THE CONCEPT OF TAHAJUD PRAYER THROUGH PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACH IN RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Religion and its practices have been duly implicated in treating not only problems related to medical health, rather, intervening and preventing such problems as well. In the present article, the authors have reviewed the significance of Tahajjud prayers in healthcare and mental health in particular. The study uses a qualitative research design in which the data collection using library research approach. The result shows that tahajjud prayer performed at the end of a quiet night can bring calm. While calm it proves to increase immunologic body resistance, reduce the risk of heart disease and increase life expectancy. Conversely, forms of mental stress such as stress and depression make a person vulnerable to various diseases, infections and accelerate the development of cancer cells and increase metastasis in (cancer cell spread). Precious and sincere tahajjud prayer influence a healthy mentality especially providing benefits in terms of psychic feelings of calm and serenity, it can also provide great benefits on physical health.

Keywords: psychotherapy, health, tahajjud prayer, psychology

INTRODUCTION

Recently, medical technology has advanced so rapidly, helping humans to get and fix their health needs. In an increasingly stress-ridden and emotionally distraught world, the need for providing appropriate and adequate counseling and psychotherapy has made the therapists look for integrative approaches to meet the challenge. In the course of the last century, psychotherapy has evolved into a varied source of techniques and
therapies to cater to the problems of the new order where rapid progress in science and technology has rendered life more of a materialistic meaning devoid of mental peace and contentment, (Hasan, 2013).

That Islam as a major religion followed by well over a billion people has made its impact in this aspect of alleviating physical and mental afflictions among its followers is very obvious. Islam is not only a religion but a complete way of life that provides a comprehensive methodology for practice and solutions to problems of mankind in the realms of spiritual, intellectual, and physical challenges. (“Verily, the prayer keeps one from the great sins and evil deeds” Holy Qur’an 29:45). All such prescriptions in form and function and the underlying philosophy are firmly rooted in the two authentic texts namely the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith, the latter being the teachings and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, PBUH). It is important to note that any attempt to add or delete, modify or even try to interpret the procedure otherwise is considered innovation and is strongly abhorred, to say the least. It is this divine and pure nature of Islamic worship that lends it the distinction of being unique and a spiritually enriching experience.

Prayer in the Arabic language is an act of worship specific and unique to Islam both in its form and spirit. While the English word prayer conveys a general meaning of supplication or invocation, prayer is an act of submission to the Supreme Creator, Allah and is expressed in a specific and well-defined physical act embodying the spirit. This act of worship is ordained upon all Muslims as a duty and is the second pillar of the faith.

According to Idrus, (2009) "Prayers are one of the best ways to reach Allah’s realm and attain His utmost blessings". Although obligatory prayers form the core ideology of Islam, the non-obligatory prayers are recommended to purify oneself from sins and earn Allah’s compassion. This by no way means that obligatory prayers fall short to earn us Allah’s forgiveness but human beings are mannequins of sin and thus no chance should be missed to repent our sins. The significance of Tahajjud is explained in Quran and Hadith innumerable times and one of ayah is conveyed in the surah Al-Isra,verse 79 that " (Establish Prayer from the declining of the sun to the darkness of the night;93 and hold fast to the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn,94 for the recitation of the Qur'an at dawn is witnessed)."
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The word Tahajjud is derived from ‘tahajjada’ which means ‘being awake at night with the Quran’. So any act of worship done in the third half of night is regarded as Tahjjud and it is one of the noblest acts a Muslim can do. Since this prayer is offered after Namaz-e-Isha, it is also called ‘Salat-ul-Lail’ and ‘Qiyam-ul-Lail’. Prophet Muhammad PBUH had a habit of waking up in the middle of every night to bow down before his Creator and offer the night prayer. Thus it is a Sunnah and every Muslim brother should at least try to follow it once in a while if not on a daily basis. Allah SWT in Holy Quran describes the characteristics of true believers in these words.

Several reports on the application of prayers in psychotherapy illustrate the positive outcome in the individuals exhibiting pathological symptoms such as tension, anxiety, depression, and anti-social tendencies. These studies have highlighted the efficacy of Tahajjud as a cure to mental distress when followed in the correct form and measure. Since Tahajjud is an act of submission to Allah, the believer puts his/her total unconditional faith in the Lord and pleads for acceptance of the prayer and grant him/her remission from the condition of ill health, irrespective of its nature. Studies have proven that non-Muslim participants merely going through the physical movements of Salah also showed appreciable results from the exercise. This study is trying to observe the significance of religious practices about the relationship between doing Tahajjud with psychological health.

METHODS

This study was designed as qualitative research. This presupposes a cause/effect relationship between Tahajud prayer and psychological health. This study involved three phases, namely the conceptual, narrative and interpretative. The narrative phase involved planning the research design. The researcher was the main data collection instrument. A pilot study (pre-exercise) was conducted with participants in Tahajjud clinic who met the sampling criteria and would not form part of the main study. The empirical research phase involved data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data collection included qualitative information that was collected during a focus group interview. The researcher also searched articles to understand the context of the topic under study, for the purpose of providing a view of reality that is important to participants.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tahajjud in practice

It is important to inspect the act of prayer in close detail as each of the positions and moves hold significance to the worshiper (Musalli) both from physiological and psychological points of view. Typically, a single Raka’a has three major movements. Firstly, after the silent expression of intention to perform the prayer the individual raises his hands to the level of his ears and utters ‘Allah is the Greatest’ and folds his hands above the navel. During this brief standing of a few minutes the opening chapter of the Holy Qur’an followed by any other verses from the holy book in Arabic is peacefully recited either silently or aloud depending upon the time of the prayer. Focusing on the recitation and contemplation over the meaning is known to soothe the believer's senses. In this serene atmosphere, the worshiper standing before Allah is supplicating for his guidance.

The second movement is that of bowing with hands rested on the knees and the back held straight for a few seconds enough to utter the supplication glorifying Allah for at least three times and the person rises back to erect posture. In these few seconds, the worshiper's back and head are held flat, perpendicular to the legs.

After more supplications praising Allah, the individual goes down on his knees and rests his hands and forehead on the ground in prostration known as Sajdah for the third and the most cherished position of all in salah. In this uniquely Islamic act that a human performs in front of Allah the Muslim is nearest to The Almighty. In a Hadith, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: “The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself, so make supplication (in this state)” (Saheeh Bukhari). The psychological advantage of realizing that one is in a physical posture best liked by the Lord and that his supplications will be answered; besides the humility attained in the act of stooping to the lowest bodily position is incomparable. The sublime supremacy of sujood (in plural) is evident in the fact that this position has been referred to over 90 times in the Holy Qur’an. Arrogance and egoistic tendencies not only take a severe beating at this moment but also relieve stress and anxiety arising from worldly concerns. A few moments later he rises to sit on his legs and repeats the prostration.
This way, one unit of salat is completed. A typical prayer of a couple of raka’at will be completed with a position of sitting on the legs (Qaa’dah) for more supplications and salutation. This only takes a few minutes of the believer's time but the spiritual, psychological, physical and social gains are enormous; truly, a blessing from the Lord.

**Health benefits of salah**

The physical and physiological benefits of salah are multiple to say the least. Most of the body muscles and joints are exercised during Salah. In the most noteworthy movement of prostration besides the limb muscles, the back and perineum muscles as well are exercised repeatedly. The neck muscles, in particular, are strengthened such that it is uncommon to find a person offering regular Salah prostrating at least 34 times a day to suffer from cervical spondylosis or myalgias. Sajdah is the only position in which the head is in a position lower than the heart and therefore, receives increased blood supply. This surge in blood supply has a positive effect on memory, concentration, psyche and other cognitive abilities. During Sajdah dissipation of the electromagnetic energy accumulated from the atmosphere takes place by the grounding effect at regular intervals resulting in a calming feeling. A recent study investigating the alpha brain activity during Muslim prayers has reported increased amplitude in the parietal and occipital regions suggestive of parasympathetic elevation, thus indicating a state of relaxation.

Khushu refers to a state of mind in Salah when we stand in front of Allah and fully direct our minds and hearts towards Him. Anything less not only diminishes the rewards of our worship but a lost opportunity for our spiritual rejuvenation as well. In psychological terms, we can liken this state of mind to a single-minded immersion of oneself with a deep focus on the activity at hand and one that leads to maximum performance. We know that our state of mind, directly or indirectly, impacts almost everything that we do in life. Being in a good state of mind makes us feel livelier and more productive, and life generally seems more fulfilling. That is the ultimate objective of tahajjud prayer and of course, of any therapy as well.

**CONCLUSION**
Apart from the spiritual advantages, Tahajjud prayer has therapeutic effects on health. Tahajjud contain elements of meditation and muscle relaxation. It affects the person both physically and spiritually by enhancing positive thoughts and spreading an aura of peace. Psychology states that night prayer renews the spirit, morally purify the soul and provide solace from fear and anxiety. It is a weapon to fight one’s inner weaknesses. Besides, it has a tranquil effect and helps in the creation of a strong personality with a cool mind. It imparts discipline in every field of life and above all, waking early in the morning keeps you fresh all day.

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