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Psychological Well-Being in the Qur'an: An Analysis of the Story of Prophet Solomon

Ardelia Nihlah Ilahi¹; Muhamad Haikal Husaini²; Fejrian Yazdajird Iwanebel³

Abstract

Purpose- Contemporary discussions of well-being are frequently dominated by material and psychological perspectives, whereas the Qur'an presents a more holistic conception integrating spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. This study examines the compatibility between Martin Seligman's PERMA model of psychological well-being and the Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Solomon (Sulaymān), with the aim of developing a Qur'an-based understanding of human flourishing. **Design/methodology/approach-** This study employs a qualitative library-based research design using thematic Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr mawḍū'ī) and narrative analysis. Primary data consist of Qur'anic verses concerning Prophet Solomon, supported by classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries and relevant literature on positive psychology. The PERMA framework – Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment – serves as the analytical lens for interpreting the Qur'anic narrative. **Findings-** The findings demonstrate that all five PERMA dimensions are consistently reflected in the life of Prophet Solomon. Gratitude represents positive emotion; wisdom and just decision-making embody engagement; persuasive and compassionate interaction with Queen Bilqis illustrates positive relationships; devotion to Allah and commitment to public welfare constitute meaning; while the responsible use of power, wealth, and divine blessings reflects accomplishment. Collectively, these dimensions indicate that Qur'anic well-being extends beyond psychological flourishing to encompass spiritual consciousness and God-centered ethical responsibility. **Research implications/limitations-** This study is limited to the Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Solomon and a conceptual comparison with the PERMA model. Future research should examine other Qur'anic figures and empirically investigate the applicability of the proposed framework within Islamic psychology and well-being studies. **Originality/value-** This study contributes to Qur'anic studies and Islamic psychology by integrating a contemporary positive psychology framework with thematic Qur'anic exegesis. It proposes a holistic model of psychological well-being in which gratitude, divine orientation, ethical leadership, and social responsibility function as interconnected dimensions of human flourishing, thereby extending PERMA through a transcendental and theocentric perspective rooted in the Qur'an.

Keywords: Thematic Qur'anic Exegesis; Wellbeing; Propeth Solomon; Martin Seligman.

¹ UIN Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia,

Corresponding Email: 02040524011@student.uinsa.ac.id

² International Economics and trade, Zhejiang University of technology, Hangzhou, China,

Email: L202212190201@zjut.edu.cn

³ UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia, Email: iwanebel@uinsa.ac.id

Introduction

Fundamentally, every human being has diverse life goals; however, all of these orientations ultimately converge on a single universal aspiration, namely the attainment of a prosperous and fulfilling life. Since the era of Ancient Greece [1], philosophers have sought to explain the nature of human well-being and happiness. Aristotle argued that all human actions are ultimately directed toward the achievement of happiness (*eudaimonia*) [2], while Plato maintained that true happiness does not lie in wealth, power, or physical pleasure, but rather in a life guided by virtue [3]. These ideas continued to evolve into the modern era and gave rise to various scientific approaches to understanding human well-being.

In contemporary psychology, interest in well-being gained renewed momentum through the development of positive psychology pioneered by Martin Seligman. Unlike conventional psychology, which primarily focuses on mental disorders and the negative aspects of human life [4], positive psychology emphasizes the cultivation of human strengths, potentials, and quality of life. Through the PERMA theory, Seligman explains that well-being is constructed through five major dimensions: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. This framework broadened the understanding of well-being from a concept centered merely on individual happiness to a more comprehensive and multidimensional construct [5].

Nevertheless, the definition of well-being remains a subject of academic debate. Numerous studies indicate that well-being is understood differently across disciplines and social groups. Some scholars emphasize psychological aspects such as meaning in life, social relationships, and self-actualization, whereas the general public often associates well-being with health, economic stability, and life comfort [6]. These differences suggest that well-being is a multidimensional concept for which no universally accepted definition has yet been established.

On the other hand, modern society frequently interprets well-being in a reductive manner, equating it with material prosperity [7]. Such a paradigm creates various problems because wealth is not always positively associated with happiness or mental health. Psychological research has shown that materialistic orientations are often negatively correlated with life satisfaction and psychological well-being [8]. This phenomenon indicates that well-being cannot be reduced solely to material possessions but must be understood more holistically, encompassing psychological, social, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Islam offers a broader understanding of well-being. Although the Qur'an does not explicitly employ the term "well-being" in its modern sense, it contains several related concepts, such as *falāḥ*, *fawz*, *sa'ādah*, *ḥasanah*, and *ḥayāh ṭayyibah* [9]. Among these terms, *ḥayāh ṭayyibah* is often understood as representing a good and prosperous life. In Islam, well-being is not merely associated with material abundance but also involves the quality of faith, inner peace, healthy social relationships, and a life orientation aligned with the purpose of human creation [10].

Beyond presenting normative concepts, the Qur'an also portrays several figures who exemplify a flourishing life. One of the most prominent is Prophet Solomon (*Sulaymān*). He was both a prophet and a king endowed with immense power, wealth, wisdom, and influence [11]. Yet these privileges did not make him arrogant nor lead him into materialistic pursuits. On the contrary, Prophet Solomon consistently demonstrated gratitude, wisdom, social concern, and unwavering devotion to Allah [12]. Therefore, his life presents a compelling example of how material abundance and political authority can coexist with spiritual and psychological well-being.

Viewed through the lens of the PERMA framework, the life of Prophet Solomon exhibits various indicators of comprehensive well-being. He manifested positive emotions through persistent gratitude, deep engagement in his prophetic and governmental responsibilities, harmonious social relationships, a meaningful life orientation, and extraordinary accomplishments in building civilization. Consequently, the story of Prophet Solomon has the potential to serve as a model of well-being that is not only relevant within a religious context but can also be brought into dialogue with modern theories of well-being.

Although numerous studies have examined Prophet Solomon, most have focused on themes such as leadership [13], communication [14], love [15], personality, and religious maturity [16]. To date, research specifically investigating Prophet Solomon as a model of Qur'anic psychological well-being remains limited. Likewise, studies on well-being in Islam generally concentrate on terminological analyses of concepts such as *falāḥ*, *sa'ādah*, and *ḥayāh ṭayyibah* [9], while person-based approaches remain relatively rare. Furthermore, research systematically integrating positive psychology theories of well-being with Qur'anic narratives is still scarce.

Based on these observations, three research gaps can be identified. First, there is no integrative model explaining the relationship between modern theories of well-being and Qur'anic concepts of well-being. Second, studies specifically constructing the well-being of Prophet Solomon as a representation

of well-being in the Qur'an are limited. Third, there is a lack of research employing Qur'anic figures as a basis for developing practical and contextualized models of well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the construction of Prophet Solomon's well-being in the Qur'an through a thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) approach and to integrate it with Martin Seligman's PERMA theory. This study is expected to generate a more comprehensive Qur'anic model of well-being—one that not only emphasizes psychological dimensions, as modern theories do, but also incorporates spiritual, prophetic, and transcendental dimensions as essential elements of human life.

The study of well-being within the Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Solomon contributes significantly to the development of Islamic psychology, particularly in efforts to construct an Islamic well-being model rooted in revealed knowledge [17]. To date, discussions of psychological well-being have largely been dominated by Western positive psychology paradigms, especially Seligman's PERMA model. This study demonstrates that the five components of PERMA—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—have strong conceptual parallels within the Qur'anic narrative. Through the story of Prophet Solomon, positive emotion is expressed through gratitude; engagement is reflected in the pursuit and application of knowledge and wisdom; relationships are manifested in his persuasive and wise communication with Queen Bilqis; meaning is realized through devotion to Allah and commitment to social welfare; and accomplishment is embodied in achievements grounded in gratitude. These findings indicate that the Islamic conception of well-being is not merely psychological but also spiritual and theocentric.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the Islamization and integration of psychological knowledge by offering a critical reading of modern well-being theories. While positive psychology generally places the individual at the center of well-being attainment, the narrative of Prophet Solomon demonstrates that the highest form of well-being emerges from a transcendental relationship with Allah. Gratitude, wisdom, social responsibility, and devotion to God serve as foundational principles guiding all dimensions of human well-being. Consequently, this research supports the development of an Islamic psychology paradigm that extends beyond subjective well-being and life satisfaction to include spiritual well-being and God-centered flourishing. This perspective is consistent with recent developments in Islamic psychology that emphasize *fiṭrah*, *tazkiyat al-nafs* (self-purification), and one's relationship with Allah as central to mental health and human flourishing [18].

In addition, this study offers a methodological contribution by utilizing Qur'anic narratives as a source for psychological theory development. The story of Prophet Solomon demonstrates that the Qur'an functions not only as a source of normative values but also as a foundation for constructing theories concerning human behavior, motivation, social relationships, and psychological well-being. Accordingly, this research opens new possibilities for the development of a Qur'anic well-being model capable of enriching contemporary psychology while strengthening the scholarly identity of Islamic psychology. By positioning gratitude as the central pillar of all dimensions of well-being, this model offers an alternative perspective: human happiness is not determined solely by achievement, relationships, or meaning in life, but by the ability to orient all aspects of life toward servitude to and closeness with Allah the Exalted [19].

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research [20] approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to explore and interpret in depth the meanings, values, and constructions of psychological well-being embedded in the story of Prophet Solomon. The research data were obtained entirely from written sources, including the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentaries (*tafsīr*), books, scholarly articles, academic journals, and other documents relevant to the research topic. From the perspective of Qur'anic studies, this research adopts the thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) method [21], which involves collecting all Qur'anic verses related to a particular theme and analyzing them comprehensively in order to gain a holistic understanding of that theme. The theme examined in this study is the construction of Prophet Solomon's psychological well-being in the Qur'an.

The research procedures follow the steps of thematic exegesis: (1) determining the research theme; (2) collecting Qur'anic verses related to the well-being of Prophet Solomon; (3) examining the context and content of the verses through classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries; (4) comparing various interpretations using a comparative exegesis (*tafsīr muqāran*) approach; (5) synthesizing the interpretations comprehensively (*ijmālī*); and (6) formulating a construction of Prophet Solomon's psychological well-being based on the findings of the analysis.

The primary verses analyzed in this study include Qur'an 21:79, 38:35, 34:13, and 27:44. Qur'an 34:13 was selected to illustrate gratitude (*shukr*) as an expression of inner tranquility in Prophet Solomon. Qur'an 21:79 demonstrates engagement through Solomon's ability to adjudicate disputes fairly, reflecting

psychological maturity in the form of self-mastery and the capacity to manage social conflicts. Furthermore, the positive relationship between Prophet Solomon and Queen Bilqis in Qur'an 27:44, manifested through wise and persuasive communication, reflects emotional maturity and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Qur'an 38:35 represents the meaning and purpose of Solomon's life, namely his aspiration to benefit as many of God's creatures as possible. Finally, Qur'an 34:13 also signifies Solomon's accomplishments, which are not merely material achievements but rather demonstrate his capacity to manage great responsibilities without losing spiritual balance, as reflected in his gratitude.

This study employs the perspective of positive psychology, particularly the Well-Being PERMA Theory developed by Martin Seligman. The PERMA framework serves as an analytical tool to identify, categorize, and interpret the values of psychological well-being embedded in the Qur'anic verses concerning Prophet Solomon. Accordingly, the material, intellectual, social, and spiritual aspects found within Solomon's narrative are not viewed as ultimate ends in themselves, but rather as factors contributing to the realization of optimal psychological well-being.

Through this approach, the study seeks to examine the relevance of Qur'anic conceptions of well-being in relation to contemporary well-being theory while explaining how the story of Prophet Solomon may be understood as a representation of flourishing that is characterized not only by power and prosperity but also by meaningful relationships, purpose in life, active engagement in responsibilities, positive emotions, and valuable accomplishments.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discusses them in light of the conceptual framework and relevant Qur'anic perspectives. The analysis begins by examining the Qur'anic understanding of well-being as the foundational concept underpinning the study. Rather than limiting well-being to material prosperity or subjective happiness, the Qur'an portrays it as a multidimensional condition encompassing spiritual fulfillment, moral integrity, psychological tranquility, and social harmony. Establishing this conceptual foundation provides the basis for interpreting the subsequent findings within a comprehensive Islamic worldview.

The Qur'an and the Concept of Well-Being

Etymologically, the term *well-being* refers to a favorable condition, particularly in terms of fortune, happiness, and prosperity. In the contemporary context, well-being encompasses both material aspects, such as food, clothing, and housing, and non-material aspects, including security, freedom, and education [22]. Interestingly, the Qur'an does not explicitly employ the term *well-being* or its Arabic equivalent, *al-rafāhiyyah*, as a specific concept denoting human welfare. Nevertheless, the Qur'an contains several related terms that convey dimensions of well-being, including *al-rakhā'* (ease and comfort in life), *al-raghd* (abundance of sustenance), *al-na'im* (bliss and enjoyment), *al-zīnah* (adornment and luxury), *al-taraf* (luxurious living), and *al-amn* (security) [23].

The term *al-amn* in Arabic denotes a state of safety and freedom from fear (*al-khawf*). It is often used in a collective context, such as the security granted by God to the inhabitants of Mecca (Qur'an 29:67) and the people of Saba' (Qur'an 34:18). Al-Rāzī distinguished between *al-amn* and *muṭma'innah*. When security refers to physical safety, the term *āminah* is employed. However, when it refers to inner peace and psychological tranquility, the term *muṭma'innah* is more appropriate [24]. The Qur'an also uses the term *al-rakhā'* to describe a life of ease, comfort, and prosperity. It is the opposite of *al-shiddah*, which signifies hardship and suffering. In Qur'an 38:36, the word *rukḥā'ān* describes a gentle wind that obeyed God's command while retaining its strength and power [25]. This illustrates a condition characterized by both comfort and capability.

Another important term is *al-raghd*, which signifies a spacious, abundant, and satisfying life [26]. Qur'an 16:112 indicates that the faithfulness of a community may bring blessings in sustenance and sufficiency in life. Conversely, disbelief leads to deprivation, hardship, and suffering. The term *al-na'im* refers more specifically to individual well-being and mental contentment. Most Qur'anic verses containing this term describe the abundant pleasures of the Hereafter, with the exception of Qur'an 102:8. In this verse, God reminds human beings that they will be held accountable for the blessings they enjoyed in worldly life. These blessings include security, health, food, drink, shelter, and restful sleep [27].

Another relevant concept is *al-zīnah*, which literally means adornment or beauty. God created various worldly pleasures as a test of human faith, examining whether individuals can utilize these blessings wisely and responsibly or become distracted by them [28]. Qur'an 3:14 mentions that *al-zīnah* includes worldly attractions such as children, wealth, vehicles, livestock, and agricultural possessions. However, these pleasures are temporary, whereas

eternal happiness belongs only to those who attain closeness to Allah. At the same time, Allah permits believers to benefit from the adornments He has provided for them (Qur'an 7:32). Indeed, making use of such blessings is encouraged when it serves a greater good or facilitates worship and obedience to Him. The term *al-taraf* refers to abundant luxury and an extravagant lifestyle that may lead to arrogance and heedlessness [29]. In the Qur'an, this term generally carries a negative connotation. For example, Qur'an 23:33 describes the affluent lives of disbelievers whose luxury led them to arrogance, denial of resurrection, and disbelief [30].

According to Ibn Khaldūn, individuals who live modestly tend to be more devoted in worship than those who live in excessive luxury. This is because abundant wealth may harden the heart and distract people from religious obligations. Consequently, the Qur'an frequently warns against the negative effects of luxury that can prevent human beings from attaining genuine well-being [31]. The concept of *al-falāḥ*, meaning success or ultimate attainment, signifies the achievement of what is desired and protection from what is feared, both in this world and in the Hereafter. It is perhaps the most comprehensive Arabic term for describing true happiness and prosperity in both dimensions of existence [32].

Another significant concept is *al-sa'ādah* (happiness), which implies the fulfillment of desires and the experience of joy [33]. The Qur'an mentions this term twice, both times referring to the everlasting happiness enjoyed by the inhabitants of Paradise, as exemplified in Qur'an 11:108. Finally, the Qur'an introduces the concept of *ḥayāḥ ṭayyibah* (the good life). The word *ṭayyib* (good) denotes the highest quality in any given category. When applied to plants, it refers to the most fertile and flourishing vegetation; when applied to beverages, it signifies the purest and most wholesome drink.

Ḥayāḥ ṭayyibah is not limited to material wealth. Rather, it encompasses multiple dimensions, including a strong relationship with Allah, harmonious family relations, inner peace, and physical health. Material prosperity constitutes only one small component of the broader concept of *ḥayāḥ ṭayyibah*. Furthermore, experiencing a good life in this world does not diminish one's reward in the Hereafter; instead, it is itself a divine blessing granted to the faithful [34]. Thus, *ḥayāḥ ṭayyibah* represents a holistic understanding of well-being that integrates material, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions within a unified framework.

The Concept of Well-Being in Positive Psychology

Well-being should be understood not only as the absence of mental disorders but also as the presence of positive psychological qualities that contribute to a meaningful life. Psychological well-being consists of two major dimensions: subjective well-being (SWB) and eudaimonic well-being (EWB). The primary distinction between them lies in their emphasis: SWB focuses on *feeling good*, whereas EWB focuses on *functioning well* [35]. Contemporary perspectives integrate both approaches. Positive psychology therefore seeks not only to reduce negative conditions but also to cultivate human strengths and potential, recognizing that these are distinct yet complementary objectives. Furthermore, well-being cannot be assessed solely through personal perceptions; it also requires external recognition and validation.

According to Seligman, the achievement of well-being requires the integration of both hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. Within this framework, five core components constitute well-being. However, before any component can be classified as part of well-being, it must satisfy three criteria. First, it must make a genuine contribution to an individual's well-being. Second, it must be valued and pursued by many people. Third, it must be independently measurable and definable. Based on these criteria, well-being is supported by five essential elements: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment.

The first element is positive emotion, often associated with the pleasant life. Positive emotions are not only fundamental components of well-being but also key determinants of happiness and life satisfaction. Numerous studies have shown that individuals who consistently express positive emotions tend to enjoy a higher quality of life. For example, research on Catholic nuns found that those who frequently expressed positive emotions lived approximately ten years longer than those who were more prone to negative moods [36]. These findings suggest that positive emotions contribute not only to psychological well-being but also to physical health and reduced risk of premature mortality.

The second element is engagement, which refers to a state in which individuals become so immersed in an activity that they lose self-consciousness and experience time as passing rapidly. While positive emotion may be assessed through questions such as, "How cheerful was your day?", engagement is reflected in questions such as, "Did time seem to pass very quickly while you were engaged in an activity?" or "Did you lose awareness of yourself while performing a task?" Both positive emotion and engagement are inherently subjective because they can only be experienced through personal reflection.

Engagement is closely associated with the concept of flow developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow is described as an optimal psychological state in which individuals are fully absorbed in activities that are challenging yet matched to their skills and capacities. According to flow theory, individuals may experience different psychological states depending on the balance between challenge and skill, including apathy, worry, anxiety, boredom, excitement, relaxation, control, and flow itself. Flow occurs when both personal skills and environmental challenges are high and well balanced. This state represents one of the highest forms of engagement and contributes significantly to overall well-being. Flow represents the highest level of engagement, characterized by complete immersion in an activity and can only be achieved when an individual utilizes their best talents in confronting optimal levels of challenge [37].

The third element is meaning, which refers to the pursuit of activities that serve purposes beyond self-interest. Like positive emotion and engagement, meaning is also subjective. What is considered meaningful by one individual at a certain time may not necessarily be meaningful to others, and it may even change for the same individual over time. For example, a person may perceive replacing the road in front of their house with paving stones as meaningful because it can help prevent flooding. However, a neighbor may view the same action as less appropriate due to the difficulty of maintaining paving surfaces. On the other hand, meaning can also be considered objective when its benefits are widely recognized. For instance, although Abraham Lincoln personally often felt that his life lacked meaning, he is widely regarded as a great president who played a crucial role in abolishing slavery [38]. This illustrates that meaning can be both subjective and objective, depending on the perspective adopted.

The fourth element is accomplishment, which involves the pursuit of goals, the attainment of improved outcomes, and the experience of recognition from others as well as personal satisfaction [39]. Accomplishment may also be subjective or objective. For example, a mother may feel a sense of achievement when her child begins to walk, while the father may only feel that accomplishment has been achieved when the child is admitted to a prestigious school. Seligman emphasizes that accomplishment is not always directly associated with positive emotion or engagement. A simple example can be seen in card games: some individuals play primarily to enjoy the process and experience happiness, while others focus solely on winning as the ultimate goal. Historically, accomplishment has often contributed to social well-being. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of Standard Oil, serves as a prominent example. He donated hundreds of millions of dollars to the establishment of national parks

and various social initiatives [40]. Although his business success reflected personal achievement, it was his contributions to society that made his accomplishments more meaningful and enduring.

The final element is positive relationships. Christopher Peterson famously summarized positive psychology in just two words: “other people,” emphasizing that the presence of others is fundamental to human happiness [41]. Healthy and supportive social relationships are among the key determinants of well-being. Positive relationships often serve as an entry point to other elements of well-being. Research indicates that individuals with positive emotions tend to be more successful, live longer, enjoy better health, and possess broader social networks [42]. As social beings, humans can hardly achieve well-being in isolation. Even in personal accomplishments, individuals often relate their success to the perceptions or recognition of others. Moreover, positive relationships have been shown to reduce stress and improve mental health. Stephen Post, a medical ethics scholar at Stony Brook University, argues that when individuals shift their focus away from personal problems by helping others, their emotional burden is significantly reduced [43]. Thus, among the five elements, kindness toward others is one of the most effective ways to enhance an individual’s well-being.

Accordingly, Seligman identifies five core components of well-being. First, positive emotion, which enhances quality of life, physical health, and longevity. Second, engagement, which refers to a state of complete absorption in an activity, often accompanied by a loss of self-awareness and perception of time. Third, meaning, which reflects the perception that one’s actions contribute to something beyond self-interest. Fourth, accomplishment, which involves the pursuit and attainment of goals and optimal outcomes that may be either subjective or objective. Fifth, positive relationships, which constitute a central element of well-being, as humans are inherently social beings. Supportive relationships serve as a gateway to other dimensions of well-being.

Well-Being in the Qur’anic Narrative of Prophet Solomon

Having established the Qur’anic concept of well-being, the discussion now turns to its practical manifestation through the narrative of Prophet Solomon (Sulaymān). His story offers one of the most comprehensive portrayals of human flourishing in the Qur’an, integrating spiritual devotion, ethical leadership, material abundance, wisdom, and social responsibility. Rather than depicting well-being solely as worldly prosperity, the Qur’anic narrative demonstrates how divine blessings are sustained through gratitude, justice, and obedience to God. To analyze these dimensions systematically, the findings are

organized according to the core components of well-being, beginning with positive emotion.

1. Positive Emotion

The verse of Allah in Qur'an 34:13 indicates that gratitude (*shukr*) is one of the key characteristics inherent in the family of Prophet David (*Dāwūd*) and Prophet Solomon (*Sulaymān*): *They made for him whatever he wished of sanctuaries, statues, basins like reservoirs, and fixed cooking cauldrons. "Work, O family of David, in gratitude," and few of My servants are truly grateful.* In the exegesis of Qur'an 34:13, classical commentators have interpreted the concept of gratitude (*shukr*) from various perspectives. Al-Ṭabarī [30] understood the word *shukran* as a *maʿūl bih*, meaning "act in gratitude." Al-Zamakhsharī in *al-Kashshāf* [44] explained that it may also be interpreted as *hāl* (act while being in a state of gratitude) or *maʿūl lah* (act because of gratitude). Al-Bayḍāwī [45] emphasized that perfect gratitude is difficult to achieve, as the very ability to be grateful is itself a new blessing that requires further gratitude. Meanwhile, Al-Qurṭubī [25] explained that Prophet David expressed gratitude through prolonged night worship, whereas Prophet Solomon manifested gratitude through daytime worship. Ibn Kathīr further added that all forms of worship—such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving—are manifestations of gratitude to God, while the highest form of gratitude is praising Him by saying *al-ḥamdulillāh*. In Islam, internal gratitude refers to the realization that human beings can never fully express gratitude for all of God's blessings. In *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* [46], it is narrated that Prophet David once asked God whether there was any creature more grateful than him. God then showed him a frog that continuously glorified and thanked Him. Through this event, Prophet David realized that even the capacity to be grateful is itself a divine blessing that requires further gratitude. This awareness reflects the highest level of spiritual gratitude, namely the recognition of human limitation before the infinite generosity of God.

The value of gratitude inherited from Prophet David is also reflected in the life of Prophet Solomon. In addition to devoted worship, gratitude was also manifested in social behavior. It is reported that Prophet Solomon and his family consumed coarse wheat, while his people consumed fine wheat. This attitude demonstrates that gratitude is not only expressed in the vertical relationship with God but also in social responsibility and empathy toward others. Thus, gratitude in the life of Prophet Solomon encompasses both spiritual and social dimensions. From the perspective of positive psychology, gratitude can be understood as a high-level positive emotion that promotes moral and spiritual transformation in individuals. Gratitude functions as a facilitating approach behavior [47], namely the tendency to move toward

sources of value and meaning. In the Islamic spiritual context, this orientation is directed toward God, thereby fostering a closer relationship with Him.

In the case of Prophet Solomon, gratitude generates a state of inner peace or contentment. Fredrickson describes contentment [48] as a positive emotion that encourages individuals to reflect on life experiences and derive deeper meaning from them. This condition is evident in Prophet Solomon's awareness that the ability to be grateful is itself a divine gift that must also be acknowledged with gratitude. Therefore, gratitude is not merely a response to blessings received but develops into a spiritual awareness that brings inner tranquility, humility, and deeper closeness to Allah.

2. Engagement

Qur'an 21:79 describes one of the forms of divine distinction granted by Allah to Prophet Solomon (*Sulaymān*): "*And We gave understanding of the case to Solomon, and to each [of them] We gave judgment and knowledge...*" (Qur'an 21:79). This verse serves as an important foundation for explaining the relationship between knowledge (*'ilm*), the capacity to render judgment (*ḥukm*), and wisdom in decision-making. Classical exegetes have provided various interpretations regarding the incident underlying this verse, namely the dispute between a landowner and a livestock owner that resulted in damage to crops.

In *Baḥr al-'Ulūm* [49], it is explained that Prophet David (*Dāwūd*) ruled that the livestock owner should compensate the landowner because damage occurring at night was the responsibility of the animal owner. This view is consistent with Prophetic tradition as well as the opinions of Imām al-Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. However, Prophet Solomon proposed a more beneficial resolution (*aṣḥaḥ*), namely that the landowner temporarily benefit from the livestock's produce, while the livestock owner restores the damaged field to its original condition; afterward, both parties would regain their respective rights. This solution reflects an orientation toward restoring harm and achieving mutual benefit.

The difference between the judgments of Prophet David and Prophet Solomon has been widely discussed among Qur'anic exegetes. In *Tafsīr al-Nukāt wa al-'Uyūn* [50], scholars debate whether Solomon's judgment was more correct than David's or whether both were valid forms of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*). This issue developed into a theological discussion concerning the possibility of prophetic *ijtihād*, the possibility of error in *ijtihād*, and whether Solomon's judgment was based on revelation or his own legal reasoning. *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* tends to affirm that both rulings were products of *ijtihād* rather than revelation, while *al-Kashshāf* presents two possibilities: if Solomon's judgment derived from revelation, it would abrogate David's ruling;

but if it was based on *ijtihād*, it demonstrates that a legal reasoning can be corrected by a stronger reasoning.

The explanation of *ḥukm* and *‘ilm* also highlights the intellectual breadth of Prophet Solomon. In *Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* [49], *ḥukm* is interpreted as judicial authority (*qaḍā’*), while *‘ilm* refers to the ability to issue legal opinions (*iftā’*). Ibn ‘Āshūr interprets *ḥukm* as the capacity for *ijtihād* and *‘ilm* as knowledge derived from revelation. Thus, Prophet Solomon’s superiority lies not only in the breadth of his knowledge but also in his ability to apply it appropriately in complex situations. A noteworthy perspective is presented in *Tafsīr Abū al-Su‘ūd*, which explains that Prophet David’s judgment is closer to analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), whereas Prophet Solomon’s judgment reflects juristic preference (*istiḥsān*), namely consideration of broader public interest. This distinction demonstrates that Solomon’s legal intelligence was not only logical and analytical but also attentive to social consequences and the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*).

This excellence is also evident in the story of two women disputing a baby, as mentioned in *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl* [51]. Through a creative and psychological strategy, Prophet Solomon was able to identify the true mother by observing the emotional responses of both women. Similarly, in a report found in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* [52], when a woman was accused of adultery, Solomon conducted empirical verification of the evidence presented, thereby avoiding wrongful judgment. These narratives demonstrate that Solomon’s knowledge was not limited to theoretical mastery of law but extended into practical wisdom in establishing justice. From the perspective of Flow Theory developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Prophet Solomon’s abilities can be understood as a form of optimal functioning [53] in fulfilling his roles as a judge and leader. Flow occurs when an individual faces challenges that are balanced with their skills, resulting in complete concentration, clarity of goals, a sense of control, and total engagement in the task at hand [54].

These characteristics are clearly evident in Prophet Solomon. In the dispute between the landowner and the livestock owner, he faced a complex legal problem and produced a more constructive solution than simple compensation. This demonstrates a balance between the level of challenge and his intellectual capacity, a condition described in flow theory as optimal challenge–skill balance. Solomon did not merely resolve the dispute but formulated a form of justice that maximized benefits for all parties involved. Moreover, flow theory emphasizes the merging of action and awareness [55]. This is evident in the case of the two women disputing the infant. Solomon did not rely solely on formal procedures but also understood the emotional

dynamics underlying the parties' behavior. His decisions emerged from deep concentration on the situation, resulting in precise and effective solutions.

This analysis becomes even stronger when linked to the concept of intuitive judgment in modern psychology. Cognitive research shows that intuition is a rapid evaluative process supported by experience, emotional sensitivity [56], and unconscious pattern recognition [57]. In both the case of the disputed child and the livestock dispute, Prophet Solomon demonstrated exceptional intuitive ability in reading situations and determining the most beneficial course of action. This intuition did not contradict rationality but rather complemented his legal reasoning. Another component of flow theory is clear goals and immediate feedback [58]. Prophet Solomon's objectives were always oriented toward establishing justice and truth. In the case of the woman accused of adultery, he did not hastily issue a verdict but first verified the available evidence. His final decision was based on clear empirical feedback. This reflects an integration of intellectual precision, moral caution, and commitment to truth. Thus, Qur'an 21:79 not only illustrates the divine gift of knowledge and wisdom granted to Prophet Solomon but also demonstrates how such knowledge is manifested in his capacity for *ijtihād*, social analysis, consideration of public interest, and wise decision-making. Viewed through flow theory, Solomon's wisdom represents an optimal form of engagement in which intellectual intelligence, intuition, experience, and spiritual values are harmoniously integrated. Therefore, his excellence lies not merely in the breadth of knowledge but in his ability to actualize it into just, beneficial, and divinely aligned decisions.

3. Relationship

The story of Prophet Solomon (*Sulaymān*) and Queen Bilqis in Qur'an 27:44 presents an important example of how wisdom, effective communication, and a persuasive approach can serve as means of building social and spiritual consolidation. Allah says: *"It was said to her (Bilqis), 'Enter the palace.' But when she saw it, she thought it was a body of water and uncovered her legs. Solomon said, 'Indeed, it is a palace paved with glass.' She said, 'My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.'"* (Qur'an 27:44). Classical exegetes explain that the glass palace contains various lessons. In *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* [59], it is mentioned that Prophet Solomon constructed the glass floor to test Bilqis's intelligence, just as she had previously tested him. In addition, the grandeur of the palace was intended to show her the magnificence of the kingdom granted by Allah to Solomon, thereby opening her heart to the truth. Some reports also mention that Solomon sought to verify the claims of the jinn regarding Bilqis's physical condition. Her statement, *"Indeed I have*

wronged myself,” is understood as her recognition of her previous error in following the tradition of sun worship.

In *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* [24] it is explained that the jinn attempted to defame Bilqis out of fear that if Solomon married her, she would bear offspring endowed with great intelligence and power. Meanwhile, *al-Kashshāf* [44] states that Bilqis’s conversion to Islam may have resulted either from her admiration of Solomon’s grandeur or from her fear of his authority. In *Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī*, the construction of the glass floor is interpreted as serving multiple purposes: demonstrating the power of God, testing Bilqis’s intelligence, and – according to some reports – assessing a potential bride for Solomon. However, Ibn ‘Āshūr in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* emphasizes that the core of the narrative lies in Bilqis’s spiritual awakening, as she ultimately acknowledges her wrongdoing and submits to Allah together with Prophet Solomon.

From these interpretations, it becomes evident that Prophet Solomon’s success was not solely based on political and military power, but on his ability to establish wise and persuasive relationships. Previously, when Bilqis’s throne had been brought before him, Solomon did not ask directly, “Is this your throne?” but instead used a more diplomatic expression: “Is your throne like this?” (Qur’an 27:42). This wording reflects communicative precision that allowed Bilqis to reflect and evaluate the situation herself without feeling humiliated or judged. Bilqis responded intelligently, “It is as though it is my throne,” demonstrating both caution and cognitive awareness in interpreting the situation. This narrative is also relevant to modern psychological studies of social relationships. Positive psychology suggests that healthy social relationships significantly influence subjective well-being, mental health, physical health, and even life expectancy [60]. Individuals who maintain positive relationships within family, friendship, and community tend to experience greater happiness and better health compared to those who live in isolation [61]. Thus, social relationships are not only emotional needs but also essential sources of psychological resilience.

This principle is reflected in the interaction between Prophet Solomon and Queen Bilqis. Solomon’s communication was empathetic, non-intimidating, and respectful of his interlocutor’s intelligence. He created a safe and positive environment in which Bilqis could think freely, evaluate her beliefs, and ultimately accept the truth with full awareness. This approach is consistent with psychological findings that positive social interactions are more effective in promoting emotional well-being and behavioral change than coercion or pressure [62]. The culmination of this process is seen in Bilqis’s declaration: “*My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of all worlds.*” This statement reflects an inner transformation resulting from

communication, reflection, and a harmoniously constructed relationship. Bilqis was not forced into belief; rather, she arrived at it through an internally developed awareness.

Thus, the story of Prophet Solomon and Queen Bilqis illustrates the importance of consolidation in human life. Solomon's success was not achieved through domination of power, but through communicative intelligence, respect for others, and the ability to build positive relationships. From a psychological perspective, such healthy relationships are a key source of human well-being. From an Islamic perspective, relationships grounded in wisdom, compassion, and cooperation in goodness serve as effective means of guiding individuals toward truth. Therefore, this narrative demonstrates that profound transformation often arises not from coercion, but from emotional, intellectual, and spiritual consolidation built upon wisdom.

4. Meaning

Q.S. Şād [38]:35 states: "*My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom such as will not belong to anyone after me. Indeed, You are the Bestower.*" This verse cannot be separated from the preceding context. In Q.S. Şād [38]:34, Allah says: "*And We certainly tested Solomon and placed upon his throne a body; then he turned back in repentance.*" Therefore, Prophet Solomon's supplication in verse 35 is a continuation of the trial and repentance he experienced. Classical exegetes present various explanations regarding the reason for Prophet Solomon's repentance. Al-Ṭabarī [59] mentions several reports concerning the loss of Solomon's ring, which became the cause of his return to Allah. Al-Samarqandī explains that Solomon's request for a great kingdom serves as evidence of prophethood, while some scholars interpret it as a request for extraordinary abilities, such as controlling the wind. From this perspective, Solomon's prayer reflects a balance between worldly and otherworldly orientation. Al-Bayḍāwī [45] interprets Solomon's repentance as being related to his neglect of saying *in shā' Allāh*. According to him, the phrase "a kingdom such as will not belong to anyone after me" means a kingdom that cannot be taken away by anyone. He also emphasizes that repentance precedes the supplication as evidence that matters of the afterlife take precedence over worldly concerns.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī [24], however, criticizes reports concerning the loss of the ring and demonic impersonation as unacceptable. He argues that Satan cannot impersonate prophets, destroy a prophet's household, or approach a prophet's wife. He instead holds that Solomon's repentance was due to his failure to say *in shā' Allāh* and his incomplete reliance on God regarding the safety of his son. Al-Rāzī further explains that prophetic seeking of forgiveness reflects humility, the conduct of the righteous, and awareness that no human is

entirely free from imperfection. The request for a kingdom is thus understood as a means of demonstrating self-restraint from worldly temptation and exposing human weakness before power.

Ibn 'Āshūr [63] emphasizes that the wisdom of this narrative is to prevent people from underestimating minor mistakes, as great blessings often follow severe trials accompanied by sincere repentance. In *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*, the phrase “a kingdom that will not befit anyone after me” is interpreted metaphorically as an exceptionally عظيم (great) kingdom. Similarly, al-Kashshāf explains that Solomon requested an extraordinary kingdom as a miracle suited to a society that prized worldly magnificence. However, some scholars argue that this was not a request for a miracle, as the supplication occurred after he had long been a ruler; rather, it indicates that God had already willed to grant him immense blessings. These interpretations collectively show that Prophet Solomon's prayer was not merely a worldly request. It was preceded by repentance and seeking forgiveness, indicating that his spiritual relationship with Allah remained the highest priority. Thus, the kingdom he requested should be understood as a means of fulfilling his prophetic mission and promoting human welfare.

The story of Prophet Solomon is closely related to the theory of meaning in life [64]. According to this theory, individuals function optimally when they have a clear life purpose and perceive life as meaningful. First, the dimension of *comprehension* [65] (as described by Steger) refers to understanding oneself, the surrounding world, and one's place within it. Solomon understood that power is not an end in itself but a means to establish justice and benefit others. Thus, Q.S. Ṣād [38]:35 reflects awareness that every blessing must serve a social and spiritual function. Second, the dimension of *purpose in life* [66] is evident in Solomon's orientation toward truth and protection of the weak. His request for a great kingdom was not driven by personal ambition but by the need to fulfill divine responsibility more effectively. Third, the affective dimension of meaning in life [67] is reflected in the inner satisfaction derived from meaningful action. Solomon's happiness did not lie in possessing the kingdom itself, but in using it to benefit God's creation. Fourth, from a social psychological perspective, Solomon's actions reflect the three dimensions of altruism: concern for others (his attention to the poor and widows), selfless helping (his generosity without expectation), and prioritizing others (his modest lifestyle despite great wealth). Fifth, Solomon's life also reflects Viktor Frankl's concept of *self-transcendence*, namely the ability to go beyond self-interest in pursuit of higher values. His obedience to God formed the foundation of all his actions and prayers. The kingdom he received was not

viewed as personal achievement but as a trust (*amanah*) to serve God's will and benefit His creation.

Thus, the narrative of Prophet Solomon in Q.S. Šād [38]:35 demonstrates that true meaning in life does not lie in power or wealth, but in how such blessings are used for worship of God and service to others. Solomon represents a figure who finds meaning through understanding that the world is merely a means, life purpose is oriented toward truth, inner fulfillment arises from giving benefit, and self-transcendence is realized through complete devotion to Allah. Therefore, his prayer should not be understood as worldly ambition, but as an expression of servitude that generates social concern and universal welfare.

5. Accomplishment

Allah says in Qur'an 34:13: "*They (the jinn) made for Solomon whatever he wished of sanctuaries (miḥrāb), statues (tamāthīl), basins like reservoirs (jifān), and fixed large cauldrons (qudūr). 'Work, O family of David, in gratitude.' And few of My servants are truly grateful.*" This verse depicts one of the divine blessings granted to Prophet Solomon (*Sulaymān*), namely a form of authority that enabled him to command the jinn to construct various structures and infrastructures for his kingdom. Classical exegetes explain that *miḥrāb* carries multiple meanings, such as places of worship, grand houses, tall buildings, fortresses [25], towers, underground chambers, or private prayer spaces. *Tamāthīl* is interpreted as statues or images in the form of angels, trees [46], or lions, functioning as symbols of authority and motivation for worship. The making of such statues was permissible in earlier laws prior to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Meanwhile, *jifān* refers to large basins resembling reservoirs used for washing slaughtered animals or providing water for livestock, while *qudūr* are massive cooking pots used to prepare food in large quantities.

The sequence of *miḥrāb*, *tamāthīl*, *jifān*, and *qudūr* reflects the grandeur and scale of Prophet Solomon's kingdom [24]. Some exegetes understand this order as a reference to size, while others interpret it as describing the spatial layout of the royal complex: *miḥrāb* in the outer area, *tamāthīl* around the throne, *jifān* inside the palace, and *qudūr* in the rear area serving as the royal kitchen. Thus, the verse not only portrays material grandeur but also illustrates the vastness of divine blessings bestowed upon Solomon. Based on this verse, the essence of Solomon's nobility does not lie in his wealth. His true distinction lies in his ability to interpret all these blessings as reasons to increase gratitude to Allah. Therefore, after mentioning these manifestations of royal grandeur, Allah concludes the verse with the command: "*Work, O family of David, in gratitude.*" This ending indicates that gratitude is the ultimate purpose of all forms of

achievement. Wealth without gratitude may lead to arrogance, while power without spiritual awareness may result in misuse of authority.

This concept aligns strongly with the theory of accomplishment proposed by Martin Seligman within the PERMA framework. According to Seligman, accomplishment is not merely external success such as power, prestige, or social recognition, but also involves striving for mastery and excellence that bring meaning and inner satisfaction. He distinguishes between intrinsic accomplishment (the “achieving life”), driven by the inherent meaning of the activity, and extrinsic accomplishment, which is oriented solely toward material gain or external recognition [68]. In the case of Prophet Solomon, he represents an ideal example of intrinsic accomplishment. Dominion over humans, jinn, and the wind; the magnificence of his palace; and his vast wealth were not the ultimate goals of his life. All of these achievements were understood as trusts and instruments to establish justice, serve society, and cultivate gratitude toward Allah. In other words, Solomon’s accomplishments did not remain at the level of material success but were transformed into meaningful spiritual experience.

From the perspective of Seligman’s well-being theory, Prophet Solomon embodies the “achieving life,” [69] characterized by the pursuit of excellence grounded in meaning. This meaning is evident in his orientation toward using all blessings as a means of devotion to Allah. Therefore, his well-being is holistic, encompassing both material prosperity and spiritual depth. Thus, Qur’an 34:13 does not merely describe the grandeur of Solomon’s kingdom through *mihrāh*, *tamāthīl*, *jifān*, and *qudūr*. It also teaches that the peak of well-being is not the abundance of wealth or the extent of power, but the ability to be grateful for these blessings and use them for good. In Seligman’s terms, true accomplishment is meaningful accomplishment. In Qur’anic terms, such meaningful accomplishment is expressed through gratitude. Therefore, the highest form of happiness does not lie in what one possesses, but in one’s ability to transform all achievements into a path toward closeness to Allah.

Conclusion

This study shows that the Qur’anic narrative of Prophet Solomon contains a holistic concept of well-being that aligns with the five dimensions of Martin Seligman’s PERMA theory. The dimension of positive emotion is reflected in gratitude, which produces inner peace and closeness to God. The dimension of engagement appears in Prophet Solomon’s ability to actualize knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence in resolving problems justly and in ways that promote benefit (*maṣlaḥah*). The dimension of relationship is manifested through persuasive communication, respect for others, and the ability to build

constructive social relations, as seen in his interaction with Queen Bilqis. The dimension of meaning is reflected in a life orientation centered on devotion to God and the welfare of others, while the dimension of accomplishment is evident in his success in managing power, wealth, and various divine blessings as means of gratitude rather than ultimate goals in life.

This study is not a perfect or exhaustive finding. Many aspects of the story of Prophet Solomon still need further exploration, particularly regarding how he achieved the peak of well-being. For example, this article only mentions his relationship with Queen Bilqis as a form of positive relationship. In fact, he did not only maintain good relations with Queen Bilqis, but also with ants, the hoopoe bird, fish, jinn, devils, and even the wind, all of which were subjected to his command. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to examine the story of Prophet Solomon in greater depth and from broader perspectives.

Author Contributions

Ardelia Nihlah Ilahi contributed to conceptualization, methodology, writing-review & editing, supervision, and project administration. Muhamad Haikal Husaini contributed to investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing-original draft, and visualization. Fejrian Yazdajird Iwanabel contributed to validation, resources, writing-review & editing, and supervision. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

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Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

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