

Impact of Religious Practices on Hardiness and Mental Health of Elderly Muslim Subjects

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the impact of regularly performed religious practices on hardiness and mental health of elderly age Muslims. For this purpose a total of 200 old age subjects belonging to Muslim religious community of age ranging from 65 to 75 years were taken for the study. The subjects were consisted of two groups of subjects, who reported to perform the religious prayers (Salah) five times a day (100Ss) and the subjects who were not regular at such religious prayers (100Ss). The Singh Psychological Hardiness Scale constructed by Arun Kumar Singh and Mental Health Checklist, constructed by Pramod Kumar was used for the purpose of measuring variables under study. The Mean and t-test was used for the purposed of statistically analyse the obtained. The results indicate that elderly Muslim subjects, who used to perform prayer (Salah) regularly for five times a day, were significantly more hardy and their psycho-physical health was better than those who do not participate in such prayer (Salah) regularly.

Keywords: *Religious practices, Salah, Mental Health, Hardiness, Muslim, Senior citizens.*

The Muslim religious prayer is a combination of physical actions, verbal sayings, and an internal feeling in the heart. Muslims are required to be in a state of calmness, serenity and humbleness while performing their prayers. Once the prayer is started, a series of sayings and actions are performed. The sayings include reciting parts of the holy Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, as well as other sayings glorifying Allah and thanking him for all of his blessings upon us. It also gives Muslims the opportunity to ask Allah for anything they desire. This could include asking for help in getting a job, passing an exam, having a child, asking Allah for forgiveness of sins or anything else for self satisfaction and expectation. Muslims are required to pray at least five times every day. Islamic prayers can produce spiritual energy that may yield many psychological benefits, such as amelioration of stress and improvement in subjective well-being, interpersonal sensitivity, and mastery. Every Muslim is aware of the

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benefits and importance of prayer. It brings a Muslim close to Allah Almighty, serves as a form of invocation, helps find solace from the troubles of this world and increases the chances of a Muslim getting higher reward in the world hereafter. Therefore, without any doubt every Muslim offers prayer as a means of fulfilling his or her obligation and becoming more pious and righteous.

In the review of literature provided in the Handbook of Religion and Health by Koenig, *et al.* (2001) identified literally hundreds of empirical studies that report associations between some measures of organizational religious involvement and some dimension(s) of mental health. Krause (2003) examined the relationship between religious meaning and subjective well-being. The findings suggest that older adults who derive a sense of meaning in life from religion tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism. Barkan and Greenwood (2003) observed that religious attendance is positively associated with subjective well-being among adults aged 65 and older. Ellison *et al.* (2001) found that church attendance had a consistent beneficial effect even with controls for a wide range of socio demographic and psychosocial covariates. A study conducted by Fry (2000) revealed that personal meaning, involvement in formal religion, participation in spiritual practices, importance of religion, sense of inner peace with self, and accessibility to religious resources were significant predictors of well-being. Mac Kenzie *et al.* (2000) revealed that many expressed the belief that having a relationship with God forms the foundation of their psychological well-being. Brady *et al.* (1999) found that religiousness buffered the relationship between physical well-being and overall quality of life.

Many individuals may experience worship as emotionally uplifting and spiritually satisfying. Believers may be touched by many different aspects of worship, very few of which have been focus of careful empirical research (Gritzmacher, Bolton and Dana, 1988; Idler and Kasl, 1997). Worship services vary widely in content and style; these differences are apparent in theological message, preaching style, emotionalism, sacramentalism, and in many other dimensions. In addition congregations vary in physical structure and appearance, which may affect personal experience in ways that are poorly understood. Nevertheless, religious services unite many diverse individuals in a common purpose, focusing their attention on the sacred. Participation in such activities with others may build excitement and solidarity among members, and may also affirm and strengthen the religious meaning system, or "plausibility structures," of individuals (Berger, 1967).

One of the ingredients that can effects on individual physical and mental health is hardiness which is a personality characteristic. Kobasa (1979) know "hardiness" as a part of personality characteristics which acts as a resistance resource against life stressor events. Generally, hardiness is a structure which is composed from three components work and personal commitment, personal sense control in time of events and consequences and an internal belief which change is a challenge and an opportunity for evolution and not a threat. Stubborn people are more bound to their actions and devote their selves to their aim and sense that they rule over the situations and they are determining themselves and they know life changes as

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challenges and the opportunities for evolvement and improvement not limitations and threats (Kobasa, 1979).

Research findings also show that hardiness acts as a bumper against stresses in various life situations (Kobasa 1979). Which suggest an independence feeling and increases autonomy and cause the performance promotion and improvement (Maddi et.al 1999). Besharat et. al.(2005) also in their survey obtain this result that there is a positive correlation between persistence and its components with psychological well-being, and these variables can predict the changes related to the psychological well-being in a significant way (Besharat, Pour Hossein, and Karimi, 2005). Also In reports of Cunningham and De La Rosa (2008) are approved the effect of the ability of job control on life satisfaction, job satisfaction, health and individual's wellbeing (Cunningham, and De La Rosa, 2008)

Beasley, Thompson and Davidson (2003) approved the moderating role of hardiness in life negative events effects on women's psychological health and the role of hardiness in reducing the effects of emotion-focused coping in distress scales, for men and women (Beasley, Thompson, and Davidson, 2003). Sinclair and Tetrick (2002) in their research entitled a review of work factors and hardiness structure and its relationship with neurosis and conflict accessed to this result that hardiness dimensions (commitment, control and challenge) predict the health beyond its general dimension (Sinclair, and Tetrick, 2002). Also Maddiet al. (2002) believed that hardiness and its components are a reflection of mental health (Maddi, Khoshaba, Persico, Harvey and. Bleecker, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of the present investigation consisted of 200 senior citizens belonging to Muslim community. Among them 100 subjects were those who offer prayer five times regularly and 100 subjects were those who were not regular in offering prayer five times daily. These subjects were belonging to age ranging from 65 to 75 years and belonging to median economic status.

Design

A between group design was used in the research. In this the variable Regular Religious Prayers (*Salah*) was consisted of two groups of two groups, i.e., who offer prayer five times regularly and the subjects who were not regular in offering prayer five times daily.

Instrument

Two measures were used in this study,

1. ***Singh Psychological Hardiness Scale*** constructed by Arun Kumar Singh (2008) was used to assess hardiness level of respondents. The test was comprised of total 30 items to be answered by subject opting one of the five options- 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Neutral', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'. The Scale was found to be a highly reliable and valid scale. The test - retest reliability of the scale was found to be 0.862

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which is significant at .01 levels. Likewise, the internal consistency reliability of the scale indicated by the coefficient alpha is found to be 0.792 which also is significant in regard to validity of the scale. The overall coefficient of concordance is 0.74 which is also significant. The index of reliability which is also taken as measures of validity is highly satisfactory. The index of reliability gives the relationship between obtained scores and their theoretical true scores. The index of reliability based upon test-retest reliability coefficient is .92 and based upon coefficient alpha is .89 which means that the test measures true ability to the extent expressed by r of .92 and .89. Percentile norms have been developed for describing the degree of psychological hardiness. An individual scoring 120 or above on SPHS is classified as high hardy while an individual scoring 79 or below is classified as low hardy.

2. **Mental health check list (MHC)** developed by Kumar was used to assess the mental health status. It consist of 11 items, includes with 6 mental and 5 somatic items, presented in a 4- point rating format. The split half reliability, correlating the odd even items has been found to be .70 with index of reliability of .83. The test retest reliability has also been studied. It has been found to be .65 with an index of reliability of .81. The retest was given with a time interval of two weeks. The r-value of .70 and .65, respectively have been found to be significant at .01 level of confidence, showing that the test is reliable both in terms of its internal consistency and stability of scores. The researcher calculated that reliability by using test- retest method on her own population. It was found to be .62. Its presented in a 4- point rating format, 4 marks are given for 'always', 3 for 'often', 2 for 'at time', and 1 for 'rarely'. High score on MHC is indicative of poor mental health.

RESULTS

Obtained data was systematically tabulated and statistically analyzed by mean, SD and t-test. The obtained results, its interpretation and discussion are given as follows:

Table: Mean, S.D and t-value two groups of subjects for hardiness and mental health

Measures	Ss offering prayer			Ss not offering prayer			t-value
	N	Mean	S.D	N	Mean	S.D	
Hardiness	100	129.93	6.36	100	93.37	11.36	28.15**
Mental Health	100	17.92	3.73	100	28.72	4.75	17.87**

Hardiness and Prayer (Salah)

The study of above Table-1 indicated that the obtained t-score for the two groups of prayer performers was showing a significant effect on hardiness at .01 level of significance [t-Score (98, 1) =17.87); p<.01]. This means that the two groups of adult prayer performers differ significantly in hardiness at.01 level of significance. The obtained mean score indicated that the hardiness score of elderly age subjects participating in prayers five times a day regularly

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(Mean-129.93, SD-6.36) was significantly higher in hardiness as compared to the subjects who do not participate in such prayers regularly (Mean-93.37, SD-11.36).

Mental Health and Prayer (Salah)

Further the Table-1 also indicated that the obtained t-score for the two groups of prayer performers was showing a significant effect on mental health too at .01 level of significance [t-Score (98, 1) =28.15; $p < .01$]. This means that the two groups of elderly prayer performers differ significantly in mental health at .01 level of significance. The obtained mean score indicated that the mean mental health scores of elderly age subjects participating in prayers five times a day regularly (Mean-17.92, SD-3.73) was significantly lower in mental health as compared to the subjects who do not participate in such prayers regularly (Mean-28.72, SD-4.75). As per the checklist scoring method, higher scores means poor mental health and lower scores means better mental health. This means that the subjects who perform prayers five times a day have better mental health as compared to subjects who do not involve in such practices regularly.

DISCUSSION

The result in the table reveals that elderly Muslim subjects regular in performing prayer (Salah) of five times a day were significantly more hardy than subjects who do not participate in such prayer (Salah) regularly. Kobasa (1979) has described hardiness as a shield against diseases. Hardiness is mainly relates to the adjustment and positive agreement encountering problems (Issacson, 2002).

When people perform five times regular prayer then he accept all the rules related to Prayer, do not break the rules and positively perform everyday activities. Believing all rules, persons completely devote to his religion; they feel positively towards your religion. On being devoted to your religion, person feels the pleasure, and he keeps himself mentally strong. Thus the level of hardiness in the person becomes high. Who people do not perform prayer regular five times their daily routine is different, they do not work more strongly. The person who does not pray is not devoted to his religion, the person understands his life well, but he is inexcusable in many aspects of life. Thus the level of hardiness in the person becomes low.

Azad (2014) found that hardiness people are more optimism, so this hardiness people's optimism, can make the overwhelming events seem controllable and not very important. Moreover, cause to a good mood and its impact on the immune system and help to maintain wellness. Optimism causes hardiness people become more resistance against an unexpected traumatic events. As came in the literature as progressive hardiness people are purposeful and achievement oriented and are consider difficult and life changes as a natural part of life. They choose attitude of problem solving toward life and use effectively of social systems. They generally do not rely only on self-blame, wishful thinking, or avoidance as a strategy to deal with problems .It is natural that people with this characteristic, have higher mental health.

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Another positive impact on the psychology of the person, who prays, is the different and relaxing physical postures during the prayer. Anybody who is punctual and prays five times a day is physically fit because praying itself is an exercise itself. If calculated five prayers in a day join to give around two hundred and eighty different body movements such as standing, bowing, prostrating, movement of neck, hand and arms movement, digits movement, sitting and also deep breathing. Therefore we can say that praying is a form of exercise that results in better blood flow in the body, provide light workout for muscles and decreases bone calcification. Furthermore he points out that the postures of salat are related to the yoga movements and also to certain anti-natal exercises practiced by pregnant women (Yucel, 2011).

The result in the same table reveals that elderly Muslim subjects regular in performing prayer (*Salah*) of five times a day were significantly more healthy than who do not participate in such prayer (*Salah*) regularly. According to Carter et. al (1959)- Mental health can be defined as the absence of mental disease or it can be defined as a state of being that also includes the biological, psychological or social factors which contribute to an individual's mental state and ability to function within the environment.

Who people perform the regular five time prayer they are follow the systematically routine work, manage the time and they are better physical care. The people protect him from everyday conflicts through prayer; prayer is similar to exercise, so the physical health of the person is also affected positively. Praying is extremely useful in giving people the strength to deal with day-to-day stress. It offers people some quiet time alone, where they can think and gives you the opportunity to focus on yourself and reduce mental stress. Who people do not perform regular five time prayer or do rarely, and does not perform any other kind of meditation he keep it himself engaged in other things and are more involved in mental confusion and they do not get mental peace. Who people do not perform prayer they feel bad about himself and the person gets entangled in mental struggle, which has negative impact on his mental health. Therefore can be said that who people perform the regular five time prayer, they have better mental health than who do not perform five time regular prayer.

The present finding was supported by numerous previous studies like Meddi (2006) showed that there is a significant correlation between hard work and religiosity. Well as the hard work and religiosity, predictor of anger and lower depression and social support and the ability to deal with more problems, and therefore mental health is higher. Koing (2009) investigated that the influence of religious practices serving as a coping behaviour in mental diseases such as depression and anxiety. In the majority of these cases, the effect has been positive. The previous studies indicated that involvement in religious practices result in better mental health. It was obtained that these practices help to cope with anxiety, fears, frustration, anger, anomie, inferiority feelings, despondency and isolation.(Moreira 2006. *et al*).

Although many studies on spirituality, religion, and health are of the correlation type, meaning the cause-and-effect relationship cannot be proved directly, evidence suggests a

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strong relationship between religious participation and good health as well as between awareness of spiritual commitment and good health (Karim Alahi et al., 2009). Bahrami Ehsan et al. (2008) found that participation in religious ceremonies and worship (such as praying and fasting) is followed by consequences such as formal psychotherapy. Emotional discharge and participation in collective religious ceremonies result in reduced stress and the elimination of emotional distress.

CONCLUSION

From the results and discussion it can be concluded that elderly Muslim subjects regular in performing prayer (Salah) of five times a day were significantly more hardy and they have better psycho-physical health than who do not participate in such prayer (Salah) regularly.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

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