

***KHAUF* IN ISLAM: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS AND SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS**

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Abstract: *Khauf* (fear) is a fundamental element in Islamic spirituality that shaping the relationship between a servant and God. It plays a crucial role in maintaining the emotional and spiritual balance of a Muslim, guiding behavior and nurturing sound moral character. *Khauf* and *raja* ' are essential aspects of Islamic spirituality and ethics, forming the foundation of faith, conduct, and one's relationship with the Divine. In the Sufi tradition, *khauf* reflects a sense of awe and reverence for the responsibility before God and trust in Allah's mercy and benevolence. This study examines of *khauf* from the Islamic perspective. The study shows that although *khauf* (fear) carries various shades of meaning depending on the Quranic context, all these meanings stem from the same fundamental concept, namely safeguarding oneself from the wrath of Allah through firm faith, sincere devotion, and avoidance of His prohibitions. This study provides significant implications in ensuring the accuracy of Quranic interpretation from a linguistic perspective, while also serving as a key reference for exegetes, translators, as well as scholars of Arabic linguistics and Quranic studies.

Keywords: *Analysis, Khauf, Islamic Perspective*

Background of research

In the discourse of Islamic spirituality, particularly within the *Ṣūfī* tradition, the concepts of *maqāmāt* (stations) and *aḥwāl* (states) play a central role in explaining the dynamics of a servant's journey towards God. According to Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (Razak, 2021), *aḥwāl* are defined as “a state of the heart that always makes remembrance, and it is not seen from the methodology of *mujāhadah* and exercises as previously mentioned. It can also be considered as a spiritual state of mind that comes to the *Ṣūfī* from time to time during his journey toward God. The *aḥwāl* are graces of God that cannot be acquired or retained through an individual's efforts. When the soul is purified of its attachments to the material world, it can only wait patiently for those spiritual gifts of God, which, when they come, fill the *Ṣūfī* with the desire to continue his journey with new energy and higher expectations.”

Thus, *aḥwāl* represent temporary spiritual experiences gifted by *Allāh*, such as the feeling of being watched by Him (*murāqabah*), closeness to Him, as well as emotions like love (*maḥabbah*), fear (*khauf*), hope (*rajā'*), longing (*shawq*), calmness (*ṭuma'nīnah*), confidence (*yaqīn*), and others. These states differ from *maqāmāt*, which are more permanent spiritual stations attained through persistent discipline and self-struggle. Al-Sarrāj divides the *maqāmāt* into nine categories, namely: *al-Tawbah* (repentance), *al-Zuhd* (asceticism), *al-Wara'* (piety), *al-Faqr* (poverty), *al-Ṣabr* (patience), *al-Tawakkul* (trust in God), *al-Riḍā* (contentment), and *al-Maḥabbah* (love). Meanwhile, the *aḥwāl* are divided into eight types: *al-Murāqabah* (vigilance), *al-Khauf* (fear), *al-Rajā'* (hope), *al-Shawq* (longing), *al-Uns* (intimacy), *al-ṭuma'nīnah* (tranquility), *al-Mushāhadah* (witnessing), and *al-Yaqīn* (certainty).

Within this framework, *khauf* holds a distinctive position as one of the *aḥwāl* that shapes the inner experience of the believer. Unlike *maqāmāt* that demand structured spiritual effort, *khauf* emerges as a divine gift that penetrates the heart, leading the servant to deep humility, self-restraint, and cautiousness in relation to God's commands and prohibitions. This highlights its importance in the study of Islamic spirituality, where *khauf* is not merely an emotional reaction but a spiritual state that energizes the believer to remain steadfast on the path towards *Allāh*, namely: “*Aḥwāl* is a state of the heart that always makes remembrance, and it is not seen from the methodology of *mujāhadah* and exercises as previously mentioned. It can also be considered as a spiritual state of mind that comes to the *Ṣūfī* from time to time during his journey toward God. The *Aḥwāl* are graces of God that cannot be acquired or retained through an individual's efforts. When the soul is purified of its attachments to the material world, it can only wait patiently for those spiritual gifts of God, which, when they come, fill the *Ṣūfī* with the desire to continue his journey with new energy and higher expectations. *Aḥwāl* is like feeling watched by *Allāh*, feeling close to *Allāh*, feeling of love, fear, hope, longing, calm, confidence, etcetera”. The types of *Maqāmāt* are divided into 9, among others: *Al-Taubah*, *Al-Zuhud*, *Alwara'*, *Al-Faqr*, *Al-Sabr*, *Al-Tawakkal*, *Dan Al-Ridhā*, *And Al -Mahabbah*. In comparison, the types of *Aḥwāl* are divided into 8 (Ahmad, 2015), namely: *Al-Murāqabah*, *Al-Khauf*, *Ar-Rajā'*, *Al-Syauq*, *Al-Uns*, *Al-Thama'ninah*, *Al-Musyāhadah*, and *Al-Yaqīn*.

Problem Statement

Khauf is categorized as one of the main topics on *Ṣūfism* or *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of soul) as *Maqāmāt* and *Aḥwāl*. The purpose of the discipline of a *Maqāmāt* and *Aḥwāl* are to purify the soul as its helps to be a good servant towards the God of almighty. Besides that, *khauf* always be paired with *Raja'* two different things that need a good connection. This discussion has always been separated and yet still mentioned in most scholarly books as these two were needed and cannot be separated. These two should be balanced and cannot dominate one

another. This can be seen on "Syarah Ihya Ulumuddin" by Ghazali (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali) in its last discussion on *khaūf* and *raja'* (Najib, 2019). Besides that, Muhammad ibn Salih al-Uthaymeen *rahimahullah* once said (Soleh, 2021): *khaūf* is an influence produced by a feeling of apprehension against destruction, danger, and disturbance. *Allāh* has forbidden from fearing the guardians of Satan and commanded only to fear Him.

Khaūf and *raja'* are crucially important to be understood correctly, especially in fulfilling our role as (servant of *Allāh*) and purifying our soul in this world. As mentioned by a researcher named, he quotes the word of Al Thusi on *mujahadah* of purifying soul. *Ahwāl* is the state of the heart that always recites *dhikr*, and it is not that seen from the methodology of *mujahadah*, and training as mentioned previously. The situation is such as feeling watched by *Allāh*, feeling close to *Allāh*, feeling love, fear, hope, miss, calm, confident and so on. The research was done by Syakhrani, Nadia, And Fithroti (Syakhrani, 2023). Because of this, many scholars have done research on this topic. This clearly can be seen by research done by Firly Hidayanti and Agus Hidayat, (Hidayanti, 2023) on analyzing the Interpretation of the Verses of *Huzn* and *Khauf* According to *Maudhu'i* Al-Farmawi's Tafsir Theory, research by Wahyudin (Wahyudin, 2023) in researching semantics of *khauf* in Al-Quran and not to forget the research of Abdul Wachid Bambang Suharto (Wachid, 2021), in explaining The Concept of Love and The Basis of Its Doctrines Between *Maqâmât* and *Haal*

Objective

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the different variations in the meaning of the term "*khauf*" as discussed by Islamic scholars.
2. To analyze the interpretations and understandings of *khauf* within the framework of Islamic scholarship.

Introduction

Khauf (fear of God) constitutes one of the foundational elements in the spiritual composition of the human soul, endowed by the Creator as part of the dynamics that regulate inner moral consciousness. This spiritual state arises in specific conditions and shapes a believer's awareness of divine accountability. When *khauf* becomes excessive, it may lead to despair and spiritual stagnation; when deficient, it may encourage complacency and moral negligence. Balanced with *raja'* (hope), however, *khauf* acts as a regulating force that cultivates humility, vigilance, and disciplined devotion.

Within the *Ṣūfī* tradition, *khauf* is understood not merely as an emotional response but as a profound ḥāl that refines ethical behaviour and strengthens one's relationship with God. Harmonized with *raja'*, it nurtures inner equilibrium (*tuma'nīnah*) and serves as a precursor to the higher spiritual station of divine love (*maḥabbah*). Thus, *khauf* is central to the *Ṣūfī* system of *maqāmāt* and *ahwāl*, functioning as a transformative element in spiritual training.

Despite its centrality, previous research has primarily focused on exegetical descriptions of *khauf* and *raja'* or their theological and psychological significance. Existing studies tend to examine these concepts in isolation, without exploring how contemporary Muslims interpret and apply *khauf* within modern spiritual life marked by anxiety, uncertainty, and shifting moral landscapes. This creates a gap in understanding how the classical spiritual concept of *khauf* can be recontextualized today, whether as a source of balance, resilience, or spiritual grounding.

Accordingly, this study seeks to provide a more analytical and contemporary understanding of *khauf* by examining its conceptual foundations, its interrelationship with *raja'*, and its relevance to modern spiritual challenges. It attempts to bridge classical Islamic spirituality with present-day experiences, thereby addressing a gap left by previous descriptive and text-based studies.

Literature Review

The literature on *khauf* and *raja'* spans Quranic interpretation, Sufi psychology, and therapeutic applications. However, much of this literature presents these concepts descriptively rather than analytically, revealing the need for a synthesized thematic understanding.

Quranic and Theological Foundations

Dawlah's *Hope & Fear in the Holy Quran* (2007) provides one of the most comprehensive Qur'anic examinations of *khauf* and *raja'*. The study systematically compiles verses related to both concepts, discussing their praiseworthy and blameworthy forms, causes, virtues, and spiritual effects. While this research offers valuable textual documentation, it remains primarily exegetical and does not extend to interpretive analysis or contemporary application. The work focuses on moral and spiritual outcomes promised in the Qur'an—such as divine pleasure and Paradise—yet does not connect these outcomes to lived religious experience or modern spiritual contexts.

Sufi Psychological Interpretations and Therapeutic Dimensions

Japri (2017), in *Konsep Khauf dan Raja' Imam al-Ghazali dalam Terapi Gangguan Kecemasan*, shifts the focus from scriptural exposition to psychological relevance. Drawing from al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, the study argues that *khauf* and *raja'* function as spiritual medicines for heart-related ailments and as potential therapies for anxiety disorders. By applying classical spiritual psychology to mental health, Japri introduces a contemporary dimension. However, the analysis remains tied to al-Ghazālī's framework and does not critically compare it with other Sufi perspectives or modern psychological theories. Thus, while innovative, it lacks broader conceptual integration.

Quranic-Based Optimism and Spiritual Resilience

Holisoh (2023), in *Studi Tafsir Maudhu'i: Khauf dan Raja' untuk Menumbuhkan Optimisme*, examines how *khauf* and *raja'* can cultivate optimism based on Quranic perspectives. Using al-Farmawī's thematic method, the study links fear and hope with psychological resilience and problem-solving in everyday life. This research contributes to contemporary discourse by associating classical spiritual states with emotional well-being. Nevertheless, it focuses mainly on optimism and does not fully analyze *khauf* as an independent spiritual state nor its nuanced role within Sufi spiritual development.

Synthesis and Identified Gaps

Across these studies, three main patterns emerge:

Predominantly Descriptive Approaches: Previous works compile verses or summarize classical scholars without synthesizing how *khauf* functions across theological, psychological, and spiritual domains.

Lack of Conceptual Integration: No study integrates Quranic interpretation, Sufi psychology, and contemporary spiritual experience into a unified framework.

Absence of a Modern Contextual Lens: Although Japri and Holisoh introduce psychological and motivational aspects, the literature generally lacks an exploration of how *khauf* is understood and practiced within modern spiritual life, especially in an era marked by anxiety, moral fluidity, and declining spiritual literacy.

This study addresses these gaps by offering an analytical, conceptually integrated examination of *khauf* with explicit relevance to contemporary spiritual challenges.

Definition of Khauf

In Islam, "*Khauf*" refers to the concept of fear, specifically the fear or awe of *Allāh*. This fear is a central aspect of a believer's relationship with the divine, and it plays a significant role in shaping one's actions, decisions, and overall conduct.

The literal definition *Ibn Manẓūr* (Manzur, 1990) has said that the Arabic word *khauf* means fear in its intransitive form. In its transitive form, it means to frighten.

Abū Qāsim (Ghazali, 1985) the wise man, used to say: 'Whoever fears something runs away from it, and whoever fears *Allāh* runs to Him.'

Abū Ḥaḥṣ (Ibn Qayyim, 2008) said: '*khauf* is the whip of *Allāh* that disciplines those who desert Him. *khauf* is a lamp in the heart: a person can see by its light what is good and what is evil. Everybody who fears creation runs away from it. Those who fear *Allāh* run to Him.'

According *Abū 'Alī Daqāq* (Iqbal, 2012), afraid in the Quran is divided into 3 that is *khauf*, *hashiyah* and *haibah*. One who is in *khauf* will feel more afraid of himself, than his fear of his enemies. When *khauf* approached him, he felt peaceful and calm because the condition of his heart was getting closer to God (Ahmad, 2015).

While *khauf* in *Ṣūfīsm* is the presence of a feeling of fear inside the self of a *salik* (one who goes to God) because he is haunted by feelings sins and threats that will befall him. The trilateral root *khā wāw fā* occurs 124 times in the Quran, in seven derived forms (Dukes, 2009):

- 83 times as the form I verb *khāfa*
- four times as the form II verb *yukhawwifu*
- 26 times as the noun *khawf*
- six times as the noun *khīfat*
- three times as the active participle *khāif*
- once as the form II verbal noun *takhwīf*
- once as the form V verbal noun *takhawwuf*

Al-Ahwāl is a psychological situation that a person obtains as a gift from Allah, not from the results of his efforts. The arrival and departure of this mental condition is erratic, sometimes coming and going very quickly, as with *maqām* in different numbers and formations (Ahmad, 2015). There are also differences in this type of *al-ahwāl* among *Sufis* (Harun, 1995), but the most important and popular ones are *al-murâqabah*, *al-khauf*, *ar-rajâ'*, *al-syauq*, *al-uns*, *al-thama'ninah*, *al-musyâhadah*, and *al-yaqîn*.

Variations word of scare in the Al-Quran

In the Al-Quran, there are more than one word that conveys the meaning of fear. These are not simply different words with the same meaning, but rather they signify different levels of fear

as mentioned in the Al-Quran, ranging from the lowest to the highest degrees. The words are (Samsul, 2018):

Al-Khauf

Fear, which generally refers to a deep sense of apprehension or dread. According to Raghīb Al-Ashafani (Al-Ashafani, 2004), It is stated that *khauf* refers to fear of something that is anticipated or known with certainty, or fear due to the weakness of the individual, even if what is feared is trivial. The term *khauf* can be used in both worldly and otherworldly matters. Ibn Qayyim Al-Jauziyah (Ibn Qayyim, 1998) stated that *khauf* is the feeling of unrest and insecurity upon hearing a certain revelation. In other words, it is the lack of safety due to awareness of what Allah has revealed, whether it be promises or warnings.

Al-Khasyyah

A type of fear combined with awe and reverence, often associated with a profound respect and awareness of Allah's greatness. Raghīb Al-Ashafani (Al-Ashafani, 2004), explain that the meaning of *khasyyah* is a type of fear grounded in a sense of reverence and awe. Most uses of the term are based on knowledge of the object of fear. Therefore, the term *khasyyah* is specifically associated with scholars and those who possess deep understanding.

According to Al-Alusi (Al-Alusi, 1994), in his tafsir, the meaning of *khasyyah* is an extraordinary fear, even if the person who experiences it is strong.

Al-Rahbah

Fear that is accompanied by a sense of intimidation or terror, often due to the majesty or power of the feared entity. *Rahbah* can be look from two aspects, first, it represents a profound sense of fear, and second, it relates to subtle and hidden matters. Quraish Shihab (Quraish, 2007) Quoted from Imam Al-Qurtubi that the term *rahbah* signifies pure fear directed solely towards Allah, not towards humans. This leads one to dedicate their time, activities, and conduct exclusively to Allah.

Types of *Khauf* (Fear):

According to Al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali (n.d.), there are three types of *khauf* (fear):

Khauf Thabi'i

This is instinctual or natural fear. It includes common fears such as fear of dangerous animals, fire, drowning, or enemies. It is an inherent part of human nature and serves as a protective mechanism.

Khauf Mahmud

This is the praiseworthy or commendable fear. It is the fear of Allah SWT due to His majesty and authority, and it leads to righteous behavior and obedience to His commands. This type of fear motivates individuals to avoid sin and fulfill their religious duties.

Khauf Maksia

This is the fear associated with sinfulness. It involves a fear of committing acts that are contrary to religious teachings or moral values. This type of fear is considered a negative aspect of *khauf*, as it is related to the apprehension of engaging in disobedience or immoral behavior.

The Levels of *Khauf* (Fear of Allah)

Fear of Allah (*Khauf*) is an important spiritual concept in Islam, and people experience this fear at different levels based on their faith and understanding of God. Ibn Ujaibah (Ujaibah (n.d.)) categorizes this fear into three levels:

The Fear of the General Believers (*Awam*)

The general believers fear Allah mainly out of concern for His punishment and the loss of rewards. Their fear is motivated by the desire to avoid Hell and to gain the rewards of good deeds in the Hereafter.

The Fear of the Elite Believers (*Khawwash*)

The elite believers, who have a deeper understanding and connection with Allah, fear not just His punishment but also His disapproval. They fear being distanced from Him and losing the closeness they have attained through worship and devotion. Their fear is more about losing their spiritual connection with Allah than about physical punishment.

The Fear of the Most Elite Believers (*Khawwashul Khawwash*)

At this highest level, the most elite believers, often referred to as saints or those with profound spiritual insight, fear that their inner vision of Allah might be obscured by negative traits or bad character. Their fear is not of punishment or distance from Allah, but rather that their perception of Allah's beauty and perfection could be clouded by their own shortcomings.

These three levels represent a spiritual journey, starting from fear based on punishment and reward, progressing to fear based on maintaining a close relationship with Allah, and finally reaching a fear that stems from the desire to always see and experience Allah's presence without any hindrance.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative library research design, focusing on the examination and interpretation of textual sources related to *khauf* within Islamic scholarship. Library research is appropriate because the study is conceptual, grounded in classical and contemporary literature, and seeks to synthesize theoretical perspectives rather than collect empirical data.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Primary sources include classical Islamic texts—particularly works on Sufi psychology, Quranic exegesis, and spiritual ethics—while secondary sources consist of journal articles, scholarly books, and contemporary studies.

Sources were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance:** Direct engagement with the concepts of *khauf* and *raja'*.
- **Scholarly Credibility:** Publications from recognized scholars, institutions, or peer-reviewed journals.
- **Conceptual Contribution:** Works offering theological, psychological, or spiritual perspectives.
- **Temporal Diversity:** Inclusion of both classical and modern sources to allow comparative analysis.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a systematic review of books, journal articles, manuscripts, and online academic databases. Each source was catalogued and organized using thematic tags such

as “Quranic basis,” “Sufi interpretation,” “therapeutic dimension,” and “contemporary relevance.”

Data Coding and Analytical Framework

A thematic analysis approach was used. The process included:

- Initial Coding: Identifying key concepts, definitions, and theoretical arguments related to *khauf*.
- Categorization: Grouping codes into themes such as spiritual psychology, ethical development, fear-hope balance, and modern implications.
- Interpretative Integration: Synthesizing themes to construct a conceptual framework explaining *khauf* within classical and contemporary contexts.

Validation and Reliability

To enhance academic rigor:

- Triangulation was achieved by comparing interpretations across Quranic exegesis, *Sufi* writings, and modern scholarship.
- Peer-reviewed sources were prioritized to ensure reliability.
- Consistent cross-checking of definitions and interpretations was conducted across multiple classical texts.

Through these methodological steps, the study ensures that its analysis of *khauf* is systematic, credible, and grounded in a balanced examination of diverse Islamic scholarly traditions.

Contributions of the Study

This study makes several important contributions to the understanding of *khauf* within the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition. First, it identifies and clarifies the variations in the meaning of *khauf* as articulated by classical and contemporary Islamic scholars, thereby providing a comprehensive mapping of its linguistic, theological, and spiritual dimensions. Through this, the research highlights the semantic richness of the term and its nuanced usage across Qurānic discourse and scholarly interpretation.

Second, by examining *khauf* in the context of *Sūfī* psychology, the study contributes to a deeper appreciation of its role as an essential *ḥāl* (spiritual state) that cannot be attained merely through human effort but is granted as a divine gift. This perspective situates *khauf* as a transformative force that disciplines the soul, curbs reliance on human deeds, and redirects the believer towards divine mercy and grace.

Third, this research provides an analytical framework for understanding the balance between *khauf* and *rajāʾ* as a dual foundation of Muslim spirituality. This balance ensures that fear does not degenerate into despair, nor hope into arrogance, but instead nurtures an inner harmony that leads to love (*maḥabbah*) of Allah. Such findings underscore the ethical and spiritual significance of *khauf* in shaping both individual piety and collective moral integrity within Muslim societies.

Conclusion

In Islam, *khauf* represents far more than an instinctual or psychological fear; it is a central element in the believer’s relationship with Allah. Rooted in Quranic vocabulary and elaborated upon by major scholars such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim, and Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq, *khauf* emerges as a dynamic spiritual state that disciplines, purifies, and elevates the human soul. The

Qur'ān itself employs multiple terms for fear—*khauf*, *khashyah*, *rahbah*—each reflecting different shades and intensities of the believer's awareness of divine majesty and accountability. This study shows that *khauf* operates at multiple levels: from natural and instinctual fear (*khauf ṭabī'ī*) to commendable fear (*khauf maḥmūd*) that inspires obedience, and even to the fear of sin (*khauf ma'ṣiyah*). It also manifests across spiritual ranks—from the general believers who fear punishment, to the spiritual elite who fear divine displeasure, and finally to the most elect whose fear is that their inner vision of Allah might be obscured.

Ultimately, *khauf* cannot be understood in isolation. Its true significance lies in its balance with *rajā'*, forming a dialectical relationship that guards against despair and arrogance alike. When harmonized, these two states cultivate serenity, ethical conduct, and sincere devotion, eventually blossoming into love (*maḥabbah*) for Allah ﷻ. In this way, *khauf* stands not only as a theological concept but also as a lived spiritual reality that profoundly shapes Muslim faith, practice, and character.

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