

# Emotional Intelligence in The Qur'an: Study of The Story of The Prophet Musa and Khidr

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## Abstract

### Introduction

The concept of emotional intelligence was first proposed by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer (1990) in their scientific article entitled "Emotional Intelligence." Some time later, the concept of emotional intelligence became widely known after the publication of Daniel Goleman's (1995) work, "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ." In modern psychological discourse, emotional intelligence is understood as a person's competence in recognizing, interpreting, managing, and using emotions positively and productively. Although Goleman popularized the term emotional intelligence, this concept has actually been embedded in religious narratives long before the emergence of formal psychology. As a guide for the lives of Muslims, the Qur'an presents many stories that illustrate the principles of emotional intelligence through the dynamics of interactions between prophets and ordinary people, facing all their challenges. In QS Al-Kahfi [18]:60-82, especially the story of Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr, offers a comprehensive case study of the dynamics of emotional intelligence in spiritual, moral, and interpersonal contexts. This study aims to explore how the Qur'an implicitly teaches emotional intelligence through an in-depth analysis of the dialogue, actions, and symbolism in the story.

### Method

The research method used is qualitative by applying two approaches: (1) narrative content analysis by examining each verse (18:60-82) to identify communication patterns, emotional responses, and psychological conflicts experienced by Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr. (2) thematic interpretation (*maudhu'i*) with a psychological approach to explore aspects of emotional intelligence in the dialogue and actions of Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr. Thematic interpretation combines the classical interpretation of Tafsir Ibn Katsir and the contemporary Tafsir Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab to unravel the dimensions of emotional intelligence in the story.

In the narrative of Surah Al-Kahfi, when Prophet Musa protested against Prophet Khidr's actions in destroying the ship (18:71), his impulsive reaction is analyzed through the lens of self-regulation, while Prophet Khidr's response reflects wisdom as a form of high-level emotional intelligence. The data is also contextualized with modern psychological theories, such as Goleman's emotional intelligence model and Feldman Barrett's concept of emotional granularity. Goleman argues about the importance of identifying, understanding, and managing emotions, both in oneself and others, for success in life. Meanwhile, Lisa Feldman Barrett argues that emotions are not innate or universal, but are constructed by the brain based on experience, social context, and the brain's predictions of certain situations.

### Results

This study produces four important concepts in emotional intelligence, namely: (1) Self-Awareness, the Prophet Musa was fully aware of the limitations of his knowledge "May I follow you so that you teach me the knowledge you have?" (18:66), showing humility as the basis of emotional intelligence. In contrast to the Prophet Khidr who metaphorically represents transcendental awareness through the statement: "You will not be able to be patient with me" (18:67). (2) Emotional control (Emotion Regulation), the Prophet Musa failed to control his emotions three times (18:71, 74, 78), revealing emotional hijacking (Goleman), while the Prophet Khidr remained calm because he understood divine wisdom. (3) Empathy and social skills, Prophet Khidr killed a child (18:74) which seems cruel, but this action actually protected the child's parents from disbelief (Ibn Abbas's interpretation). This shows long-term empathy that goes beyond the immediate situation. (4) Motivation and spirituality, Prophet Musa' perseverance in seeking knowledge reflects intrinsic motivation, a key component of emotional intelligence. On the other hand, Prophet Khidr acted based on unseen divine motivation (*ghaib*).

### Discussion

This finding strengthens the dialogue between Islamic and Western psychology by showing that: (1) The principle of emotional intelligence in the Qur'an is holistic, combining spiritual (*tazkiyatun nafs*) and psychological dimensions simultaneously. (2)

The story of Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr offers a framework for emotional intelligence training based on religious values, such as a mindfulness program adapted to the concept of patience in Islam. (3) The Qur'anic narrative can be a therapeutic tool to overcome modern problems such as stress and interpersonal conflict by teaching emotional reflection (e.g., the critical dialogue between Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr). In this study, two schools of thought are presented in the field of exegesis, namely Ibn Katsir as a representative of traditional exegesis and Quraish Shihab as a contemporary exegesis figure. Ibn Katsir is more strongly associated with the traditional approach, namely in the form of narration and more emphasis on the miracle of the story. Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab emphasizes the universal value of the story for contemporary life, by prioritizing a more flexible and contextual interpretation style. This story emphasizes the importance of patience and trust in Allah as the foundation of emotional intelligence in Islam. This research strongly supports the view that emotional intelligence is not merely a modern concept, but a universal value taught in the Qur'an. This study has limitations in generalization because it focuses on one story. Further research is needed to compare other stories (e.g., Yusuf or Maryam) to build a more comprehensive Qur'anic model of emotional intelligence.

### Conclusion

The story of Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr is not merely a moral story; it also serves as an operational guide for developing emotional intelligence through patience, reflection, and trust in a greater wisdom. The integration of Qur'anic interpretation and modern psychology in this study paves the way for new approaches to character education and religious counseling. A deeper understanding of the wisdom of Prophet Musa' encounter with Prophet Khidr can guide the development of emotional intelligence in the context of education, leadership, and everyday life.

*Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Al-Quran, Prophet Musa and Prophet Khidr, Thematic Interpretation, Islamic Psychology*

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