

## The Role of Ashura rituals and post-Ashura days in spiritual health through promoting religious-oriented normal behavior: A practical model

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Islamic world especially Shia experience some different atmosphere in Muharram because of Ashura. This atmosphere can provide a proper field for reducing some maladaptive behaviors and stabilizing religious-based behaviors in society by setting up Ashura rituals in all cities. Surely cultural policy makers wish to remain this spiritual atmosphere for other times in order to improve spiritual health in people.

**Methods:** In this regard, Authors try to provide some practical solutions through Ashura rituals and their analysis according to some behavioral models such as transtheoretical model of behavioral change. All ethical issues were observed. Moreover, the authors did not report conflict of interest.

**Results:** several behavioral strategies may be offered according to time of interventions lasts from Ashura rituals. These solutions can lead to institutionalization of favorable and adaptive behaviors both in individual and social level.

**Conclusion:** In this paper, it istried to introduce the practical solutions by reviewing the dimensions of behavior changes and matching them with the circumstances of society in Muharram.

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### Summary

**Background and Objectives:** Shia'stend to experience a different atmosphere in different social milieus during the months of Muharram and Safar. They hold mourning ceremonies in various forms in order to commemorate Imam Hussain (PBUH) and the high values for which he was martyred.

For centuries, Hey'at and Hussaini'yeh, in parallel with mosques, have been responsible for hosting such ceremonies in Shia communities, including Iran, in both urban and rural areas (1). People attend these institutions and do their best without any expectation of reward and independent from the governmental organizations.

As some scholar have pointed out, religiosity is somewhat different from spiritual health (2). However, others have argued that the concepts related to spiritual health should be translated according to the cultural

and religious issues in each community. In line with this perspective, one of the aspects of spiritual health in Shia communities is performing religious-oriented normal behavior among people. This factor, along with other cognitive and emotional components, forms the main framework of spiritual health (3).

The effects of mourning ceremonies on reducing risky behavior and promoting spiritual health have been the focus of several studies (4). For example, in one study, the number of prisoners in Khuzestan, a province in southern Iran, was reported to decrease in Muharram when compared with that in other months (5). In another study, the relationship between people's religious beliefs and their attendance at Hussaini'yeh-A'zamin Zanjan, Iran, during Muharram days was evaluated, and significant correlations were found (6).

Given the empirical evidence, it seems that Muharram and its spiritual atmosphere could be one of the most effective tools for the internalization of religious-oriented normal behavior and the promotion of spiritual

health in Shia communities. This becomes of paramount importance when one take saccount of promoting such behavioras the main goal of intervention in fields such as educational medicine (7). The authors of this article would, thus, aim to explain this relationshipin light of the Trans Theoretical (TT) model of behavior change (8).

**Method:** According to the TT model of behavior change, behavior can be internalized or changed through a series of stages including precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, change, and maintenance. Of course, different levels of society experience different levels of spirituality and religious-oriented normal behavior. Accordingly, Muharram rituals may have differential functions for these levels according to their stage of behavioral change.

The rituals can help people at one level move from the precontemplation to contemplation stage, make them perform behaviorrelated to another level, and help them maintain former normal behavior, thus preventing any reduction in the frequency of such behavior.

**Results:** From this view point, people at any level of change need proper behavioral intervention that can be different from that for other levels. According to the aforementioned facts, important policie sarising from the TT model are as follows:

- Reliance on the potential of schools, mosques, and universities as places covering a great proportion of a community. Unlike Hey'at and Hussain'yeh, these organizations can maintain and continue their activities after Ashura and Muharram;
- Efforts to promote the community understanding of Ashura movement and its achievements;
- Provide clear behavioral patterns originated from heroes of Ashura;
- Focus on the outcomes of normal behavior at both individual and social levels in order to maintain the frequency of such behavior, especially for those positioned at change and maintenance stages.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, it should be stated that the Islamic world, especially Shia communities, experience a different atmosphere in Muharram because of Ashura. This atmosphere, created through setting up Ashura rituals in all cities, could pave the way for reducing maladjusted behavior in the society. Without doubt, cultural policy makers should maintain this spiritual atmosphere for the other time periods in order to improve people's spiritual health. Ashura rituals could also be analyzed based on behavioral models such as the TT model of behavior change, hence providing practical solutions in this regard. Such solutions could result in the institutionalization of favorable and adaptive behavior at both individual and social levels.

The authors of this article are currently seeking to design and carry out research in order to evaluate the efficacy and effectiveness of this model in normal behavior adjustment.

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