Forgiveness and Religious Tendency as Predictors of Mental Health Among the Undergraduate Students of Bahonar University

Naaser Ebrahimpour and Fatemeh Zarinkolah

Kerman central prison health & treatment officer, Kerman, Iran

Research objectives: Various researches have investigated the relation between general health and dependent variables. The current study has been conducted in order to look into the relation between forgiveness and religious tendency as a predictor of mental health among undergraduate students of Bahonar University. Methodology: In order to meet the objectives, a sample of 140 participants including 82 female and 58 male students was randomly chosen and using the questionnaires of religious tendency (Khodayari Fard, 1999), General Health Quality (GHQ) and Family Forgiveness Scale (FFS) was studied. Findings: The results coming from regression analysis showed that religious tendency with a regression coefficient of 0.14 and forgiveness with a regression coefficient of 0.09 can be the predictors of mental health. The results' coming from calculating correlation indicates a significant relation between general health and factors like realization (0.30), recognition (0.28), reparation (0.24), restitution (0.25), and resolution (0.28). The result of this article is in accordance with the former studies.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is something beyond a lack of mental illness. The positive facet of mental health which is emphasized by the World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity”. No groups are immune from mental illness though it should be acknowledged that immigrants, the homeless, unemployed and uneducated people as well as people who were victims of violence, abused women and children, and finally neglected elders are more subject to mental illness. So far, so many definitions have been given for "mental health" all of which insist the importance of personal integrity. Godstein considers mental health as the balance between the organs and the environment in order to achieve prosperity. Hal et al state mental health as a state of psychological maturity that involves maximum effectiveness and content coming from individual and social confrontations including feelings and positive feedbacks towards oneself and others.

Since 1990s, following the relative failure of mental health experts with the customary intervention methods and technics, and after the conduction of various researches approving the positive impact of religion on mental health, focusing on religion was staggering. An intercultural study among western countries that was carried out on 28085 participants, suggested that the more people hold on to their religion, the less they are likely to commit suicide.

Regarding Stress as a common mental disorder, studies show that participating in religious ceremonies reduces stress. Some studies showed teaching question solving methods using a religious framework would reduce the subjects’ stress while increasing their conformity. Religion or religious behavior and depression have also been the subject of some researches which show the decreasing effect of religion on depression, and there is an inverse relationship between tendency towards religion and depression. Moreover, studying depression factors like self-respect show the positive effect of religion, too. In sum, religion has a favorable effect on mental health. In a meta-analysis carried out on religion and mental health studies, the results suggested that 47 percent of the studies showed a direct relation between religion and mental health, 23 percent showed the inverse relation and in about 30 percent there was no significant relation. Some other studies not only show a direct relation of religion and mental health but also show a positive influence of religion on the physical health.
Physical illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases, digestive disorders and some forms of cancer and hypertension are less seen among religious people. Moreover, a lot of articles have been published on the mechanism of religion's influence on the health of people. Some researchers believe religion answers two of the human's profound questions about the goal of life and the meaning of his activities, as it affects the lifestyle and how people solve the conflict of their values and this way, it can help the integrity of human psychological and spiritual integrity as well as human self-discipline. In other words, one's conformity with life issues entails responding some important desires to which he is trying to find an answer. Religion may be a suitable ground on which human desires and complications can be fulfilled. Among these desires, man's problem with the relation of time and eternity, getting and staying socialized, the pattern of getting attached to something and then separating from that, encouragement and punishment, meaning of activities, intellect, one's position in the world, overcoming the sufferings and making sense out of them, and finally the profound conflicts of life can be named as some of the prominent ones. Looking more precisely into the mechanism of religion impact on mental health and how some studies show negative effect of religion on mental or physical health encouraged researchers to study the influences of different kinds of religious tendency. Thus, Alport points out different kinds of religious tendency and believes religion is a spectrum that on the one side, it is used as a means and on the other side it has some form of sense and meaning which is per se the main motive of life with its own inner value. This latter kind of religion itself is a kind of motive for the individual and doesn't need other stimuli. Regarding this type of categorization, Alport then states that now we can cope with the question whether some religious beliefs are of more powerful in treating and preventing, compared to other stimuli.

Research objective:
Based on what was said about the health determining factors and considering the significance of religious tendency and forgiveness, the objective of this article is to investigate the interrelation of these variables and their potential of predicting mental health. The objectives of the article are listed as follows:

Research methodology:
The current research is a cross-sectional survey study and is classified as a correlational study.

Population, sample and sampling:
The population in this research was the undergraduate students of Bahonar University in Kerman. Based on the statistics, 10500 of them were female students and the remaining 7500 were male students. Using stratified sampling, 77 female and 55 male students were selected and random sampling was carried out on freshman to senior graduate students and also on the associate students.

Compiling information:
General Health Questionnaire (GHQ):
28-item General Health Questionnaire is provided by Goldberg and Hiller and contains 4 secondary scales and each scale contains 7 questions. The 4 scales are: 1. Somatic symptoms 2. Anxiety and sleep disorder 3. Social function 4. Depression symptoms. The validity of questionnaire using double-checking and cronbach alpha was estimated at 0.70, 0.93 and 0.90. According to the results of this research, the 28-item GHQ questionnaire was eligible to be used in psychological researches and clinical activities. The questionnaire's reliability has been reported by Yalahang as 91.0

Religious tendency questionnaire:
The questionnaire which is provided by Khodayarifard et al is a Likert attitude test comprised of 40 questions in which the subject is to respond in accordance with a 5 point scale differing from "I absolutely agree" to "I absolutely disagree". And of course at the end of questionnaire, there is a general self-report in which the subject on a 5 point scale determines how religious he/she is from the viewpoint of classmates, teachers, acquaintances and strangers and also from his own viewpoint. Indices of validity and reliability of the questionnaire were calculated in the first and second studies and the indices for both were reported at a high, acceptable level.

Questionnaire of Family Forgiveness Scale:
The means of evaluating forgiveness features in this research is the Family Forgiveness Scale (FFS). The original text of this scale was devised by Pollard, Anderson and Jennings in 1988 screening and assessing "Forgiveness" in the families. FFS 40-item form which was used in this research after translation to Persian, was devised by Pollard et al and its phrases was extracted through agent analysis on the primary 56-item form. This scale form likewise the primary form, is comprised of 5 scales each of which contains 8 questions in two parts of main family and primary relation. The subscales forming FFS are as follows:
1. Realism  2. Recognition  3. Reparation
4. Restitution  5. Resolution

Findings:
As you can see in the table, the correlation between General Health and Family Forgiveness (r= -0.27) and between General Health and religious tendency (r=0.32) is significant at 0.01. Meanwhile, the correlation between forgiveness and religious tendency is r= 0.34 which would be significant at 0.05.

The results of regression analysis on relation of forgiveness and religious tendency with general health showed that the critical value (F=13.75) with freedom degrees of (2, 137) is more than the table critical value (F=4.66) and therefore, the calculated regression is significant at 0.01.

As you can see in the table above, regression coefficient of religious tendency (β= -0.14) indicates that each unit of "Job burnout" equals 0.14 unit of change in general health with a standard error of 1.32 and its value was investigated with t-test and the value t=4.26 suggests its significance at 0.01. Also, the regression coefficient of forgiveness (β=0.09) shows that each unit of change in forgiveness equals 0.09 unit of change in general health with a standard error of 0.78 and the value t=3.24 shows its significance at 0.01.

As you may see in the table above, multivariate correlation was calculated as R=0.39 which accounts for 15 percent of general health variance.

Conclusion:
Forgiveness and religious tendency are predictors of the student’s general health. As for investigating prediction power of forgiveness and religious tendency in predicting mental health, regression analysis was used. The results of regression analysis respecting the relation of forgiveness and religious tendency with general health indicated that forgiveness and religious tendency accounts for 15 percent of general health variance. The results of the current research are in accordance with the research results of Khodayari et al (2001) and Bahrami. The results may be better enlightened if the investigated inner factors of research are reflected upon. Honesty and trustworthiness are among traits which are admired in all cultures. Honest people are usually honest with both other people and themselves. Having traits of honesty and recognition would prevent many pressures and unduly stresses. These traits also give rise to sound interpersonal relationships and strengthen them and meanwhile correct other people's misbehavior or wrong patterns.

From the mental viewpoint, the effect of recognition on mental health is remarkable but in the current research it was studied only as a reparation which is one of the things that people do after they have done something wrong. People usually experience a state of content after reparation. Reparation is usually a function of individual discrepancies; that is, not all people have reparation after doing something wrong but this kind of action is a lot more likely to come from people with general and mental health, so it might be said that there is a relation between reparation and general health. Different aspects of forgiveness were studied and the results show its significant relation with general health. Restitution is one of human traits that is more involved in emotional fields and sometimes, it is considered as one of the psychic needs. Like other aspects of forgiveness, restitution is likewise one of the effective factors determining the quality of healthy interpersonal relationships. This trait is again related to general health and especially mental health. The same relation was confirmed in this research. Resolution is a state which can arise under restitution and forgiveness. This state indicates a person’s recovery or regaining their health, and one usually experience such a state when he/she enjoys mental and physical health.

REFERENCES


