Relation between quality of image of God with obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety 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 obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety 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 Scales of Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviours and Phobic Anxiety in Symptom Checklist90-R (SCL-90R, Deragotis et al., 1973) were administered on them. Analysis of data revealed that the magnitude of obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety 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 obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety than parents of exceptional children who had a negative image of God. Authors concluded that positive image of God were associated with lower obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety in parents of exceptional children. Theoretical implication and practical application of the finding are discussed in the original paper.

Keywords: Image of God; Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviours; Phobic Anxiety; Parents of Exceptional Children; Iran;

1. Introduction

Relation between psychological disorders and image of God has been investigated in numerous studies. Bowman and associates (1987) have studied image of God in women with a multiple personality disorders. They found that these individuals had conflicting and inconsistent image of God. Exline, yali, and Sanderson (2000) have discovered that individuals with depressive moods had a negative image of God. Schapp- jonker and colleagues (2002) have discovered that individuals with a borderline personality, Paranoid ideation and obsessive compulsive behaviours had negative image of God. Individuals with paranoid ideation, schizoid individuals, had a cold, distant, and
unsupportive image of God in their minds. Individuals with an avoidant personality disorders, dependent, and obsessive – compulsive disorders had a punitive image of God.

Braam and colleagues (2008a) 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 of God, anxiety and dissatisfaction of Him, while the better adjustment was associated with the supporting figure of God (Braam and colleagues, 008b).

Schaap-Jonker and associates (2002), discovered that there was an association between negative image of God with obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety. In this study there was a significant negative 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 were repeatedly reported by Schaap-Jonker and associates (2008). Bradshaw and associates (2008) reported that a positive image of God inversely related to variety of psychological symptoms; among these symptoms they mentioned obsessive-compulsive behaviours that were 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’ obsessive-compulsive behaviours 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.

Relation between mental health indexes and image of God has been reported by investigators repeatedly. Benson and spilka (1973) studied the relation between the quality of image of God and self-esteem in 128 students who were attending to catholic schools and concluded that students’ self-esteem was associated with their positive image of God. Moreover, individuals who had a negative image of God, their self-esteem were lower. Kirkpatrick (2005) has studied the relation between image of God and mental health, and discovered that positive image of God was associated with a higher mental health status. Kirkpatrick and shaver (1992) demonstrated that positive image of God was associated with life satisfaction, reduction in anxiety and depression, as well as amelioration of physical symptoms (Davis et al, 2003).

Mc Elroy and colleagues (1999) have discovered the association between image of God, depression, and mental health in the adult population. In this study individuals with a positive image of God were lower in depression and higher in mental health (Jahnson & Eastburg, 1992). Tisdale and associates (1997) have demonstrated that treatment of depression enhances personal adjustment of individuals, and increases the positive image of God as well.

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 and 167 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 scale-consisted of nine subscales (dimensions) including somatization, obsessive-compulsive disorders, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. 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 psychoticism (α = 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, psychoticism, 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 had 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. 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:

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<td>0.74**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>-0.12*</td>
<td>-0.11*</td>
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<td>0.74**</td>
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<td>-0.33**</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
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<td>-0.17*</td>
<td>-0.33**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
<td>0.46**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
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<td>-0.08</td>
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<td>0.51**</td>
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<td>0.58**</td>
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** P < 0.01  * P < 0.05

Table 1 Shows that image of God is associated with obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety. Individuals who show an accepting image of God, were lower in obsessive-compulsive behaviours, phobic anxiety, and had a higher health status.
Table 2. Multiple regression analysis method to predict obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety from image of God in parents of exceptional children

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dependent</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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCL90-R-</td>
<td>Obsessive-Compulsive</td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>25.03</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.59**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SCL90-R-</td>
<td>Benevolence</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>17018</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.32**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phobic Anxiety</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
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As indicated in table 2 only benevolence and influence were significant predictors of obsessive-compulsive behaviours ($R^2=13\%$) and phobic anxiety ($R^2=17\%$) in parents of exceptional children. In other words obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety of parents were higher than other parents. Moreover, obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety of students with positive image of God were lower than other students. Inspecting beta analysis shows that positive image of God can negatively predict magnitude of obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety in parents, while negative image of God were positively associated with obsessive-compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety parents of exceptional children.

4. Discussion

Current study investigated the relation between image of God, and obsessive-compulsive disorders and phobic anxiety in parents of exceptional children. Investigators with utilization of image of God inventory (Lawrence, 1997), obsessive–compulsive and phobic anxiety scales of symptom checklist- 90R (Deragotis et al, 1973) conducted this study on parents of exceptional children. Multiple regression analysis showed that magnitude of obsessive-compulsive disorders and phobic anxiety can be predicted by their images of God. Parents who had a positive and accepting image of God were lower in obsessive-compulsive and phobic anxiety disorders; whereas, parents with challenging and negative images of God were higher in obsessive-compulsive and phobic anxiety disorders. Since the origin of obsessive behaviours relates to individuals' anxiety, finding these results was not far from expectation (Kirkpatrick, 2005).

Schaap-Jonker and associates (2002) demonstrated that image of God in individuals was associated with personality characteristics of individuals with a borderline personality and avoidant personality. Paranoid ideation and obsessive-compulsive disorders often hold a negative image of God. The result of the study showed that to the extent that individuals' psychological distress becomes intense, their image of God become more negative. These studies show that individuals' psychological and health status including obsessive – compulsive behaviours are closely related to their image of God. These findings are consistent with the results of the current study. Flannelly and associates (2010) has investigated the relation between obsessive compulsive disorders and image of God and concluded that individuals with a positive image of God (i.e. believing in supporting and forgiving God who is available for individuals in times of distress) were lower in obsessive – compulsive behaviours.

Review of literature show that magnitude of obsessive – compulsive behaviours and phobic anxiety are associated with negative images of God. Current study has implications for prevention, and interventions of psychological problems in individuals. Planning to improve individuals' image of God yields to improvement in their health status.

References


