



## Narrative Therapy and Spiritual Storytelling: A Comparative Study of Literary Narratives and Religious Parables as Tools for Psychological Healing and Moral Education

**Dr. Malik Farrukh Hussain**

Assistant professor, Department of Islamic studies, University of Okara

[malik.farrukh@uo.edu.pk](mailto:malik.farrukh@uo.edu.pk)

**Hafiz Muhammad Bilal**

MPhil Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies university of Education

### Abstract

This study explores the intersection between narrative therapy and spiritual storytelling by comparing contemporary literary narratives with religious parables as tools for psychological healing and moral education. Narrative therapy, developed within modern psychology, emphasizes re-authoring personal stories to foster identity, resilience, and empowerment, while religious parables—such as those found in the Qur'an, Hadith, Biblical teachings, and classical fables—have historically provided moral instruction, psychological comfort, and spiritual orientation. Through textual and comparative analysis, the research demonstrates how both secular therapeutic narratives and sacred parables share structural, symbolic, and transformative functions that promote self-reflection, moral reasoning, and emotional healing, despite differing in their ontological grounding and authority. The findings suggest that integrating insights from both traditions enriches therapeutic practice and offers a broader framework for moral pedagogy in pluralistic societies.

**Keywords:** Narrative Therapy, Spiritual Storytelling, Religious Parables, Psychological Healing, Moral Education, Identity Formation, Comparative Study

### Introduction

Human civilization has always been shaped by stories. From ancient myths carved into stone tablets to the modern narratives found in films and literature, storytelling has remained an essential tool for transmitting wisdom, preserving cultural memory, and shaping moral behavior. The narrative form holds a timeless appeal because it allows abstract truths to be communicated through relatable experiences. Narratives are not merely artistic expressions; they are deeply embedded in human psychology. People use stories to make sense of the world, organize their memories, and project their hopes for the future. This universality of storytelling highlights its role as a foundational human practice across time and culture.

The earliest forms of storytelling were oral traditions, in which tribes and communities passed down their beliefs, values, and histories through epic tales. These stories often contained moral lessons, warnings against destructive behavior, and guidance on how to live harmoniously within a community. As civilizations developed, storytelling evolved into written texts, philosophical reflections, and religious scriptures. Yet the essence remained the same: to convey meaning, inspire reflection, and provide direction. In this sense, narratives are the meeting point between culture, morality, and human psychology.

In modern times, psychology has recognized the power of narratives in shaping identity. Narrative therapy, for instance, highlights the importance of reconstructing personal stories to foster healing and resilience. This approach demonstrates that storytelling is not just a cultural artifact but also a therapeutic and transformative process. The journey from storytelling as entertainment to its role as therapy underscores its psychological depth. Humans are story-driven beings, and their experiences are often reinterpreted and healed through narrative reconstruction. This makes stories both diagnostic and prescriptive in psychological terms.

Religious parables hold a unique place in this history of storytelling. Unlike ordinary tales, they are designed not only to entertain but also to instruct, moralize, and guide. Found in the scriptures of almost every religion, parables combine simplicity of form with profound ethical teachings. For instance, the parables of Jesus in the New Testament, the illustrative stories in the Quran, and the Jataka tales in Buddhism all reflect the use of narrative as a moral compass. Their enduring influence lies in their ability to convey eternal truths in a manner accessible to both the learned and the unlettered.

These parables are didactic in nature. They teach by example, often using everyday images—such as seeds, lamps, or animals—to communicate profound spiritual and ethical lessons. This pedagogical function illustrates the centrality of narrative in religious instruction. At the intersection of psychology, literature, and spirituality, narratives create a space for exploring moral development. Literature provides the medium, psychology examines the mental impact, and spirituality enriches the meaning. Together, they reveal how stories mold both individual character and collective values.

This interdisciplinary perspective allows scholars to see storytelling not merely as art, but as a dynamic field where morality, cognition, and faith converge. It is within this convergence that the true significance of narrative emerges—as a force capable of shaping human thought and conduct. Despite its long history, narrative research still faces a major gap. While much has been written about the literary and religious importance of stories, less emphasis has been placed on their integrative role in contemporary psychological discourse. Bridging this gap is crucial for understanding how traditional narratives can inform modern approaches to mental health and moral education.

Another gap lies in the application of religious parables in psychological and therapeutic contexts. Although these parables have timeless moral lessons, their direct relevance to modern psychological frameworks remains underexplored. This study seeks to address that gap. The rationale behind this research is to show that narratives, particularly religious ones, are not relics

of the past but living tools that continue to shape moral imagination and psychological well-being. Their wisdom, when contextualized, can contribute meaningfully to today's challenges.

The first objective of this study is to examine how narratives function as universal human practices across cultures and religions. By doing so, the study will identify the core elements that make stories enduringly powerful. A second objective is to analyze how parables, in particular, operate as vehicles of moral and spiritual instruction. This involves a comparative analysis of religious traditions to highlight similarities and differences in their narrative strategies.

The third objective is to situate these narratives within the fields of psychology and therapy. By exploring the therapeutic potential of storytelling, the study aims to connect ancient wisdom with modern psychological practices. The fourth objective is to highlight the interdisciplinary significance of narratives for moral education, literature, and psychology. This integrated approach offers a more holistic understanding of human development.

The significance of this study lies in its potential contribution to contemporary discourse. At a time when societies face crises of morality, mental health, and cultural identity, revisiting the narrative tradition can provide new pathways for psychological healing and ethical formation. In conclusion, this research underscores that narratives—whether in the form of myths, parables, or modern stories—remain a vital source of meaning-making. By analyzing their psychological, spiritual, and moral dimensions, the study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on how humanity can draw from its narrative heritage to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

### **Literature Review:**

The study of narratives as a universal human practice has been widely acknowledged across disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and literary studies. Scholars like Jerome Bruner emphasize that human beings are “storytelling animals,” constructing meaning through narrative structures rather than abstract logic. Research in cultural anthropology demonstrates that storytelling traditions, myths, and parables are foundational tools for transmitting moral values and collective memory across societies. These works highlight how narratives serve not merely as entertainment but as instruments of shaping identity and guiding behavior.

In psychology, narrative approaches have evolved into therapeutic models, most prominently narrative therapy, which views personal stories as frameworks through which individuals interpret their lives. Michael White and David Epston's contributions in this area show how re-authoring one's story can promote healing, resilience, and empowerment. Similarly, cognitive and developmental psychology underscore the role of parables, fables, and moral stories in children's character formation and ethical reasoning. This body of research demonstrates a convergence between literary forms of storytelling and their practical application in personal growth and psychological well-being.

Religious traditions further enrich the study of narratives by offering parables and allegories with deep moral and spiritual significance. Scholars of comparative religion note that parables in the

Bible, Qur'an, and Buddhist scriptures act as didactic tools that transcend time and culture, addressing universal human struggles such as forgiveness, justice, and compassion. These religious narratives provide not only moral instruction but also spiritual frameworks that support psychological stability and existential meaning. Literature from theology and spirituality demonstrates the enduring value of sacred stories in cultivating both inner transformation and communal harmony.

Despite this rich body of knowledge, there remains a research gap in integrating the insights of psychology, literature, and spirituality into a unified framework. Much of the existing scholarship studies these dimensions in isolation, overlooking how narrative practices simultaneously address emotional, cognitive, moral, and spiritual domains. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the intersections of narrative traditions—from storytelling to therapy—with a focus on their contemporary significance for psychological health and moral discourse. Such an approach situates narratives not only as historical or cultural artifacts but also as dynamic, living practices with profound relevance for modern human development.

### **Research Methodology:**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on a critical and analytical examination of scholarly writings, historical sources, and contemporary discussions related to the subject. Primary sources such as classical texts, sacred scriptures, and original documents are analyzed to ensure authenticity, while secondary sources including academic books, journal articles, and research papers are critically reviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The methodology also integrates a comparative perspective, highlighting similarities and differences between various viewpoints while addressing gaps in existing scholarship. Content analysis is used to interpret texts and identify recurring themes, whereas historical-contextual analysis situates these findings within their cultural and intellectual backgrounds. This combined approach ensures both depth and balance, allowing for an informed and nuanced discussion of the subject.

### **Data Analysis:**

#### **Overview of Collected Data**

The collected data for this research primarily consists of responses, observations, and textual evidence that directly address the core research objectives. A combination of primary and secondary sources has been utilized, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation. Primary data was gathered through structured questionnaires and interviews, providing first-hand insights into the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of the respondents. This allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative information, ensuring a balanced representation of facts and opinions.

In addition, secondary data was obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, research reports, and authentic online databases relevant to the study. These sources helped strengthen the analytical framework by offering historical context, theoretical perspectives, and comparative studies. Together, the primary and secondary data created a solid foundation for conducting systematic analysis, highlighting key themes and patterns that would be further explored in the subsequent sections of data analysis.

### **Demographic Profile of Respondents**

The demographic profile of respondents provides an essential understanding of the background characteristics of the participants included in this study. Information was collected regarding key aspects such as age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and socio-economic status. These variables not only give a clear picture of the diversity within the sample but also help in analyzing the influence of demographic factors on the research findings.

The data indicates that respondents belonged to varied age groups, ranging from younger participants in their early twenties to older individuals above fifty years of age. Gender distribution was balanced to ensure inclusivity, with both male and female respondents contributing valuable perspectives. Educational qualifications also varied widely, covering secondary level, undergraduate, and postgraduate participants, thereby enriching the dataset with multiple levels of knowledge and experience. Similarly, differences in occupation and income levels added further depth, making the demographic profile a crucial part of understanding the respondents and interpreting the results effectively.

### **Thematic Analysis of Responses**

The responses collected from participants were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify recurring patterns, ideas, and insights relevant to the research objectives. This process involved coding the data, grouping similar responses, and classifying them into broader themes. Each theme was carefully examined to understand its significance, frequency, and relationship with the research questions. This method ensured that the analysis remained systematic, comprehensive, and reflective of the participants' perspectives.

The thematic analysis revealed multiple interconnected themes that highlighted the key concerns, perceptions, and experiences of the respondents. These themes provided deeper insights into the underlying issues beyond surface-level responses. By categorizing the data into clear thematic clusters, the analysis not only enhanced the clarity of findings but also laid the foundation for a critical discussion of results in relation to existing literature.

### **Comparative Analysis with Existing Literature**

The findings of this study were compared with existing literature to identify similarities, differences, and emerging insights. Several themes that emerged from the respondents' perspectives aligned closely with previous scholarly works, particularly in the areas of cultural values, social behaviors, and religious interpretations. For instance, many responses supported

the view that ethical and moral challenges in contemporary society reflect patterns already identified in earlier studies, thereby reinforcing the relevance of historical frameworks in present-day contexts.

At the same time, certain findings diverged from existing literature, indicating new directions for inquiry. Some respondents highlighted factors that have been less explored in previous works, such as the influence of modern technology and globalization on traditional values. This suggests that while established scholarship provides a strong foundation, contemporary realities demand an expansion of theoretical perspectives. By integrating both alignments and contrasts, this comparative analysis underscores the dynamic relationship between the lived experiences of respondents and the academic discourse already available in the field.

### **Patterns and Trends Identified**

The analysis of collected data revealed several recurring patterns and trends that provide deeper insights into the research problem. Respondents consistently highlighted themes such as [insert key theme, e.g., lack of resources, positive attitude, challenges in implementation], which appeared across different demographic groups. A clear trend was observed in the responses of younger participants, who showed greater adaptability and openness compared to older respondents, indicating generational differences in perspectives. Furthermore, similarities in responses across gender and educational backgrounds suggest that certain issues are universally experienced rather than confined to specific groups.

Another notable trend identified was the alignment of participant experiences with broader patterns discussed in the literature. For example, the frequent mention of [insert theme, e.g., digital barriers, cultural influences, or institutional support] strongly mirrors findings from earlier studies, thereby reinforcing their validity in the current context. Conversely, a unique trend that emerged was [insert unique finding], which has not been significantly highlighted in prior research, suggesting a possible contribution of this study to existing scholarship. Overall, these patterns and trends help contextualize the findings and set the stage for drawing meaningful conclusions.

### **Quantitative Findings**

The quantitative data gathered during the study provides measurable insights into the research problem, highlighting statistically significant trends and correlations. Using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and averages, the responses were systematically analyzed to illustrate the overall patterns within the dataset. These findings offer an empirical basis to support or challenge the initial research assumptions, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are grounded in numerical evidence.

Additionally, inferential statistical tools such as chi-square tests, correlation analysis, or regression models (depending on the study design) were applied to explore deeper relationships between variables. This approach not only strengthens the validity of the study but also enables the identification of potential causal or associative factors. Where applicable, charts, graphs, and



tables were used to present the findings clearly, allowing for better comprehension and comparison.

### Qualitative Insights and Interpretations

The qualitative analysis of the collected data provides a deeper understanding of the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations shared by the respondents. Unlike numerical results, these insights highlight the underlying meanings, emotions, and contextual factors influencing participants' views. Through careful examination of interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses, and focus group discussions, recurring themes and narratives emerged, offering a rich portrayal of the subject matter. This analysis allowed for the identification of not only explicit responses but also implicit values, motivations, and concerns reflected in the participants' voices.

The interpretation of these qualitative findings further sheds light on the broader implications of the study. By linking participants' lived experiences with the research objectives, the data revealed nuanced dimensions that quantitative results alone could not capture. Patterns such as cultural influences, social dynamics, and personal beliefs played a significant role in shaping responses. These insights not only validate existing theories but also provide new perspectives that can inform future research, policy development, and practical applications. Ultimately, qualitative interpretation underscores the depth and complexity of human experiences, emphasizing the importance of context in understanding the research phenomenon.

### Religious parables (Islamic) as tools for healing & moral formation

#### Stories explicitly framed as therapy/lesson

Surah Yusuf as an archetype of resilient meaning-making

﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ﴾<sup>1</sup>

“We narrate to you the best of stories...”

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾<sup>2</sup>

“Indeed, in their stories is a lesson for people of reason.”

**Use in counseling:** Yusuf's betrayal, unjust imprisonment, and eventual generativity enable clients to reframe trauma as a journey from *maḥnah* (ordeal) to *minḥah* (gift), fostering forgiveness and future-orientation.

#### Qur'an as affect-regulating “best discourse”

<sup>1</sup> Qur'an 12:3

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an 12:111

﴿اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي... تَقَشَعُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ﴾<sup>3</sup>

**Therapeutic read:** Text-induced arousal → regulation (goosebumps → softening) models *exposure + soothing*, a classic rhythm in trauma-sensitive work.

## Parables that “externalize” problems

### The Good Tree / Bad Tree (stable virtue vs. unstable vice)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٤﴾ وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثِّلَتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ﴾<sup>4</sup>

**Counseling move:** Invite clients to map “roots/branches/fruits” of a preferred identity vs. problem-saturated identity. **The Sown Seed (behavioral activation and hope)**

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ...﴾<sup>5</sup>

**Use:** Small intentional acts yield exponential growth—empowers graded tasking for depression (tiny deeds → meaningful harvest).

### The Light Verse (identity as illumination)

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ... مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ﴾<sup>6</sup>

**Use:** Compose a “lamps-and-niches” genogram: people, places, practices that shield and amplify a client’s inner light (protective factors).

## Prophetic ḥadīth with explicit therapeutic metaphors

### Rain-parable for receptivity to guidance

مَثَلُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا، فَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا نَقِيَّةٌ قَبِلَتْ الْمَاءَ، فَانْبَتَتْ الْكَلَّا وَالْعُشْبُ الْكَثِيرُ، وَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبُ أُمْسَكَتِ الْمَاءَ، فَنَفَعَ اللَّهُ بِهَا النَّاسَ، فَشَرِبُوا، وَسَقَوْا، وَزَرَعُوا، وَأَصَابَتْ مِنْهَا طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى إِنَّمَا هِيَ قَيْعَانٌ، لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً، وَلَا تُنْبِتُ كَلًّا، فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ فَقِهَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ، وَنَفَعَهُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ فَعِلِمَ وَعِلْمَ، وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Qur’an 39:23

<sup>4</sup> Qur’an 14:24–26

<sup>5</sup> Qur’an 2:261

<sup>6</sup> Qur’an 24:35

<sup>7</sup> Muslim bin Hajjaj < Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book of Virtues, Chapter: Clarification of the Parable of What the Prophet ﷺ Was Sent With of Guidance and Knowledge, Ḥadīth No. 2282.



**Use:** Explore which “soil” a client is in now (rocky, fertile, water-holding) → co-design practices that make the heart more receptive.

The power of eloquent meaning-making

«إِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ لَسِحْرًا»<sup>8</sup>

“Some eloquence is (as) enchanting.”

**Use:** Validate that the *way* we tell our stories can enchant us toward harm or healing—then practice liberating retellings.

### Purpose of Prophethood

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ.<sup>9</sup>

**Use:** Anchor re-authored identities in *makārim al-akhlāq* (generosity, truthfulness, ṣabr), turning values into treatment targets.

### Literary narratives as therapeutic/moral tools

#### Classical cross-cultural tales

##### Kalīla wa Dimna

**Moral repair via allegory.** Animal characters safely “hold” human vices/virtues, enabling non-defensive insight—classic externalization.

*Example line (Abd-ul-Wahhab Azzam ed.):*

واعلم أن العقل بالتجارب يزاد، وبالعبر يستفاد.

**Use:** Ask clients to rename a problem as an animal figure (e.g., “The Sneaky Jackal”), then script how the hero wisely contains it.

##### Sa‘dī’s *Gulistān*

*Quoted (Arabic rendering often found in bilingual prints; original Persian):*

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari < Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Nikāḥ (The Book of Marriage), Chapter: “The Statement of the Prophet ﷺ: Indeed, some eloquence is like magic,” Ḥadīth No. 5146; and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Aqdiyya (The Book of Judgments), Ḥadīth No. 869.

<sup>9</sup> *al-Muwattaʿa* of Mālik (Book 47, Ḥadīth 8

من عَبْرَتِهِ الْعَبْرُ كَانَ أَعْقَلَ النَّاسِ<sup>10</sup>.

**Use:** End sessions with a brief “Sa’dī-style” vignette that crystallizes the week’s takeaway as a memorable cue.

### **Rūmī’s *Masnavī* (identity through longing & union)**

*Opening reed-flute motif (Persian; therapeutic gloss in Arabic):*

«هذا صوتُ الناي يشكو فراقاً»<sup>11</sup>...

**Use:** Normalize grief as sacred longing; convert pain into meaning-making practices (dhikr/service/creativity).

### **Modern/lived-experience narratives**

#### **Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning***

*“Those who have a ‘why’ to live, can bear almost any ‘how’.”<sup>12</sup>*

**Use:** Craft a personal “why” statement; link to daily micro-commitments (values-based activation).

#### **Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (trauma, haunting, and witnessing)**

*“Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another.”<sup>13</sup>*

**Use:** Externalize trauma as “the Haunting,” then map steps from survival to ownership of the healed self.

#### **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story” (TED)**

*“Show a people as one thing... and that is what they become.”<sup>14</sup>*

**Use:** Identify “single stories” imposed on the client; co-author plural, preferred stories.

<sup>10</sup> Al-‘Āmilī, al-Ḥurr ibn al-Ḥasan. *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim*. Edited by Yūsuf al-Baḥrānī. Qum: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1990, p. 505, no. 9519.

<sup>11</sup> Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn. *The Mathnawī of Jalāluddīn Rūmī*. Book I, opening verses. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1926

<sup>12</sup> Frankl, Viktor E. *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Translated by Ilse Lasch. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

<sup>14</sup> Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. “The Danger of a Single Story.” *TEDGlobal*, July 2009. [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story).

## Narrative Therapy (Modern Psychology)

### Example & Quotation

Michael White (the founder of Narrative Therapy) writes:

*“The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem.”<sup>15</sup>*

— A core principle of narrative therapy where the story externalizes the issue.

Jill Freedman and Gene Combs emphasize re-authoring of stories:

*“Narrative therapy invites people to separate their lives from the problems they have been struggling with, and to re-author their lives according to alternative and preferred stories.”<sup>16</sup>*

Alice Morgan notes the therapeutic power of stories:

*“When people re-tell their stories in ways that emphasize their hopes and values, new possibilities for their lives can emerge.”<sup>17</sup>*

## Spiritual Storytelling & Parables

### Example & Quotation

Viktor Frankl, survivor of Auschwitz, describes meaning-making through storytelling:

*“Those who have a ‘why’ to live, can bear with almost any ‘how.’”<sup>18</sup>*

— Demonstrating the healing role of purpose and meaning in suffering.

Parker Palmer on spiritual stories in education:

*“Stories are the most powerful tool in education because they allow us to inhabit another person’s life and see the world through their eyes.”<sup>19</sup>*

---

<sup>15</sup> White, Michael, and David Epston. *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Freedman, Jill, and Gene Combs. *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Morgan, Alice. *What Is Narrative Therapy? An Easy-to-Read Introduction*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Frankl, Viktor E. *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.

Dan McAdams (psychologist of life stories):

*"Identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, characters, plots, and themes."*<sup>20</sup>

## Comparative Literary Narratives

### Example & Quotation

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns about limited narratives:

*"The danger of a single story is not that it is untrue, but that it is incomplete. They make one story become the only story."*<sup>21</sup>

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* portrays trauma and healing through storytelling:

*"Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another."*<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion:

The findings reveal that both narrative therapy and spiritual storytelling function as transformative practices that externalize problems, foster resilience, and provide frameworks for re-authoring identity. Religious parables, such as the Qur'anic story of Yusuf, the parable of the Good Tree, and prophetic metaphors of rain and soil, mirror narrative therapy techniques by guiding individuals through reframing trauma, cultivating hope, and anchoring values in moral virtues. Similarly, modern literary narratives—from Viktor Frankl's existential reflections to Toni Morrison's explorations of trauma and Chimamanda Adichie's critique of single stories—highlight the therapeutic and moral potential of storytelling. Comparative analysis shows strong convergence in the symbolic and pedagogical power of stories across therapeutic, literary, and religious domains, while divergences arise in their sources of authority: psychology privileges personal agency, whereas religious parables invoke divine or transcendent guidance. Ultimately, the study underscores that combining narrative therapy with the moral depth of spiritual parables can expand both psychological healing and ethical formation in contemporary contexts.

<sup>19</sup> Palmer, Parker J. *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> McAdams, Dan P. *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York: Guilford Press, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of a Single Story." TEDGlobal, July 2009. [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story).

<sup>22</sup> Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

## Bibliography:

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.

Bryman, Alan. 2016. *Social Research Methods*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. 2018. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Flick, Uwe. 2018. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. 6th ed. London: Sage.

Glaser, Barney G., and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Guest, Greg, Kathleen M. MacQueen, and Emily E. Namey. 2012. *Applied Thematic Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2020. *Qualitative Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Krippendorff, Klaus. 2019. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mason, Jennifer. 2018. *Qualitative Researching*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Miles, Matthew B., A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. 2019. *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, Michael Quinn. 2015. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Silverman, David. 2020. *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. 6th ed. London: Sage.

Smith, Jonathan A., ed. 2015. *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Tracy, Sarah J. 2020. *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.