A Comparative Study of Self-Confidence from the Perspectives of Quran, Ahadith and Psychology

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Self-confidence, referring to relying on and exploiting individual abilities and talents for realizing spiritual and material prosperity, not only contradicts but is in agreement with and a prerequisite for faith in God. Practically, the greater faith in God one has, the more potent self-confidence he /she possess. Investigating the subject of self-confidence from the perspectives of Quran, Ahadith and psychology, this study explores the meaning of self (soul) in self-confidence and its levels, the prerequisites for development and enhancement of self-confidence, the association of self-concept and self-esteem with self-confidence, and the approaches to develop and enhance positive self-concept as well as to boost self-confidence.

Methods: The data of this descriptive review article were gathered from library and digital references.

Results: Although it appears that self-confidence contradicts Islamic teachings, it can be clearly understood that this teaching subject is confirmed and emphasized in Islamic teachings by discovery of its true meaning.

Conclusion: If having self-confidence is meant to rely on and exploiting individual abilities and talents to reach material and spiritual prosperity, it not only does not contradict but is in agreement with and a prerequisite for faith in God. Self in self- confidence indeed means human as a combination of the body and the spirit which is fully consistent with indices of self-confidence. According to psychologists, improving self-esteem and positive self-concept affects self-confidence directly. From perspective of religion, paying attention to venerability and God-given dignity of human, recognizing the superb purpose in life, etc. are approaches to develop and enhance positive self-concept and self-esteem, and to boost self-confidence.

Keywords: Mental Health, Mental Hygiene, Psychology and Religion, Self- confidence, Self-esteem.

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Introduction

Self-confidence is a term that has recently been introduced into our culture. This does not mean that no one had already known this state or it has recently been discovered, but rather other terms have been used to refer to this state such as self- esteem, self-respect, and self-trust. Not a long time has passed since the time self- confidence was adopted to refer to this state--believing in individual abilities (1).

If self-confidence is referred to being dependent only on one's own power and abilities and considering oneself the only cause of individual and social prosperity, it is contrary to wisdom, belief in the Unity of God, and faith in God. Rather, if having self-confidence is meant to rely on and exploiting individual abilities and talents to reach material and spiritual prosperity, standing on one's own two feet, and not resting on others to remain hopeful and reach happiness, it not only does not contradict but is in agreement with and prerequisite for faith in God (2).

Methods

In this review article, self-confidence was investigated with reference to Quran and the collections of Ahadith consisting of Usul al-Kafi of al-Kulayni, Bihar al-anwar of al-Majlisi, and Jami' al-Ahadith Shi'a of Ayatollah Boroujerdi. Besides that, the teaching subject of self-confidence was comparatively investigated

from the perspectives of Quran, Ahadith, and psychology with reference to a number of psychology books such as Mental Health of Saeed Shamloo and Enhancement of self-confidence in Children and Adolescents of Ismail Biabangard.

Self-confidence, referring to relying on and exploiting individual abilities and talents for realizing spiritual and material prosperity, not only contradicts but is in agreement with and a prerequisite for faith in God. Practically, the greater faith in God one has the more potent self-confidence he /she possess.

Result

Self-confidence, referring to relying on and exploiting individual abilities and talents for realizing spiritual and material prosperity, not only contradicts but is in agreement with and a prerequisite for faith in God. Practically, the greater faith in God one has the more potent self-confidence he /she possess.

Discussion

To investigate self-confidence, as a subject of teaching, from the perspectives of Quran, Ahadith, and psychology, we explored the meaning of self (soul) in self- confidence, the prerequisites for development and enhancement of self-confidence, the association of self-concept and self-esteem with self-confidence, the approaches to develop and enhance positive self-concept and self-esteem as well as to enhance self-confidence.

A. Meaning of soul in self-confidence

To understand the meaning of soul, we should first address its meanings and usages as well as its different levels appearing in Holy Quran.

Self in Quran

The word soul occurs sixty one times in Quran. Three usages have been derived for the word soul through study of the verses of Quran in which soul occurs:

1. Used as genitive; in these occurrences, soul has the same meaning to what follows it: For example, means the thing itself and the human him/herself. Therefore, the purpose of using the word soul in these examples is to verbally or semantically emphasize the word that follows it. Soul, in this meaning, is used for God as well,

for example ".He has decreed upon Himself mercy." (Holy Quran, AL-AN'AM, 6:12).

Used to mean human as a combination of the body and the spirit: "...He created you from one soul". (Holy Quran,39:6).

2. Used to mean human spirit:" Allah takes the souls at the time of their death" (Holy Quran, 39:42). "

Types of soul

Certain descriptions and characteristics, some of which are concerned with levels of soul, have been offered for soul in Quran and Ahadith. To explain this, six types of soul are briefly described:

1. Carnality: Carnality is a level of the soul that refers to uninhibited and unadjusted instincts of humans that force them to do evil to satisfy themselves. More clearly, God has instituted certain instincts within humans for survival of human race. Responding to the demands of these instincts to the extent that they are satisfied is necessary and useful for humans. However, since human experiences pleasure through applying instincts and instincts are insatiable, they continue to be stimulating in every possible way even if they are responded to. Here, the instincts' demands may become rebellious passions and order humans to transgress the limits of wisdom and religion, i.e. Shari'a, and do evil things, leading to development of carnality. "And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil." (Holy Quran, 12:53).

2. Garnishing soul: In some verses of Quran, soul is described as an agent of garnishing: "...said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something" (Holy Quran, 12:18); "...And thus did my soul entice me" (Holy Quran, 20:96).Literally, garnishing means to decorate, and a wish or prayer that human soul is greedy of achieving it (4). However, this description seems to be one of the specifications of carnality rather than an independent classification of soul. Extremist tendencies, especially when accompanied with moral vices, serve as a curtain facing human sense and make the facts seem completely changed from his/her viewpoint. As a result, carnality garnishes ugliness and evil in the eyes of human and make them charming and lovely for him/her.

3. Postponing soul: Soul can be described as postponing. This means that, human, driven by an internal demand, continuously wishes to postpone his/her tasks and therefore enjoy the benefit(s) of what can be available for him/her or be conducted

immediately. This state is more representative of the tasks whose outcomes are realized in the long term, for example, otherworldly affairs.

This state can be a specification of carnality, as this authentic prayer states:

My God, to Thee I complain of the soul that always commands [me] to do evil and hastens to do sin and greedy of doing the sins defined by Thee ... the soul that forces me to hasten to do sin and postpone repentance to today and tomorrow (5).

4. Blaming soul: The second level of soul is blaming soul or conscience that reprehends humans for doing evil frequently (6)." I swear by the Day of Resurrection. And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]." (Holy Quran, 75:1-2). This level of soul forbids humans from doing evil.

5. Sure soul: Sure soul is an evolved and transcended level of human soul that after refining and purification of the evil moral traits and caprices, reaches a level that can control and inhibit rebellious instincts and uninhibited animal-like desires. By achieving this level of soul, human can eliminate inner turmoil through inhibiting passions and resolve external difficulties by means of faith in and remembrance of God and therefore achieve composure (7). Therefore, sure soul is the supreme and desired level of soul: ". [To the righteous it will be said], "O reassured soul. Return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]" (Holy Quran, 89:27-30).

6. Inspired soul: Soul may be described as inspired. A level of soul whose good and evil have been inspired to it by God: ". And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness." (Holy Quran, 91:7-8). Because inspiring soul, i.e. nature and innate tendencies, is general and according to Quran's certain verses, includes all people, inspired soul cannot refer to a specific level of soul.

Taken together, it can be concluded that according to Quran's verses, the levels of soul are carnality, blaming, and sure.

Out of these levels, carnality definitely is not meant by self in self-confidence, as relying on rebellious instincts that deceive humans through certain descriptions such as garnishing and postponing, and commanding them to enjoy what can be immediately realized for them have no result but destruction and loss of assets. For this reason, relying on and trusting carnality is explicitly proscribed according to some sayings: Avoid relying on one's own soul, which is one of the biggest traps of Satan; (7). If one trusts one's soul, it will betray him/her (8). Indeed, your soul is very

deceptive, if you trust it, Satan leads you to commit [God-defined] prohibitions (8). Obviously, soul in these verses means carnality and therefore having self-confidence is meant to be deceived by soul and follow its demands. In this state, humans are trapped by Satan and led toward committing God-defined prohibitions. More clearly, the contents of these sayings are focused on remonstrating following of rebellious passions, i.e. carnality, rather than relying on one's talents and capabilities, i.e. self-confidence.

The second level of soul, i.e. blaming soul, is unlikely to represent self in self-confidence because religious teachings are not aimed to help humans reach this level. Moreover, staying in this level brings about certain damages and may even affect self-confidence adversely. Regarding religious teachings in this regard and the findings of some studies, it can be argued that reproaching frequently and reprehending continuously, by either oneself or others, lead to destructive effects on personality and self-esteem. Verbal criticism of one's behavior, as with hitting a precious vase by a hammer, destroys the constituents of his/her self-confidence (8).

From the perspective of Quran, being reproachful is basically a satanic instruction (Holy Quran, 14:22). This trait is considered worthless and has not been reported to be a trait of the believers; in addition, no trace of reproaching has been reported in Saints of God's dealing with sinners. In this regard, Prophet

Jacob's behavior toward his sons' wrongdoing is an exemplary model (Holy Quran, 12:18; 66-67; 86-87), as according to sayings, blaming frequently and scolding repeatedly have been forbidden (8). Therefore, this level of soul is not absolutely acknowledged as valuable but rather is evaluable with reference to carnality.

The third level, sure soul, as already described, is considered the transcended and desired level of soul. However, self in self-confidence does not mean sure soul, as one is required to make great effort and spend much time to reach this level of soul. In contrast, enhancing self-confidence is desirable for and is considered by any people at any periods of life, even children and adolescents.

Regarding the above-mentioned, we should seek out the concept of self in self-confidence among the meanings and, more clearly speaking, usages of the word soul rather than the levels of soul. For this paper's purpose, it seems that the word soul, as mentioned above, means combination of the spirit and the body, because this meaning is fully consistent with indices of self-confidence such as relying on one's own talents and capabilities and not being dependent on others.

B. The prerequisites for development and enhancement of self-confidence

Self-confidence is composed of certain elements and components: Understanding talents and capabilities alongside defects and incapabilities, rejecting self-inferiority and soul infirmities, which are conditional upon recognizing oneself fully, and having faith in one's own ability to reach the pinnacles and not relying on others. However, in the light of religious teachings, this concept can be found to be in agreement with self-concept and self-esteem. Therefore, exploring these concordant concepts and figuring out their association with self-confidence can lead us toward prerequisites for development and enhancement of self-confidence.

Association of self-concept and self-esteem with self-confidence

Self-concept or the perceived self refers to a collection of traits that one uses to characterize his/herself with (9).

In any people, self-concept is composed of three main feelings or beliefs: Self-worth, i.e. the value or feeling of competency that one considers him/herself to deserve; competency, i.e. one's beliefs about his/her own capacities to progress and solve problems as well as his/her own ideas, i.e. self-confidence; and sense of attachment, i.e. to feel being accepted and loved by others. The outcome of one's own evaluation of self-worth and sense of attachment represents his/her self-esteem (1).

Accordingly, self-esteem is different from self-concept. Self-esteem indeed refers to the worth of the information inside one's self-concept from his/her perspective, and is derived from all traits and characteristics inside him/her. Alongside self-esteem, ideal self is a conception of self that one wishes to possess, and when his/her perceived self and ideal self are aligned together, he/she enjoys high self-esteem (11). This tendency may be an individual purpose that one seeks to achieve or a self-image that he/she tends to exhibit to others (1). The presence of gap and distance between the perceived self and ideal self causes self-esteem-associated problems. The struggle between the perceived self and ideal self is much more intense in abnormal people than in healthy ones. Ideal self has a positive dimension that when one reaches, he/she does not become satisfied and proceeds to promote his/her purposes and to make efforts to realize newly set purposes (1).

Potent and stable self-esteem, called healthy and appropriate perception of self, is sought out. This type of self-esteem includes deficiencies and weaknesses in a realistic manner. If one has self-esteem, he/she evaluates him/herself positively and deals with others' viewpoints appropriately.

Self-concept and, by extension, self-esteem have been developed based on a combination of issues and subjects that are important for us. Basically, if one considers the contexts in which he/she acts to be valuable, he/she enjoys a potent self-esteem. Some people do not value abilities and good capacities they possess and instead value greatly what they lack or possess in low amounts. Obviously, these people face more difficulties developing and enhancing self-esteem (2).

Self-esteem and self-worth are one of the most fundamental factors for desirable personal development. Possessing potent self-confidence and strong will, decision-making power and initiative, creativity and innovation, intellectual and mental health is directly correlated with the level and quality of self-esteem and self-worth. Currently, assessment and development of self-esteem and boosting of self-confidence are taken into account in treatment of many personality and behavioral disorders (1).

Stang confirmed mutual relationship between one's self-esteem and perception of his/her own abilities such that the lower the self-esteem is, the weaker one considers him/herself to be, and conversely, feelings of capability and worthiness are recovered and positive changes such as feeling self-confident and ambitious occur as self-esteem is boosted. Therefore, enhancement of self-esteem and positive self-concept directly affects increase in self-confidence (12).

Approaches to develop and enhance positive self-concept and self-esteem, and to boost self-confidence

A close investigation into Quran and Ahadith reveals fruitful approaches to develop and enhance self-esteem and positive self-concept and consequently to achieve ideal self, and potent and stable self-confidence:

1. Paying attention to venerability and God-given dignity of human

From the perspective of Quran, all humans have venerability and dignity: ". And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with [definite] preference" (Holy Quran, 17:70)

However, one can voluntarily enhance his/her worth and dignity through using thought and adorning him/herself with positive attributes such as faith (Holy Quran,63:8), science (Holy Quran,39:9) and Taqwa (Holy Quran,49:13). Therefore, the human soul is likened to a precious jewel and human is held responsible to maintain and enhance it further: Indeed, human's soul is a precious gem; anyone who nurtures it will excel it and anyone who degrades it will throw it down (8). And The

most profitable knowledge is the knowledge about self (8).

2. Recognition of the superb purpose in life: From the perspective of religion, recognizing the superb purpose in life is one of the important approaches that can be adopted to achieve positive self-concept, and develop and enhance self-confidence. Recognition of ultimate and superb purpose leads to many benefits, including development and stability of personality, arriving at a definite definition of success and prosperity, and finding freedom from confusion.

By recognizing and taking into account the ultimate goal, any actions taken to realize it is considered a success and therefore feelings of emptiness and despair due to unpleasant events, which cause self-confidence to be undermined, are minimized or disappear.

From the perspective of Quran, humans' ultimate purpose in life is to become close to Allah (Holy Quran,18:110) and to achieve his Mercy (Holy Quran,11:118) in the light of divine slavery and servitude (Holy Quran,51:56). Therefore, any attempt is conceptualized according to this sacred purpose.

3. To avoid any expectations from and hope to others:

Discontinuing to be greedy of other people's belongings leads to honor: Discontinuing to be hopeful for what is in other people's hands is considered a believer's honor (8); I saw human's all good and prosperity to lie in not being greedy of what is in other people's hands (13).

4. Making efforts to strengthen mental stability, resolution, and ambition

A free man feels free under any circumstances, if a plight occurs to him, he waits out, and if the plight crushes him, he is not defeated though captured and subdued and his comfort turned into hardship (13). It is advisable for a believer to have eight traits, composure at devilries and turmoils, patience at plights (13). [Human's] honor depends on [his] ambitions (13). Any efforts, in this regard, are indeed to enhance positive self-concept and self-esteem as well as to boost self-confidence.

8. Making efforts to boost one's own social image

From social perspective, one's conception of him/herself depends on others' reactions to him/her and the image that others exhibit in facing him/her, as comparing oneself with others plays an important role; for example, if one has a rich neighbor, he/she may consider him/herself poor. Therefore, comparing oneself with people from upper classes causes senses of humiliation and self-inferiority (8). Sayings have highlighted avoiding accompanying with people from upper economic classes (2).

Besides that, social support and self-esteem are associated. Social support refers to one's perception of others' attention to and interest in him/herself, of whether he/she is a valuable person from others' perspectives and they will rush to his aid if he/she is experiencing a difficulty and distress (13). Quran's efficient suggestion, in this regard, is establishing a deep, faith-driven connection among members of the Muslim Community that leads to their support of each other (Holy Quran, 9:71).

The need for feeling valuable is vital for mental health and equilibrium and even individual evolution. If this need is not appropriately satisfied, a sense of humiliation is developed in person, which is mainly due to being continuously rejected by others (1).

Conclusion

Self-confidence not only contradicts but also is in agreement with faith in God. Such interpretation of self-confidence is confirmed and emphasized in Islamic teachings. From perspective of religion, paying attention to venerability and God-given dignity of human, recognizing the superb purpose in life, making efforts to strengthen mental stability, resolution, and ambition, and relying on one's own will and practice can be suggested to develop and enhance self-concept and self-esteem. Mental health, having persistency to reach purpose, gaining success, and winning others' confidence are considered the benefits and outcomes of having self-confidence.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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