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Relation between quality of image of God and paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children

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Abstract

Since parents of exceptional children are exposed to the variety of child raising stressors that impact their psychological functioning, determining factors associated with psychological health of these individuals is an important research endeavour. The aim of the current research was to investigate the relationship between image of God with paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children. To accomplish the stated goal 167 parents of exceptional children were selected by means of proportional sampling procedure. The Image of God Inventory (IOG, Lawrence, 1997) and Scale of Paranoid Ideation in Symptom Checklist90-R (SCL-90R, Deragotis et al., 1973) were administered on them. Analysis of data revealed that the magnitude of paranoid ideation can be predicted from the quality of images of God in parents of exceptional children. Moreover, data revealed that parents of exceptional children who had positive image of God were lower in paranoid ideation than parents of exceptional children who had a negative image of God. Authors concluded that positive image of God were associated with lower paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children. Theoretical implication and practical application of the finding are discussed in the original paper.

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1. Introduction

Image of God is individuals' internal experience in relation to God that presents itself as a mental representation. Image of God is related to individuals' psychological characteristics. Individuals with mental disorders hold a negative and a distorted image of God (Schaap- Jonker et al., 2002). In fact psychological symptom including anxiety and depression are higher in individuals with negative images of God (Schaap- Jonker et al. 2008).

Individuals, who had a sound relation with their primary care givers, perceive God accessible, and available to themselves, whereas Individuals with a problematic relations with their primary care givers may have difficulties in connecting to others, and establishing a trustful relationship with God. Considering pathological object-relations of

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children, individuals with problematic relations with their primary caregiver may experience low self-esteem, and a negative image of God. Some studies have supported these propositions. To the extent that individuals experience psychological distress, and pathological symptoms, their image of God become distorted, perceiving God punitive, and angry (Flannelly et al, 2009). Psychotic patient's images of God are more negative than other individuals; they perceive God inaccessible and unavailable for themselves. Research findings indicate that to the extent hospitalization of individuals in psychiatric hospitals are extended, their images of God became distorted as well, and they felt God inaccessible for themselves (Tisdale, 1997).

Researchers have studied the relation between the quality of God image and psychopathological symptoms in individuals, and they have found that psychological symptoms were higher in individuals with negative images of God. Braam and colleagues (2008) in their study discovered that feeling dissatisfied with God was associated with despair, and depression, in adults. In this research negative image of God (believing in a punitive God) was strongly associated with feeling guilty and having psychiatric symptoms. Furthermore, data indicated that neuroticism was associated with fearfulness from God, anxiety and dissatisfaction of Him, while the better adjustment was associated with the supporting figure of God (Braam and colleagues, 2008b).

Schaap-Jonker and associates (2002), discovered that there was an association between negative image of God and paranoid indentation in parents of exceptional children. In this study there was a significant relation between image of God, and global index of symptom severity in symptom checklist inventory (r = -0.395). Investigators also concluded that image of psychiatric patients in compare to normal people were more negative. These findings indicated that there was a significant association between mental health and image of God.

Individuals with a positive image of God were less anxious, and lower in hostility. Individuals with a negative image of God (i.e. perceiving God punitive) were more anxious, and were higher in their aggression toward others. These findings are repeatedly reported by Schaap-Jonker and associates (2008).

Greenway and associates (2003) concluded that individual's self-acceptance was associated with caring image of God. Individuals who believed that God was caring and nourishing had a positive sense of themselves. They also reported that negative sense of self and perceiving a personal inadequacy was associated with a depressive mood and a negative image of God. Individuals who perceive God a punitive figure, they have a low self-esteem, and they perceive themselves inadequate. Bradshaw and associates (2008) reported that a positive image of God inversely related to variety of psychological symptoms; among these symptoms they mentioned paranoid ideation that was higher in individuals with a negative image of God.

Flannelly and associates (2010) also investigated the relation between psychological disorders and image of God in the adult populations. They concluded that individuals with a positive image of God (i.e. individuals who perceive God closer to themselves who forgives their shortcomings) were lower in psychological symptoms and distresses. These researchers also found that in these individuals’ paranoid ideation were lower, than others. Newton and McIntosh (2010), who explored the relation between image of God and style of coping in parents of exceptional children, reported that positive image of God in these individuals were associated with more effective coping styles. Individuals with a positive image of God evaluated situations more positively. Schaap-Jonker and associates (2002) discovered that individuals with a borderline personalities and a paranoid ideation hold a negative image of God. They also reported that individuals with the overwhelming characters in cluster "A" (paranoid- schizoid) have a cold distant, and unproductive image of God.

Although research findings show that quality of image of God is related to individuals personal characteristics and their mental health status, most of these investigations have been conducted in the United States and European countries. Since people in Iran are different from Americans and European countries in terms of their cultural and religious backgrounds investigating the relation of these constructs in individuals who live in Iran is necessary. This study fills the existing gap in the area.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Population in the current study was consisted of 167 parents of exceptional children in Iran. A proportional sampling procedure was utilized in this study. Parents of exceptional children who were between 25-50 years old
have been selected as a sample. 53% of the participants were female, and 47% of them were male, 56% were residing in Tehran (the capital city), and 26% were from other major cities. After preparation of assessment devices, questionnaires were administered on parents of exceptional children by a trained research assistant. In general 167 individuals completed the questionnaires.

2.2. Measures


This symptom checklist is consisted of 90 items in which each item requires responding in degree of symptom intensity (from 1-5) in which he/she have experienced during the past week. This checklist-consisted of nine subscale (dimensions) including somatization, obsessive-compulsive disorders, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, Hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychotism. In order to calculate the internal consistency of the scale cronbach alpha coefficient has been used, and the results indicated that internal consistency for all subscales were at a satisfactory level. The maximum alpha coefficient was 0.90 for depression, and the minimum value was for psychotism ($$$\alpha = 0.77$$). Stability coefficient that was computed for test-retest reliability in the interval of one week was between 0.87 and 0.90. In Iran, we obtained Cronbach alphas values for every dimensions (SCL90-R) and total of .88, .87, .81, .90, .90, .81, .76, .77, .82, and 97 for somatization, obsessive-compulsive disorders, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, psychotism, and full symptom checklist respectively (Ghobari Bonab & Haddadi Koohsar, 2011).

2.2.2. The Image of God Inventory (IOG, Lawrence, 1997)

The image of God inventory was used to measure individual's quality of image of God. This inventory was consisted of 72 items and six factors: influence, providence, presence, challenge, acceptance, and benevolence. This inventory measures individual's images of God in a Likert type scale. The alpha coefficient for each scale was 0.92, 0.92, 0.94, 0.86, 0.90, and 0.91 respectively. In Iran, we obtained Cronbach alphas values for every subscale (IOG) of .80, .41, .88, .51, .81, and 82 for influence, providence, presence, challenge, acceptance, and benevolence respectively (Ghobari Bonab & Haddadi Koohsar, 2009).

3. Results

The results have been presented in the following tables:

**Table 1. Matrix of correlation between "image of God" and paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SCL-90R-Paranoid Ideation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. IOG-Influence</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. IOG-Providence</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. IOG-Presence</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. IOG-Challenge</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>0.50**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. IOG-Acceptance</td>
<td>-0.30**</td>
<td>0.65**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. IOG-Benevolence</td>
<td>-0.34**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.50**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P < 0.01 * P < 0.05**

Table 1 shows that image of God is associated with paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children. Individuals who show an accepting image of God, were lower in paranoid ideation, and had a higher health status.

**Table 2. Multiple regression analysis method to predict paranoid ideation from image of God in parents of exceptional children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCL90-R-Paranoid ideation</td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>-0.44**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>-0.33*</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>-0.20*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P < 0.01 * P < 0.05**
As indicated in table 2 only benevolence, presence, influence and acceptance were significant predictors of paranoid ideation ($R^2=24\%$) in parents of exceptional children. In other words paranoid ideation of parents of exceptional children with acceptance was lower than other parents. Moreover, paranoid ideation of parent’s with negative image of God was higher than other parents. Inspecting beta analysis shows that accepting image of God can negatively predicts magnitude of paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children.

4. Discussion

In the current study relation between image of God and paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children has been investigated. Results of multiple regression analysis indicated that paranoid ideation in parents of exceptional children can be predicted by their image of God. Individuals, who hold a positive image of God, are lower in paranoid ideation in compare to others, and individuals who had a challenging image of God, were higher in paranoid ideation. The results of the current study was consistent with some other investigation (e.g., Flannelly et al. 2010; Bowman et al., 2008; Schapp-Jonker et al., 2002; Tisdale et al., 1997).

Flannelly and associates (2010) studied the relation between mental disorders and image of God in adults was paranoid ideation. Bowman and associates (1987) explored images of God in woman with multiple personality disorders and concluded that these individuals had conflicting, and inconsistent images of God.

Schapp-Jonker and associates (2002) have discovered that individuals with borderline personality and paranoid ideation had a negative image of God. These researchers also discovered that individuals with a paranoid ideation had negative image of God. These researchers also discovered that individuals with paranoid ideation and schizotypal personality hold a cold, unsupportive, image of God. These findings are consistent with result of the current study. Since the current study was an expost facto research, inferring a causal relationship between image of God and psychological distress was not possible. Investigators in the future can design an experimental design in which environmental prompting instigate the image of supportive, caring, and punitive deity in individuals' and study its consequences in development or escalation of psychological distress.

Review of literature show that magnitude of paranoid ideation is associated with a negative images of God. Current study has implications for prevention, and interventions of psychological problems in individuals. Improvement of individuals’ image of God yields to enhancement of their health status.

References


Schaap-Jonker H; Elisabeth H.M. Eurelings-Bontekoe b; Hetty Zock c; Evert Jonker (2008"). Development and validation of the Dutch