

The Prediction of Loneliness among the Kermanshahi Elderly Based on Self-Compassion, Spirituality, and Islamic Lifestyle

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Given that, in the 21st century, the elderly population is rapidly rising, especially in developing countries, it is crucial to pay due attention to their physical and mental needs. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the predictive power of self-compassion, spirituality, and Islamic lifestyle on seniors' loneliness.

Method: A descriptive, correlational design was adopted in this research. The study population consisted of all male seniors in Kermanshah, while the sample included 280 participants who were randomly selected. They completed Loneliness Questionnaires, Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS), and Islamic Lifestyle (ILST). The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression. All ethical issues were observed in the study and the authors declared to conflict of interests.

Results: The results indicated that the absolute magnitude of correlation coefficients ranged from -0.56 to -0.65. Loneliness had a significant, negative relationship with self-compassion, spirituality, and Islamic lifestyle ($P < 0.05$). Further, the results of simultaneous regression indicated that, in total, the predictors accounted for 59% of the variance in loneliness.

Conclusion: According to the results, one can say that those who have higher levels self-compassion and spirituality, and follow an Islamic lifestyle are in a considerably better condition in terms of their health indicators.

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Summary

Background and Objective: Aging population and its consequences constitute a major social challenge (1). Aging, a process that involves biological, psychological and social changes, increases the likelihood of mortality (2). The volume of behavioral and psychological problems in developing countries is increasing and this can be accompanied by a sense of loneliness in the elderly (3-5). Loneliness is a pervasive phenomenon which is experienced by 25% to 50% of the population over the age of 65 (6). Loneliness is related to the health and well-being of the elderly (7-9). Neff (10) proposed the notion of self-compassion. Self-

compassion entails adopting a loving and accepting approach toward undesirable dimensions of oneself and one's life. It includes kindness to oneself, common human feelings and mindfulness (11). Also, self-compassion serves to meet the basic needs of autonomy, competence and the need for communication (12). Studies have shown the relationship between self-compassion, on the one hand, and loneliness, spirituality and lifestyle, on the other (13-15).

People who enjoy mental health interpret life events and problems more comfortably and have better compatibility (16). There is a relationship between health and spirituality (17). Spirituality has two parts: religious spirituality and existential spirituality (18,19).

Today, the concept of Islamic lifestyle has become the subject of a lot of research (20, 21). The commonality of religions is that the material life style is not encouraged (22). Islamic life style is derived from Quranic verses (23).

Springer et al. showed that there is a relationship between depression and loneliness (15). Keramrei et al. also demonstrated that there is a relationship between spirituality, depression and loneliness in the elderly (24). The results of Sheikholeslami et al.'s study also showed that the elderly who follow an Islamic lifestyle are less likely to experience loneliness (25). Providing mental health to the various strata of society, especially the elderly, is one of the most important issues (26,27). Therefore, the present study was conducted to examine the predictive power of self-compassion, spirituality, and Islamic lifestyle on seniors' loneliness.

Method: This research is correlational. The statistical population included all elderly men aged 60 and older in Kermanshah. Of this population, 280 individuals were randomly selected. Data were collected through administering questionnaires of loneliness, self-compassion, spiritual well-being and Islamic lifestyle (2 & 28-30). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient and regression.

Results: Demographic data showed that mean (\pm SD) age in old men was 64.49 (\pm 17.3 years). Overall, 96% of the participants were single (widow or divorced) and 4% were married. The results showed that the mean score obtained for loneliness, self-compassion, spirituality, and Islamic lifestyle were 43.19, 26.49, 40.88 and 21.11, respectively. Also, the results showed that the correlation coefficients of predictive variables with loneliness were -0.568 (for self-compassion), -0.655 (for spirituality) and 0.607 (for Islamic lifestyle), with all the correlations being statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). The results of simultaneous regression further showed that none of the predictive variables in the regression equation was eliminated. The beta (β) values for the three variables were -0.59, -63.0, and -0.65 respectively. These three variables accounted for 57% of the variance in loneliness.

Conclusion: In line with the results of previous studies (31-33), the results of this study showed that there is a statistically meaningful relationship between self-compassion and loneliness in the elderly. In explaining this association, it can be argued that self-compassion is a new construct that relates to the health of individuals, in general, and the reduction of loneliness in particular (28). Self-compassion is a sort of emotion regulation strategy that alleviates isolation by motivating the elderly to establish social interactions.

As another finding of this study, which is consistent with the results of previous studies (34,35), a significant relationship was detected between self-compassion in the elderly, on the one hand, and their spirituality and Islamic lifestyle, on the other hand. There is no doubt that individuals are different in terms of their vulnerability to psychological problems. Nonetheless, these discrepancies are influenced by people's socio-cultural status and spiritual orientation

(21,35). Without spirituality, other dimensions of health cannot have the maximum desired performance. In addition, people's health is affected by their lifestyle and spiritual beliefs (36).

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