

Relationship between Islamic Lifestyle and Mental Health among the Students of the Qom University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Islamic lifestyle is associated with all dimensions of life and can play an important role in maintaining health. The present study was conducted to investigate correlation between dimensions of Islamic lifestyle and mental health in the students of the Qom University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: The study population of this descriptive-analytical, cross-sectional study conducted in 2016 consisted of the students of the QUMS. Of this population, 150 people were selected by multistage sampling. Data gathering was conducted by the short version of Islamic lifestyle test and 12-item General Health Questionnaire. Data analysis was performed by descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and stepwise multiple regression.

Results: Mean (standard deviation) score for Islamic lifestyle and mental health variables in the students was 417.14 ± 42.21 and 15.4 ± 2.21 , respectively. There was a significant correlation between Islamic lifestyle and mental health ($r = -0.65$, $p < 0.05$). Among the variables included in the stepwise multiple regression, Thinking and Science, Financial, and Social dimensions had significant effect on mental health.

Conclusion: Thinking and Science dimension was the most important Islamic lifestyle aspect followed by Financial and Social dimensions. These components help promote students' mental health.

Keywords: Islamic lifestyle, Mental Health, Medical Sciences, Students.

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Introduction

With industrial advances, new technologies, and related problems, mental diseases, as with physical ones, have recently increased considerably. Because the mental health of students is highly important, it is necessary to consider this population's emotional and mental issues serious and therefore investigate them. Increasing number of students who refer to counseling centers confirms increasing mental, social, and educational issues among them (1). Mental health has recently been identified as a highly important component of daily life. According to the WHO, mental health refers to the ability to communicate with others in a

concerted manner, modify one's social environment, and resolve emotional conflicts and personal tendencies properly and rationally. Mental health is associated with emotions, thinking, and behavior (2). One who is mentally healthy tends to better cope with daily events and difficulties and pursue his/her goals in life (3).

This has caused that health institutions, which have already taken into consideration the treatment of diseases, to focus on the prevention of diseases and maintenance of health through promoting lifestyle and eliminating certain agents that affect human's health negatively in some way (4). The WHO refers to lifestyle as

specific and definable behavioral patterns that are derived from interaction among personal characteristics, social relationships, environmental conditions, and socioeconomic status. Incorporating positive behavioral patterns into lifestyle can be effective in promoting individual health (5). It seems that lifestyle with Islamic approach in the form of positive behavioral patterns can be effective in promoting mental health in the community. Islamic lifestyle must be derived from religious teachings and can be addressed in the form of Islamic pure life. Adhering to Islamic lifestyle and assimilating it in the community are considered prefaces of implementing religious principles and realizing Islamic purposes and causes in the community. This requires compliance with religious laws and culture and avoidance of western lifestyle patterns. More clearly, according to Islamic lifestyle, individual and social life is based on Islam and Quranic guidelines (6). According to Islamic Lifestyle, the nature of God Almighty is pivotal, i.e. the general framework of life has already been developed by God who is the creator of human and aware of his existential aspects (7).

Islamic lifestyle represents an appropriate behavioral pattern for human growth. Through applying Islamic lifestyle, one can live a healthier life and achieve higher levels of satisfaction. Kajbaf et al. study demonstrated that Islamic lifestyle was positively and significantly correlated with happiness and life satisfaction (8). Asadi et al. reported that Islamic lifestyle and happiness were positively and significantly correlated among students (9). Salmabadi et al. reported a positive and significant correlation between Islamic lifestyle and mental health among students (10). Nealman and Persaoud found that 20-60% of variance in adults' mental health was explained by religious beliefs (11). Headey et al. study demonstrated that religious people were more satisfied with life and conversely, those who had weaker religious beliefs were less satisfied with life (12).

Religiosity or spirituality has been frequently reported to be positively and significantly correlated with mental and physical health. A very limited number of studies have been

conducted on association between different aspects of Islamic lifestyle and mental health. One of the purposes of conducting Islamic research is to achieve Islamic patterns by which development, persistency, and prevention of certain mental disorders can be explained and useful strategies and criteria can be developed to prevent and treat mental disorders as well as to maintain health in the community. In fact, by using and reflecting on Islamic lifestyle concept, people's beliefs and behaviors in a community as well as current or emerging orientations and patterns can be realistically interpreted. This study was conducted to investigate association between Islamic lifestyle and mental health among the students of Qom University of Medical Sciences (QUMS).

Methods

This descriptive-analytical, cross-sectional study conducted in 2016 consisted of the students of the QUMS. Of this population, 150 people were selected by multistage sampling and enrolled. The inclusion criteria were studying in the QUMS and volunteering to participate in the study. First, the researchers entered the study setting after the officials of the QUMS and the faculties provided the letter of approval to conduct the study. Then, a researcher-developed questionnaire was given to the students to be filled out. In addition, they were ensured that their responses would be kept private.

In addition to a demographic questionnaire, the instruments below were used in this study:

Islamic Lifestyle Test (ILST): This test was developed by Kaviani and consists of 75 items rated by 4-point Likert scale. According to its significance, each item is given a coefficient ranging from 4 to 1. The minimum and maximum possible score for ILST is 141 and 570, respectively. This test consists of 10 dimensions: Social (12 items), Prayer (6 items), Beliefs (6 items), Ethics (11 items), Financial (12 items), Family (8 items), Health (7 items), Thinking and Knowledge (5 items), Security-defense (4 items), and Chronology (5 items). The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed. The

concurrent validity correlation coefficient of the ILST with religious orientation was derived 0.64 (13), and its overall reliability has been reported to be 0.78 (13). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this test was obtained 0.85.

12-Item General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ-12): This widely used questionnaire was developed by Goldberg to measure mental health and detect mental disorders in different settings. The items of this questionnaire were codified as questions, and 12 and 28-item versions of this questionnaire have been much frequently used in Iran and other countries. The GHQ-12 consists of 12 of 60 items of the original version that, as with other versions, measure the severity of mental problems in the recent few weeks. The GHQ-12 items are rated by 4-point Likert scale; therefore, maximum possible score for the GHQ-12 is 36 (14). The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been confirmed (15).

Data analysis was performed by descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient, and stepwise multiple regression. The level of significance was considered < 0.05 .

Result

The mean (standard deviation) age of the participants was 19.20 (2.66) (range: 18-33) years, 54.5% of them male, 81% single, and 14.5% lived in dormitories. Mean score for mental health was derived 16, 14, and 15.20 in male, female, and all participants, respectively. Mean score for Islamic life style was 411.81, 426.61, and 417.17 in male, female, and all participants, respectively (Table 1).

Islamic lifestyle and its dimensions were significantly correlated with mental health in the participants. Islamic lifestyle was inversely

and significantly correlated with mental health ($r=-0.65$, $p=0.0001$) (Table 1). Given that higher scores for the GHQ-12 represent lower levels of mental health, negative correlation between these two variables indicates that with increase in scores for Islamic lifestyle, scores

Table 1. Mean (\pm standard deviation) score for Islamic lifestyle and correlation of its dimensions with mental health in students

Variable	Means \pm standard deviations	r	P-value
Social	53.98 \pm 8.40	-0.38	0.0001
Beliefs	22.29 \pm 4.25	-0.33	0.009
Prayer	43.60 \pm 5.99	-0.29	0.006
Family	60.94 \pm 8.78	-0.34	0.003
Financial	70.13 \pm 9.25	-0.31	0.003
Ethics	76.57 \pm 11.43	-0.23	0.03
Health	26.77 \pm 3.59	-0.34	0.04
Thinking and Science	26.06 \pm 4.83	-0.36	0.001
Security-defense	18.23 \pm 3.27	-0.22	0.03
Chronology	19.82 \pm 3.55	-0.15	0.15
Total	417.14 \pm 42.21	-0.65	0.0001

for mental health decrease and therefore respondents with higher levels of mental health have higher levels of Islamic lifestyle. Stepwise regression analysis was used to predict and explain the participants' mental health according to different dimensions of Islamic lifestyle.

Out of variables included in the final model, three dimensions, namely Thinking and Science, Financial, and Social explained 50% of variance in mental health. F value in the final model was 13.72 ($p<0.001$) (Table 2).

Discussion

According to the present study, Islamic lifestyle was positively and significantly correlated with mental health; therefore, it can be argued that Islamic lifestyle is an appropriate framework for human's growth and development that guide him toward healthy living. This finding is consistent with previous

Table 2. The results of multiple regression on prediction of mental health by Islamic lifestyle dimensions

Steps	R2	Independent variable	B	SE	β	Adjusted R	p
1	.351	constant	31.312	3.638		.336	.0001
		Thinking and Science	-5.927	1.242	-.593		.0001
2	.444	constant	44.181	5.987		.417	.0001
		Thinking and Science	-4.483	1.288	-.448		.001
		Financial	-6.088	2.328	-.337		.012
3	.507	Constant	48.399	6.004		.470	.000
		Thinking and Science	-3.611	1.287	-.361		.008
		Financial	-5.360	2.243	-.297		.022
		Social	-2.712	1.198	-.274		.029

studies that indicated that there was a positive and significant correlation between lifestyle and mental health (9,10). To explain such findings, we can argue that religion serves as a comprehensive institution and maintains physical and mental health. Different aspects of religion and religiosity can prevent development of depression and reduce negative feelings and emotions and therefore promote mental health via reinforcing positive feelings and emotions (love, self-esteem, hopefulness, happiness, and optimism).

Besides that, the current study demonstrated that Islamic lifestyle can help predict mental health, and out of the dimensions of Islamic lifestyle, Thinking and Science, Financial, and Social were the most effective subscales on mental health; more clearly, with increase in these three dimensions, mental health was promoted. According to Islamic lifestyle, cognitive and knowledge aspects are influenced by religious teachings as Quran says "Those who listen the word, then follow the best of it." (Az-Zumar, verse no: 18). Thanks to such healthy thinking, one becomes a believer in God, resurrection, and the mission of the prophets that have many rational reasons. From the perspectives of such people, human and the world were created purposefully and the mundane world is an introduction to the eternal world. From their perspectives, wealth and material prosperity are not factors in reaching happiness, but it is the spiritual wealth that is the basis of happiness.

Similarly, according to Islamic lifestyle, one does not oppress others or violate the law even if he has been brought into an impasse. Instead, he expects God to make for him a way out. "And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out And will provide for him from where he does not expect" (At-Talaq, verses no: 2-3).

To explain the findings of the current study regarding Social dimensions, it can be argued that human's God-seeking nature, Iran's religious, cultural, and ethnic context as well as in-depth roots of spirituality and religiosity, are considered some of the support sources that help maintain mental health, keep personal

calmness, and enhance ability to cope with difficult living conditions (16). Besides that, according to Islamic lifestyle, one loves others and is compassionate, benevolent and well-intentioned to others: ... merciful among themselves ... (Al-Fath, verse no. 29) and ... and advised one another to compassion (Al-Balad, verse no. 17).

Altogether, it can be inferred that Islamic lifestyle is effective in promoting mental and physical health and reducing mental disorders. Kajbaf et al. studied Islamic lifestyle, happiness, and life satisfaction among 300 students of the University of Isfahan and found that Islamic lifestyle and happiness were positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction (8). Idler et al. study on 2811 people demonstrated that depression was significantly lower in those attending religious ceremonies or praying individually (17). Sanders et al. studied association between religious beliefs and the levels of depression, anxiety, and self-confidence in 898 students and found that internal religion, spiritual maturity, and self excellence significantly predicted mental health and positive mental function (18).

A limitation of the present study was that the number of the items of the questionnaires especially ILST was high, which could have influenced the respondents' accuracy in responding to the questionnaires. Another limitation was the scarcity of reliable references regarding Islamic lifestyle. It is recommended to conduct further studies on Islamic lifestyle and the efficacy of its components on mental health. In addition, such studies with larger sample size and the followers of other religions should be conducted to increase the generalizability of the findings. Besides that, association between Islamic lifestyle and other variables of mental health should be investigated.

Conclusion

According to the present study, Thinking and Science dimension was the most important Islamic lifestyle aspect followed by Financial and Social dimensions. The results of the current study can be used for curriculum and

preventive and developmental planning in universities, counseling and psychotherapy centers to improve the mental health and Islamic life style.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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