

A meta-analysis of the effect of religiosity and spirituality on treatment of psychotic-clinical disorders (2003-2013)

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Although in the 20th century religion was regarded as an obstacle in front of modernizing human societies and was a symbol of old-fashioned ideas, it leads to serenity and spiritual enjoyment for a religious person who believes that God is supporting them in all walks of life. Therefore, the question is whether religion is able to improve people's mental health given the existing differences in individuals' views in this regard. The current study aimed to conduct a meta-analysis on the association between mental health and religiosity.

Method: The method of this study is meta-analysis. This study is among documentary researches that are based on systematic review. Systematic review pursues settlement and combination of researches and evidences that focus in special question. Statistical population of this study included papers published in peer reviewed journals that were connected to the topic and were published during 1380-1395. At first we did a primary study and gathered data. Validity of elected papers was appropriate (0.99). Validity of the Iranian papers was a bit higher than that of English papers. The researchers declared no conflict of interests.

Results: Mental health, happiness and satisfaction of life were the most repeatedly mentioned subjects in Iranian papers and heterogeneity of variables were relatively low. In English studies, the majority of studies had focused on the effect of religiosity on health, quality of life and depression. Diversity of variables in English papers was higher than that of Iranian papers. Overall, according to the results of the reviewed papers, 34% of the findings reported a weak effect of religiosity on mental health, 34.4% indicated a strong impact and 31.4% showed a medium influence.

Conclusion: The effect size of religiosity has been studied more frequently in Iranian papers. The similarity in the low and high effect sizes in Iranian papers indicate that further studies are required in this regard.

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Summary

Background and Objective: Religion is a systematic system of beliefs, practices and designed symbols for facilitating nearness to transcendent existence and educating a true perception from relationship and responsibility for others in living with each other in society (1). Religion evolves the face of the word in

front of person's view and changes his attitude about himself, creation and events that happen around him (2). Religious person feels safe under God support and mercy and has confidence, serenity and deep pleasure. Indeed, spirituality is an inseparable part of morality and human values and it is important especially in monotheism religions. It is important to know spirituality and religion are different both in meaning and act. When we consider spirituality, we should

make a distinction between religiosity and spirituality. Spirituality is an inseparable part of human existence and we cannot have permanent happiness. So for avoiding chronic disaffection as "spiritual deficit syndrome", we need enough spirituality. With respect to spirituality, Jung says, "spirituality strengthens faith, trust and hope in a person and reinforces moral and spiritually features in a person and also it is an important base in front of problems, disasters and privations of life" (3). It seems that people who are mentally healthy can easily communicate with religion and are at high levels of spirituality. These individuals can properly get along with people around them based on mutual respect. At the same time, they can suitably express their feelings to others. According to research findings on the relationship between religiosity and mental health and physical health, one can conclude that religion attitudes among people and mental-physical health have a relation (4). In general, the results of researches show that doing a religious practice, having faith and participating in religious ceremonies can play an effective role in prevention of mental problems in people and their treatment and also in promoting health and well-being among people (5). On the other hand, spirituality affects mental health and promotes it through some mechanisms such as cooperative coping style, internal control, and creation of a supportive network in stressful situations. In recent years, psychologists have begun to consider religion as an extraordinary force that gives spiritual power to humans, protects them against difficulties and complications and reduces anxiety and stress (6, 7).

Spirituality affects mental health through some mechanisms like participatory coping with style, internal control and enjoying supportive network in stressful situations and cause to Nowadays in most of the society, life of people in all dimension change fast and rapidly. Reflex of this changes in individual and social life is very sensible. Based on research findings, Comer (8) believes that, in comparison with non-religious individuals and those who believe God does not pay any attention to them, religious people feel less lonely and are less likely to suffer from pessimism, depression and anxiety. Such people are better equipped to deal with major life stressors like diseases and war and are less likely to commit suicide (6). In the current study, the researchers focused on the research projects conducted in the realm of the association between religiosity and spirituality by carrying out a meta-analysis and presenting the results in the form of a comprehensive picture.

Method: Meta-analysis helps the researchers avoid depending on the results of a single study or traditional and narrative non-quantitative reviews. It provides the opportunity to find similarities and differences in the research methodology of various studies and, through adopting a focused viewpoint, presents a general picture of a research activity. In meta-analysis, the researcher concentrates on a single subject covered in different studies. The current study sought to conduct a meta-analysis based on studies focusing on the

association between health and religiosity. To do so, documents and evidence from Irondoc, technology bank, noormags, English peer reviewed journals available in Alzahra University library, etc. were retrieved. The study aimed at investigating research projects on the relationship between religiosity and mental health. This meta-analysis can enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences in such research findings. During the research process, first each study was explored individually and, based on the effect size, the final results of the study were determined and implications were suggested.

This meta-analysis aimed to compare and combine the results of studies on the association between health and religiosity. The observation unit comprised theses and papers related to the effect of religiosity. Statistical population of this study included papers published in peer reviewed journals that were about spirituality and religiosity. During data analysis and exploration of the effect size, two factors were taken into account: (1) the study should present quantitative data and (2) it should focus on factors affecting health and religiosity. After screening the studies, the required statistics were extracted. In the next stage, necessary conversions were made in light of effect size and correlation coefficient formulas.

Results: Mental health, happiness and satisfaction of life were the most repeatedly mentioned subjects in Iranian papers and heterogeneity of variables were relatively low. In English studies, the majority of studies had focused on the effect of religiosity on health, quality of life and depression. Diversity of variables in English papers was higher than that of Iranian papers. Overall, 69.5% of Iranian studies had found medium or large effect sizes for the impact of religiosity on mental health. In English studies, however, 54.6% had reported medium to large effect sizes. In fact, the effect sizes reported in Iranian studies were larger than those of English studies. Most of the studies focused on religion and religiosity and only 7% of them concentrated on interventions. Out of the 43 studies journals, 31 (71.5%) had reported positive association between religiosity/spirituality and reduced mental disorders, 8 (18.6%) journals had found inconsistent results (both positive and negative correlations), and 2 journals (4.7%) had reported negative correlations between religiosity and mental disorder.

Conclusion: Because daily life is accompanied by anxiety, believing in God and a true source can enhance people's tolerance of these difficulties. The major limitation of this study has to do with the way the results were presented in the studies. Some of the reviewed papers/theses, had not presented detailed information about the findings. Rather, they had only offered general pictures. Thus, the way they had reported their findings was not consistent and standard. Some other studies had only reported the results of t-test, F value, or correlation. Thus, a lot of papers were discarded. Moreover, in some regions, no particular

study had been conducted or the carried out studies were not reliable enough.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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