

Short Communication

The Impact of Self-Review Intervention Method in Reducing Depression Symptoms

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to introduce, present, and describe the self-review therapeutic method that was designed and presented by Pourhosein based on Beck's cognitive theory, Islamic philosophy, and the return to Iqbal-e-Lahouri's self-awareness to reduce the symptoms of depression and increase happiness.

Method: In this study in addition to a theoretical and methodological discussion about self-review intervention method browsing, an example of research done in this field is mentioned.

Results: The basic principles of this approach have been based on human integrity with a cognitive approach. The underlying principle in this method is the bareness and consciousness of the human being from the inner and outer features of the self in which as a human being becomes more aware of his internal and external traits and his emotional responses will become more realistic.

Conclusion: This method is presented in a systematic manner, which if goes well, the patients' consciousness about their self is increased and their symptoms of depression will decrease. In this study, while explaining its theoretical and methodological foundations, some research examples suggest a decrease in these symptoms.

Key words: *Cognitive Approach; Depression; Happiness; Islamic Philosophy; Self-Review; Self*

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Self-cognition is the knowledge about inner and mental characteristics as well as the ability to distinguish, continue, and attribute them to oneself (1, 2). According to the cognitive approach, self-images gradually form a system of beliefs and will be changed to nonreal cognition and irrational thoughts if they do not match the reality. The automatic and unreal thoughts naturally create inappropriate emotional responses such as depression. Based on the cognitive approach, emotional responses are mainly affected by human cognition .

Based on cognitive findings of Ellice and Beck (3), the more people are aware of their positive abilities and attributes, the more their emotional responses are improved and they gain more satisfaction. Therefore, cognition determines types of emotional responses .

As undesirable and unrealistic imaginations of oneself could lead to unsuitable emotional responses, in this approach, the mental disorder starts with the formation of unrealistic beliefs and leads to deviation in one's passive behaviors.

According to cognitive theorists, we are all artists who rebuild and create the world in our mind (4). An unreasonable thought is rooted in a deep cognitive construction that appears to be logical and superficial mistakes. These mistakes create a pessimistic interpretation of the external world and the individual inside. Self-experience consists of cognitive schemas and creates negative self-concept. In other words, the more logical mistakes, automatic thoughts, and negativity are created, the more the human self-consideration will be pessimistic .

The present paper aimed to introduce the self-review method based on the self-consciousness principle. The strategy of this method is considered to increase the level of self-awareness to correct negative and irrational thoughts and modify negative emotional symptoms. In this method the therapist helps participants to review and evaluate their roles and become aware of themselves. The individuals' domination of their roles increases their optimism and levels of self-esteem.

According to many other studies, self-enhancement, or an increase in positive self-impressions of happiness and satisfaction, and on the other hand, self-deflating lead to a sense of sorrow and grief (4).

Clinical studies and researches by Pourhosein et al (2004-2018) on delinquent adolescents and their comparison with ordinary children, and studies on 80 depressed students and their comparison with ordinary children indicated the self-review method was able to significantly reduce symptoms of depression (5). Furthermore, Pourhosein et al (6)

conducted the self-review method on depressed women to reduce their auto negative thoughts. The results indicated that the method was effective in reducing the frequency of auto negative thoughts in depressed women. Another research indicated that the self-review method was an effective significant technique in reducing suicidal ideation in female adolescent offenders (7).

Studies are also conducted on the effectiveness of this method on increasing the happiness and self-esteem in 19 female adolescent offenders. The happiness and self-esteem variables significantly increased after performing the self-review method (8).

The self-review method could increase self-efficacy and improve the quality of life in patients with multiple sclerosis (9). Such a conclusion was also studied in cardiovascular patients. The results indicated that the self-review method reduced symptoms of depression and stress in cardiovascular patients (6). Khodabandehlou, Pourhosein, Lavasani, and Yeganeh (10) investigated the impact of self-review method on students' body image. Their research indicated that the method had a significant effect on the evaluation of body image .

The self-review method also affected negative perfectionism as well as undeveloped defense mechanisms. The study was also conducted on a sample group who had high negative perfectionism and undeveloped defense mechanisms based relevant questionnaires. Finally, the experimental group had a significant decrease in the undeveloped defense mechanism and negative perfectionism (11).

Depression in the Cognitive Approach

Of all disorders, depression seems to be related to deferent patterns than those of paranoia, hysteria, panic, or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Beck introduces 3 assumptions about depression as cognitive trilogy: events are interpreted negatively, depressed individuals do not love themselves, and the future is negatively predicted.

Beck introduces these assumptions as principles. During a cognitive therapy session, the patient is helped to explore these basic principles of his mind and examine them both logically and empirically to revise them. Beck mentions some steps to succeed in refining self-cognition: the person should know what he is thinking about, know incorrect judgments and replace them with the correct ones while having some feedbacks to tell him if he is right (3). The self-review method, which is based on cognitive therapy, uses these steps to reach true self-cognition.

Self in Islamic Texts

Findings of Islamic studies emphasize that self-cognition is equivalent to the knowledge about the universe and the creator of the universe. Furthermore, self-knowledge and cognition are the best knowledge according to Islamic religious leaders. Self-cognition is the ultimate knowledge and the most useful cognition. In this point of view, people are aware of their soul and if they forget themselves, they have forgotten God. The Islamic insight emphasizes on the self-consciousness, and an attempt to learn more about it. In the treatise "Three Principles", Mulla Sadra- first, Ignorance towards self as the humans' truth, second, affection for money and eminence, and third sensuality and Satan's tricks for humans- considered the lack of self-knowledge as the cause of inclemency and the self-knowledge as a virtue(12). In his view, human cognition means the knowledge of the whole world. In Sadra's thinking, human cognition is the essence of all cognition and the secret of consciousness of the universe and the knowledge of God. Without such knowledge, all true ways of knowledge will be blocked for the human .

In this regard, there are other theories that are commonly referred to as theories of "self-return"; for instance, a theory about self-return by Iqbal Lahuri's, a contemporary poet and thinker. Iqbal's views are among the most important Islamic theories throughout the Islamic world. In the individual field, Iqbal said success in life is due to self-cognition (13). This view shows that human consciousness in terms of self-abilities has a motivational role in individual and social dimensions and increases the human dare and ability to face life situations .

Iqbal defined self as the subject to which the human behavior, thought, and excitement is attributed. According to him, when people become aware of themselves, they reach the venerable position of the representation of the Lord on earth . In short, Iqbal considered self-return as referring to divine nature and the human awareness of self-blessings and abilities. If humans return to and recognize themselves, they become aware of their high inner degrees. The consciousness of their capacity and talents leads to self-care .

According to the first principle of Sadra's Three Principle, and Self-Return through Iqbal's poems, of all cognitive schemas, we choose self-cognition as the major focal point to reconstruct and revise in the therapy sessions.

Materials and Methods

Self-Review Method

Based on psychological principles, which are mainly derived from theories of cognitive psychologists especially Beck and Ellice, the negative emotions of

depressed individuals come from their irrational and unrealistic thoughts (3). As a person becomes aware of his/her abilities and good attributes, the emotional responses will improve. In addition, as represented in Islamic texts and Islamic philosophy fundamentals, individuals may find their divine nature and see their true values by knowing themselves. This goal could be achieved by putting existential (positive) propositions next to nonexistential (negative) propositions that depressed individual uses to describe him/herself.

On this basis, the self-review method is a set of theoretical principles with a psychological cognitive approach and Islamic texts that are performed at several stages based on the correlation between self-awareness and emotionally-corrected responses. These stages result in the self-consciousness that gradually corrects emotional responses. In this process, people describe themselves and are also evaluated by psychologists, and thus the therapists make the participants aware of their negative and positive feelings by the review and reflection technique. This way, the individual negative beliefs, which are expressed in different sentences, gradually become positive beliefs. The pursuit of sentence review and the reflection of positive emotions and attitudes toward the individuals continue in the next steps.

The self-review method is a therapeutic intervention based on a cognitive approach and theoretical basis of self-return Islamic philosophy. This method has several stages :

First stage: Self-Description

This stage is based on the Twenty Statements Test (TST). At this stage, participants are asked to describe themselves in several different sentences. The sentences have no particular size and the participants cannot answer them. They are reminded not to be concerned about the beauty of their sentences and freely describe their sentences. The TST was first introduced by Kuhn and McPartland in 1954 and was revised by Hartley. In this test, the participants are asked to answer the question "Who are you?" Or "What kind of a person are you"? The answers to these questions are open, and thus provide a deeper view of participants' psychological state. This method allows participants to describe themselves as they are based on freewill with the least stimulus (2). The free description seems interesting to the participants as the unclaimed task provides more important personality content. Some researchers used the test to evaluate self-perception to understand categories such as job role, individuality, ideological references, sense of self-determination, and unity .

The first session ends with the implementation of the first stage and expression of instructions .

Second stage: Reviewing the Statements

At this stage, which could be held in the second session, the statements are being repeated by the therapist and reviewed with participants. "Review" is defined by describing and explaining the sentences, including the

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frequency, intensity, and considering the related time and situation for each sentence. If sentences are negative, the psychologist tries to reduce the individual's cognitive and emotional investment in the propositions. In other words, he tries to reduce the amount of invested energy in negative and illogical thoughts so that the negative emotional effect could be reduced. This is done through the "reflection" technique, including reflection of the content and emotion. Accordingly, if sentences indicate positive states and thoughts, positive emotions must be reflected. When participants describe themselves with negative sentences, they tend to generalize them. The next stage aims to reduce amounts of generalization of propositions. This corrects the individuals' attitudes toward themselves .

The Third Stage: continue the Negative sentences using the words "instead" or "but"

At the end of the second session, the participants are asked to specify negative sentences and continue each sentence using the words "instead" or "but". When negative sentences are continued with these words, they naturally tend to be written positively. New sentences are created by continuing negative sentences. In the third and subsequent sessions, the review and reflection technique is still being used, as performed at the second stage .

For instance, a participant wrote, "I sometimes feel that I am ugly." When he was asked to complete his sentence by the word "instead", he wrote: "I sometimes feel that I am ugly, instead, I am highly educated and can be important to others." Therefore, the participant sought to describe himself in the second part of the sentence mentioning a value or an ability. This method makes it possible to express a positive characteristic. The intrinsic search for positive expression or intraconsideration with thinking is needed to create a positive self-concept and personality development .

At the end of each session, participants are asked to continue their sentences and continue their negative sentences with the word "instead" or "but". New sentences are reviewed at future sessions, and this process continues until the therapist finds that most of the new sentences are written in positive forms. Converting negative sentences and repeating the writing of positive sentences is an indication of self-development.

There is no need to go through all 3 stages in the 3 sessions. These stages can be done during 2 or 3 sessions, and further sessions to review the statements can be held if needed. It is advisable that statements be written before the session. Sessions can be arranged as follows:

The first session: psychological examination, performing the needed test such as Beck's Depression test, and the self-respect test and explaining the self-description process.

The second session: reviewing the written sentences as explained in the second stage and taking assignments according to the second stage

Next sessions: further reviewing, writing description, and evaluating the reduction of negativity.

Results

Clinical studies and researches by Pourhosein et al (2004-2018) on delinquent adolescents and their comparison with the control group, and studies on 80 depressed students and their comparison with the control group indicated that the self-review method was able to significantly reduce symptoms of depression (5).

Furthermore, Pourhosein et al (6) conducted the self-review method on depressed women to reduce their auto negative thoughts. The results indicated that the method was effective in reducing the frequency of auto negative thoughts in depressed women. Research suggests that self-review have positive effects on reducing suicidal thoughts (7), increasing happiness and self-esteem (8), increasing self-efficacy and improving the quality of life in patients with multiple sclerosis (9), reducing symptoms of depression and stress in cardiovascular patients (6), and improving students' body image (10).

The author's experience in applying the self-review method for dozens of participants and educational workshops indicates that this method increases the level of self-concept and happiness and reduces depression and corrects the individuals' attitudes towards themselves and environmental phenomena. The correction of attitude generally leads to appropriate emotional responses of individuals and to gain more satisfaction in life.

Discussion

The author's experience in applying the self-review method for dozens of participants and educational workshops indicates that this method increases the level of self-concept and happiness and reduces depression and corrects the individuals' attitudes towards themselves and environmental factors. The correction of attitude generally leads to appropriate emotional responses of individuals gaining more satisfaction in life. The research findings indicated the deep impact of individuals' cognition and awareness of their abilities on increasing the level of self-concept, self-esteem, happiness, and decreasing depression symptoms. This method can be applied in situations where people are less proud of themselves due to the lack of awareness about their abilities, and thus they have negative emotional responses which can give rise to depression. This method is important in several aspects: It considers the human being as a unified entity; it signifies that self-review method is not necessarily used for treatment purposes, but it can be used to improve self-concept and self-esteem for mental health.

Limitation

This article introduces a clinical method and its effects based on cognitive approach. There is no limit to the design of this theory, but a comparative approach has been taken with other methods.

Conclusion

This method is designed and developed based on the cognitive approach and self-return theory. In this theory, awareness of one's inner and outer features reduces the symptoms of depression. In addition to the logic of this method, which is derived from cognitive logics, clinical experience has also shown this effect. I recommend that psychotherapists use this method to reduce depression, increase self-confidence, and increase happiness. This method should be considered in other mental disorders.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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