

Comparing the indicators of general health among two groups of female Quran memorizers and non- memorizers in Kermanshah, Iran

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Abstract

Background and Objective: General health has always been a critical issue in human's life. Religion and religious education is influential in individuals' general health. Thus, the purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the effect of Quran memorization on general health.

Method: This study used a simple random sampling procedure to select 106 female Quran memorizers and 91 non-memorizers. With respect to the collected data, the demographic information, such as age, marital status, education, and occupation, was elicited; in addition, general health was measured using the *General Health Questionnaire* (GHQ-28). The data were analyzed through comparison of means to spot the group differences. In this study, all the ethical issues were considered; moreover, the authors declare no conflict of interest.

Results: The results of the study revealed that Quran memorizers were in a better status in terms of general health when compared with the non-memorizers. Accordingly, there were significant differences between the two groups in terms of stress, sleep disorders, depression, and physical signs. Furthermore, a significant difference was detected in terms of social functioning.

Conclusion: Since Quran memorizers enjoyed better general health, it could be concluded that extending Quran principles and realizing their effects on individuals' general health could provide greater understanding of Quran and its potential for treating psychological disorders, hence promoting psychological and mental health.

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Summary

Background and Objectives: General health, as the name suggests, is a general concept which includes both physical and psychological aspects. We associate general health with being away or free from illness. The ultimate goal of all attempts made by medical doctors and psychologists is maintaining the health and preventing physical and mental disorders. Based on the definition presented by World Health Organization (WHO), health in its broad sense is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (1). One dimension of general health is mental health. In fact, general

health is affected by a set of physical, social, cognitive, and spiritual factors. Moreover, in public opinion general health is defined in terms of normal reactions when responding to internal and external stimuli.

Among other sources, religious teachings in general and the holy Quran in particular have attached significant importance to physical and psychological health as a strategic attempt in people's lifestyle. According to Quran, an individual is said to be in good health if s/he has a strong religious belief and, given the human's divine nature, s/he interacts well with her/his internal and external powers and desires. Such a person chooses the best path for the sake of closeness to God. However, a person is supposed to be mentally ill if s/he is atheistic at heart and factional in practice.

Research conducted in this area shows that practicing the religion along with attending religious ceremonies and Quran reading sessions can improve physical and mental health, thus enhancing the quality of life.

Method: This study used a causal comparative design. Simple random sampling was employed and 106 female Quran memorizers and 91 non-memorizers were selected. General health was measured using the *General Health Questionnaire* (GHQ-28) developed by Goldberg and Hiller (1972) (16). This scale has been used in five forms of 4, 60, 30, 28, and 12- item questionnaires. The scale measures four components, namely anxiety, social functioning, physical and psychological signs, and depression. Goldberg and Williams (17) have reported the validity and reliability of the scale to be 0.83 and 0.87, respectively. Taghavi (18) calculated the reliability of the scale using test-retest, split half, and Cronbach's Alpha and found the reliability of 0.70, 0.93, and 0.90, respectively. Moreover, Palheng et al., (19) measured the validity of *General Health Questionnaire* using conventional rating and found a cut score of 6 while in the case of Likert scale use a cut score of 22 was found. They further used test-retest and reported a reliability of 0.91. This study used descriptive statistics and t- test in order to compare two groups of memorizers and non-memorizers.

Results: Results demonstrated that the female memorizers were in a better status considering the general health components when compared with the female non-memorizers. In other words, they were better in terms of physical signs, anxiety, and depression at a significant level of 0.99. Besides, results indicated that Quran memorizers had more effective social functioning than their counterparts ($p=0.95$).

Conclusion: The findings of this study revealed that Quran memorizers had better general health than their counterparts (non-memorizers). This is in line with Johnson et al., (20). These researchers found that religious beliefs affect both general health and compatibility. This can be justified by verse 82 of Assra in holy Quran that explains "And We send down Quran which is healing and mercy for the believers", meaning that those who are religious are loved and cured by mighty God (21). In this verse, the almighty God has explicitly underscored the role of Quran in healing. In fact, Quran is said to be the panacea for the behavioral, social, psychological, and physical disorders.

The results further indicated that the level of anxiety and depression was lower among Quran memorizers compared with non-memorizers. In fact, believing in God is an effective solution to reduce anxiety and stress. Moreover, remembering God also lowers fears and challenges in everyday life (4). The comparison of social functioning among the two groups showed that Quran memorizers are in a better status. This finding is concordant to that of Rezaee et al., (22). This can be explained by the fact that religion provides benevolence, empathy, and rigor in people's life. In

other words, religion is a self-control mechanism helping individuals stay away from trouble and feel safer when problems arise.

Research shows that when you are a strong believer you tend to be at peace, feeling lively and happy. This feeling brings individuals cultural, social, and economic prosperity. This study concludes that reading Quran can help individuals ensure general health. However, this study had limitations with regard to sampling and controlling cultural and economic variables. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies focus on different populations and use experimental designs. It is further recommended that more education and extension of Quran activities take place if we expect to improve the general health of our society

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