beginning with profound grief, followed by emotional restraint, and culminating in the exclusive outpouring of sorrow to Allah (Zamimah and Putri 2021).

3. The Affective Dialogue of *Yā Bunayya* in the Story of Prophet Nuh

In the story of Prophet Nuh (QS.[11]:42–46), sadness is not expressed through an explicit emotion word but is embedded within the dialogical structure through the affectionate address *yā bunayya* and the statement *innahu laisa min ahlik*. Lexically, *bunayya* is the diminutive form of *ibn*, functioning to express affection, tenderness, and paternal compassion (Manzhur 1993). The juxtaposition of the affectionate signifier *yā bunayya* with the theological exclusion expressed in *innahu laisa min ahlik* denotatively portrays the emotional conflict between a father's biological



love and the uncompromising boundaries of *tawhīd*. This finding is consistent with Sopian (2017), who argues that the dialogue in the story of Prophet Nūḥ is carefully constructed through functional lexical choices to reinforce the central message of *tawhīd*.

4. Submission through the Action Verbs *If'al Mā Tu'mar* and *Aslamā* in the Story of Prophet Ibrahim

In the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm (QS.[37]:102–103), sadness is expressed implicitly through the action verbs *if'al mā tu'mar* and *aslamā*. Rather than verbalizing emotional distress, the Qur'an transforms it into acts of obedience and submission. As argued by Andi and Ridho (2026) this narrative emphasizes absolute obedience and complete surrender to Allah's will as the central theme of the sacrifice, allowing the emotional dimension of sadness to be conveyed implicitly through the protagonists' willingness to submit to the divine command.

Overall, the denotative mapping presented in Table 1 demonstrates the Qur'an's remarkable precision in selecting linguistic signifiers. The term *fu'ād* is chosen to represent a mother's emotional turmoil, the lexical sequence '*āsaf*, *kaẓīm*, and *batt*' maps the gradual progression of prolonged sadness, the dialogue *yā bunayya* articulates the emotional tension of paternal affection, and the verb *aslamā* transforms sadness into obedience. These variations in linguistic signifiers demonstrate that the Qur'an organizes language with remarkable precision, aligning each lexical choice with the theological message and emotional intensity intended within each narrative.

Connotative Meanings of Sadness in the Stories of the Prophets

At the connotative level, the lexical signifiers identified at the denotative level in Table 1 and Figure 2 no longer merely describe the psychological states of the characters. Instead, these denotative signs are transformed into new signifiers (Signifier 2) that generate connotative signifieds (Signified 2) in the form of religious values and the spirituality of *tawhīd*.

1. The Connotation of Anxiety Transformation in the Story of the Mother of Prophet Musa

The signifier *fu'ād* and the phrase *rabaṭnā 'alā qalbihā*, as mapped in Table 1, connote that a mother's inner turmoil and panic are not allowed to culminate in destructive actions but are instead redirected toward spiritual tranquility through divine intervention. This connotative meaning is supported by the interpretations of Ibn Katsir (2012) and Az-Zuhaili (2016) who explain that the strengthening of her heart represents Allah's special protection, enabling the mother of Mūsā to maintain her trust in His promise. Likewise, Al Zomor (2024) argues that the Qur'an portrays human fear and sadness not as evidence of weak faith but as a transitional state through which Allah grants protection and inner steadfastness.

2. The Connotation of the Transcendence of Faith in the Story of Prophet Nuh.

A different connotative structure emerges in the narrative of Prophet Nūḥ (QS.[11]:42-46). The affectionate address *yā bunayya*, juxtaposed with



Allah's declaration *innahu laisa min ahlik*, connotes the inner conflict of a father torn between paternal affection and the theological boundaries of *tawhīd*. While *yā bunayya* signifies enduring fatherly compassion despite the son's rejection of faith, the statement *innahu laisa min ahlik* shifts the meaning of sadness from the loss of a biological family member to the transcendental affirmation that the bond of faith surpasses blood relations. Traditional exegetical works reinforce this connotative interpretation by emphasizing that, within the Qur'anic worldview, the true concept of family is founded upon the bond of *tawhīd* rather than biological lineage (Az-Zuhaili, Wahbah 2016; Ibn Katsir 2012).

3. The Connotation of the Sublimation of Sadness into Action in the Story of Prophet Ibrahim.

In the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm (QS.[37]:102–103), the dialogical signifier *if'al mā tu'mar* and the verb *aslamā* connote a profound sublimation of emotion. Rather than expressing sadness explicitly through emotional vocabulary, the Qur'an channels the entire emotional struggle into acts of obedience and physical submission. From a semiotic stylistic perspective, the interactive dialogue between father and son connotes consultation, empathy, and respect for the son's feelings despite the severity of the situation. As noted by Lalahwa et al. (2025) the son's obedient response reflects the quality of *ḥalīm* (forbearance), indicating that his submission arises not from coercion but from complete spiritual awareness. The interpretations of Ibn Katsir (2012) and Az-Zuhaili (2016) further support this connotative meaning by portraying such total obedience as the highest manifestation of *tawhīd*.

4. The Connotation of Emotional Education in the Story of Prophet Ya'qub.

The most complex connotative system appears in the story of Prophet Ya'qūb (QS.[12]:84, 86) through the sequence of signifiers *'āsaf*, *kaẓīm*, and *baṭṭ*. As illustrated in Figure 2, these three signifiers connote successive stages of emotional education: beginning with profound yet natural sadness, followed by emotional resilience through self-restraint before others, and culminating in the exclusive outpouring of grief to Allah. Ibn Katsir (2012) and Az-Zuhaili (2016) emphasize that Prophet Ya'qūb's complaint was not an act of *protest* against divine decree but rather an expression of longing that remained within the bounds of beautiful patience. Consequently, the Qur'an constructs sadness not as an expression of despair but as a process of spiritual purification that strengthens the servant's relationship with Allah.

Overall, the connotative analysis demonstrates that the Qur'an represents sadness not as a passive and destructive emotional response but as a religiously oriented process that strengthens faith, prioritizes obedience, and directs human emotional experiences toward greater closeness to Allah (Mufid et al. 2023).

Mythological Meanings of Sadness in the Prophetic Narratives

At the third level of signification, the linguistic variations identified in the prophetic narratives, as presented in Table 1 and Figure 2, do not merely generate religious connotative meanings but also function to shape and naturalize the



Qur'anic worldview of sadness. According to Barthes (2006) myth operates by transforming connotative meanings into an ideological system that readers perceive as natural, self-evident, and unquestionable. This perspective is consistent with the hermeneutical approach of Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (Wekke, Amiruddin, and Firdaus 2018) who argues that the Qur'an is a discourse that constructs meaning through the organization of language, lexical choices, and the relationships among signs. Consequently, the Qur'anic ideology is not imposed through rigid doctrinal statements but is embedded within narrative signification, allowing readers to internalize its worldview naturally and voluntarily (Sulaiman 2023).

1. The Mechanism of the Naturalization of the Ideology of Sadness in the Prophetic Narratives

a. The Mother of Prophet Musa

The sequence of signifiers *fu'ād* followed by the phrase *rabatnā 'alā qalbihā* does not eliminate the reality of human emotional suffering. Instead, this narrative structure gradually naturalizes the belief that genuine inner tranquility originates not from human psychological control alone but from Allah's assistance. Accordingly, the appropriate response to a crisis is not overwhelming panic but trust in Allah's promise.

b. Prophet Nuh

The Qur'an first introduces the affectionate address *yā bunayya*, encouraging readers to expect that biological kinship will be presented as the highest familial value. This expectation is then dramatically overturned through the declaration *innahu laisa min ahlik*. This narrative shift naturalizes a new ideological perspective in which family identity, from the standpoint of *tawhīd*, is determined by faith rather than biological lineage. In line with Mufid et al. (2023) this Qur'anic discourse guides readers to regard the redefinition of family based on faith as a logical and rational consequence.

c. Prophet Ibrahim

The Qur'an deliberately omits explicit verbal expressions of sadness and replaces them with the dialogical expression *if'al mā tu'mar* and the verb *aslamā*. By shifting the narrative focus from emotional conflict to embodied obedience, the Qur'an naturalizes the understanding that complete submission to Allah's will constitutes the most appropriate and rational response, even in the face of the most difficult trials.

d. Prophet Ya'qub

The sequence of signifiers *'āsaf*, *kaẓīm*, and *batt* portrays a gradual emotional journey. Furthermore, the somatic description *wabyaḍḍat 'aynāhu mina al-ḥuẓn* naturalizes the idea that the physical consequences of emotional suffering are an inherent aspect of the human condition and do not diminish one's faith. From a medical perspective, Tang et al. (2024) published in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, reported a bidirectional relationship between depression or profound sadness and retinal damage through inflammatory responses and stress-hormone



dysregulation. This finding further highlights the Qur'an's semiotic precision in naturalizing the somatic dimensions of sadness while directing its ultimate expression toward exclusive supplication to Allah.

2. The Construction of a Counter-Myth against the Jāhiliyyah Tradition

The ideological status of the Qur'anic narratives of sadness as a new myth becomes particularly evident when examined against the socio-historical context of pre-Islamic Arabian society. During the Jāhiliyyah period, sadness resulting from loss or death was expressed through the destructive practice of *Nihayah* a ritual of hysterical mourning characterized by self-inflicted injury, striking one's cheeks, tearing one's clothes, and loudly lamenting while recounting the virtues of the deceased. This practice was upheld as a cultural myth representing honor and tribal loyalty (Nawayseh and Adayleh 2023).

Within this context, the Qur'anic narratives of the prophets' sadness function as a revolutionary counter-myth. The Qur'an deconstructs the destructive and hysterical myth of *Nihayah* and replaces it with a new myth grounded in constructive spiritual submission. It demonstrates that the sadness experienced by the prophets the foremost exemplary figures is never expressed through the hysterical mourning characteristic of the Jāhiliyyah tradition. Instead, the Qur'an transforms sadness into beautiful patience, obedience manifested through action, and private supplication directed exclusively to Allah. Through this system of signs, the Qur'an revolutionizes the pre-Islamic culture of destructive mourning into a model of spiritual and adaptive emotional education for believers.

Integrating Semiotics and Positive Religious Coping in Emotional Regulation

The Qur'an's mythological reconstruction of the meaning of sadness extends beyond the formation of theological discourse and functions as an adaptive psychological mechanism (Labibuddin, Ansori, and Anwar 2026). The deconstruction of the *Jahiliyyah* myth into the Qur'anic counter-myth directly facilitates the process of Positive Religious Coping, as conceptualized by Kenneth Pargament. According to Pargament (1997), religious beliefs and practices provide individuals with cognitive and emotional frameworks for managing psychological crises, reducing distress, and discovering transcendent meaning in the midst of suffering.

The integration of Roland Barthes' semiotic structure with Pargament (1997) framework of Positive Religious Coping is reflected in four forms of emotional regulation within the prophetic narratives:

1. Collaborative Religious Coping: The signifiers *fu'ād* and *rabaṭnā 'alā qalbiḥā* portray inner tranquility as a divine gift. This myth encourages readers to anchor sudden anxiety in Allah's assistance, thereby fostering a sense of security and emotional stability.
2. Benevolent Religious Reappraisal: The juxtaposition of the signifiers *yā bunayya* and *innahu laisa min ahlik* reconstructs the primacy of faith over biological relationships. This mechanism encourages individuals to cognitively reappraise emotionally distressing experiences, enabling them to



reconcile inner conflicts and reorder their life priorities in accordance with *tawhīd*.

3. Religious Surrender: The signifiers *if'al mā tu'mar* and *aslamā* represent complete submission to Allah's will. Through this mechanism, the sadness arising from severe trials is transformed into conscious, constructive obedience grounded in spiritual commitment.
4. Spiritual Connection: The progression of *'āsaf*, *kazīm*, and *batt* affirms that somatic expressions of sadness are a legitimate aspect of the human condition, provided that emotional distress is ultimately directed exclusively to Allah. This pattern helps prevent despair while fostering spiritual resilience and psychological well-being.

These findings are consistent with those of (Rassool and Keskin 2025; Çınaroğlu 2024) who argue that the values of *tawhīd*, *ṣabr*, and *tawakkul*, as embedded within the Qur'an's semiotic structure, function as effective psycho-spiritual resources for reducing psychological distress, preventing destructive depression, and promoting resilience and emotional well-being among believer

Academic Implications and Research Limitations

The findings of this study offer significant theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of Qur'anic semiotics and Islamic psychology. First, this study addresses a gap in the literature by demonstrating that Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, when integrated with Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutical approach, provides an effective framework for analyzing the ideological function of Qur'anic language without undermining the sacredness of the text. Second, this article advances the central argument that the Qur'an does not merely advocate patience as a normative religious virtue but also transforms the pre-Islamic cultural worldview through the construction of a counter-myth, replacing the tradition of hysterical mourning with an adaptive model of emotional regulation. From a practical perspective, the narratives of the prophets' sadness may serve as valuable resources for emotional education and psycho-spiritual counseling within an Islamic framework. This study is limited by its focus on four prophetic narratives selected according to the inclusion criteria of family relationships and experiences of suffering. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope of semiotic analysis to other Qur'anic expressions of emotion, such as *khashyah*, *khawf*, and *farḥ*, through interdisciplinary approaches that integrate Islamic studies with clinical psychology and neuroscience to examine the somatic dimensions of emotion more comprehensively.



CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the representation of sadness in the Qur'anic stories of the prophets is constructed through a multi-layered system of signification that generates denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings. At the denotative level, the Qur'an employs distinct lexical choices to represent different forms and intensities of sadness. At the connotative level, sadness is understood as a spiritual process that guides individuals toward patience, surrender to Allah, and the strengthening of their relationship with Him. At the mythological level, the Qur'an constructs a counter-myth that reconstructs the destructive tradition of mourning into a model of religiously oriented emotional regulation grounded in *tawhīd*.

The integration of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory with Pargament's Positive Religious Coping framework reveals that the narratives of the prophets' sadness represent four forms of religious emotional regulation: Collaborative Religious Coping in the story of the mother of Prophet Mūsā, Benevolent Religious Reappraisal in the story of Prophet Nūḥ, Religious Surrender in the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm, and Spiritual Connection in the story of Prophet Ya'qūb. These four mechanisms demonstrate that sadness in the Qur'an is not portrayed as a sign of weakness or despair but rather as a psycho-spiritual process that leads individuals toward inner tranquility, positive reinterpretation of life's trials, surrender to Allah's will, and a stronger spiritual relationship with Him. These findings suggest that the narratives of the prophets convey not only theological teachings but also offer an adaptive model of emotional regulation from the perspective of Islamic psychology.

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