



## Effect of Islamic ontology in life satisfaction among infertile women

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**Original Article**

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### **Abstract**

Life satisfaction is an important and pervasive issue for all community members, including infertile women. Infertility brings about a mentally stressful situation. In this respect, life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology may be an important factor in the promotion of life satisfaction and improvement of mental health. The study population included infertile women referred to the Mashhad Infertility Center. After completion of diagnosis process and conducting the pretest, 40 infertile women were randomly assigned to the groups of intervention and control. The participants completed the questionnaire of Miller life satisfaction of before and after the intervention. The intervention group received ten sessions of life review therapy while the control group was invited to attend the treatment sessions after the posttest. None of the members of two groups took any medication during the study period and they were followed up for three months to check the long-term effects. The results showed that life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology can significantly increase life satisfaction in infertile women and potentially could be of clinical use. Considering the positive effect of life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology in life satisfaction among infertile women, special trainings for these women and the preventive measures should be taken.

**Keywords:** Islamic, Ontology, Satisfaction

### **Introduction**

Infertility describes the state of a woman who is unable to conceive or unable to carry a pregnancy to full term. Being barren is attributed to partners who decide to have a baby and their attempts have been failed even though they have decided not to use any pregnancy prevention method for a year. So, they request for medical treatment and the specialist diagnoses them as infertile [1]. Although, infertility is

not recognized as a disease, it creates various emotional and socio-psychical disorders. Infertility threatens the mutual life to a host of problems such as painstaking medical treatments, problems in sexual inclination and sexual discourses, feebleness, guiltiness, desperation, furiousness, depression, and emptiness. On the other hand, such troubles can be reckoned as one of the reasons of

infertility [2]; indeed, there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and health. Life satisfaction predicts physical and mental health, positive mood, seeking social support, and health promoting behaviors [3-4]. Although research conducted on life satisfaction has mostly discussed topics such as marriage, work, and aging, exploring the structure of life satisfaction in infertile women has been recently addressed [5].

Hence, identifying variables involved in life satisfaction is very important in planning for improvement of life satisfaction. Variables such as age, income, physical and mental health, education, interpersonal relationships, personality, and life review have been recognized as significant factors affecting life satisfaction. Among these variables, life review therapy, given its therapeutic purposes, seems to be able to increase the level of life satisfaction.

Life review is a cognitive therapy that has been proven to be effective in treatment of anxiety in older ages. In life review, patients recall, revise, and ponder their life experiences to understand and resolve past conflicts and achieve personality integration. During the process of life review, patients revise, redefine, and cognitively restructure their life experiences and expand their perception of their personal life, which directly affects their feelings. Therefore, life review therapy is an essential process of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive changes resulting in better insight and perception of oneself [2].

However, life review is not easily occurred. As Butler [6] suggests, whenever exposed to horrible events, people should evaluate and make a conclusion right at the time or later during their life. However, due to the bitter and emotionally upsetting nature of such events, most people avoid integrating them, which can be called cognitive avoidance and therefore, they need assistant to go through with this process. In life review, therapists review issues that the clients have problem reviewing by themselves, because of their unsolved conflicts, guilt, resentment, and hatred.

The purpose of life review therapy is to reduce cognitive avoidance and annoying, unwanted thoughts by processing negative emotions related to the past events and to create a situation in which the clients, with the help of therapist, create a new and structured understanding of their current and past experiences and successfully conclude their life experiences [7].

Butler [8] mentioned that the process of life review may be intertwined with the ontology theory, because these two refer to the same questions such as how events in the individual life is in compliance with the greater space? What is the purpose of my life? Is there any meaning in my life? To achieve what value should we live and bear difficulties?

There have also been a lot of studies on the effects of religion on mental health and most results show the positive effects of religion on adjustment, mental health, and life satisfaction [9]. Bowman [5] reported that religious orientation had a relationship with promoting mental health and decreasing mental disorders and it is able to predict positive religious coping. They also reported a positive relationship between life satisfaction and religious orientation.

Kazemian and Delavar [7] indicated that life review therapy is effective in increasing general health among self-treatment drug addicts, or in other words, reducing its subscales i.e. somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and depression symptoms. Moreover, the results demonstrated that using life review therapy is remarkably effective in improving the mental health of drug addicts who attempt to withdrawal [8]. On the other hand, Catherall [9] have conducted studies on the effectiveness of life review group therapy in reducing anxiety. In addition, the results of a case study showed that the technique of life review is effective in the treatment of PTSD [10]. Based on the results obtained through a literature review on the examination of life review in infertility that showed lack of research in this area, this issue was raised by

the researcher to find out whether or not the method of life review therapy can be effective in life satisfaction among infertile women.

Although life review therapy to date have been mainly used for elderly, considering the above, the present study aimed to determine the effectiveness of life review therapy by emphasis on Islamic ontology in life satisfaction promotion among infertile women.

### Method

This study was a quasi-experimental research with experimental and control groups and pretest-posttest design in which, life review was considered as independent variable and life satisfaction as dependent variable.

The study population included infertile women referred to the Mashhad Infertility Center (Iran) in winter 2015. A sample set of 40 infertile women was selected by convenience sampling. After completion of diagnosis process and conducting the pretest, the participants were randomly assigned to the intervention group or if they agreed, joined the control group. The members of control group were in the waiting list and invited to attend treatment sessions after the completion of posttest. None of the members of the two groups took any medication during the study period and they were followed up for three months after the intervention to check the long-term effects. The inclusion criteria included not suffering from any special physical illnesses and living in the well-being center for at least one year.

In this study, Miller life satisfaction-test was used to collect and measure the variable.

*Miller life satisfaction-test:* This is a questionnaire consisted of 48 items measuring hopefulness and hopelessness states in which all points are selected based on apparent and implicit behavioral protests for hopeful or hopeless individuals. For every item, as a representative of one behavioral sign, sentences are written as follows (complete disagree =1, disagree=2, apathetic=3, agree=4, complete agree=5). Each participant obtains a score by choosing a choice that is true about him. The score of each item ranged from 1 to 5. The

total score explains the participant hopeful or hopeless. The total score in Miller test is in the range of 48 to 240; the minimum score indicates totally hopelessness state and the maximum score implies totally hopefulness state. It should be mentioned that 12 items of Miller Questionnaire are reverse scored that are items 27, 39, 38, 34, 33, 31, 25, 18, 16, 11, 15 and 28. Rajaei [10] evaluated the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and split method and obtained the values of 0.90 and 0.89, respectively.

The research data were analyzed through applying descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and measures of variability) and inferential statistics (analysis of covariance) using SPSS 19 software.

The intervention included a treatment designed based on the process of life review therapy by Davis & Wright [11] combined with Islamic ontology elements, which was performed in ten sessions (2 hours per session).

*First and Second sessions:* Introduction and acquaintance with participants, statement of objectives, description of methods and sessions, reviewing birth event and dangers passed during childhood and its related events by emphasis on the principle of coordination, purposiveness and testing in the existence.

*Second and Third sessions:* Discussing the most difficult events after childhood and possible and real harms that were passed by emphasis on the principle of sufferings.

*Fourth and Fifth sessions:* Evaluation of events occurred for people around the participants which they witnessed by emphasis on the principle of responsibility and capability of human for tolerance.

*Sixth and Seventh sessions:* Reviewing the present memoirs.

*Eighth and ninth sessions:* Challenging the matter that how has been your life?

*Tenth session:* Re-naming and positive interpretation of negative aspects, summarizing, evaluating, and concluding the participants' life by emphasis on the principle of choice, decision, and action.

During all the sessions, the effort was to teach

the participants the rule that “there is an ease with and within every difficulty and life has no meaning except with its events, emotions, and challenges”. In this intervention, the basic skills of counseling such as understanding and accepting the client, having no presumptions, developing a friendly relationship, interpretation, and redefining life and its events

and also relaxation techniques, mind imagery, and ontological emphasis on the relationship between component and total.

**Results**

Descriptive indices for the scores of life satisfaction in the pretest and posttest for both groups are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Descriptive indices for life satisfaction scores in both experimental and control groups

Group	Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
Experiment	Pretest score	20	76	99	91.33	11.1
	Posttest score	20	122	176	145.23	11.77
Control	Pretest score	20	73	140	98.1	8.47
	Posttest score	20	73	153	98.72	8.8

**Table 2** ANCOVA results for posttest scores of life satisfaction after adjusting for pretest

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Pretest	6142.42	1	5564.50	29.241	0.001	
Group	2664.76	1	27707.69	133.45	0.001	0.64
Error	5377.15	37	172.11			
Total	14184	40				

Table 2 presents the results of ANCOVA for posttest scores of life satisfaction. According to the obtained results ( $p < 0.001$ ;  $df = 37$ ;  $F = 133.45$ ), when the effect of pretest removes from posttest results, the difference between groups become statistically significant at the confidence level of 0.95.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the research one is accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology is effective in life satisfaction promotion among infertile women. Also, Eta Squared value indicates that 78% of the total variance of life satisfaction variable for the experimental group (group difference in the posttest) was explained by implementation of independent variable (life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology).

**Discussion**

The results of the present study revealed that life review therapy is effective in increasing the level of life satisfaction in infertile women. At the same time, we must keep in mind that obtaining good results from treatments and

psychological interventions depends on important factors such as cultural, religious, socioeconomic, familial, and personal factors of the cases under study, all of which are better to be considered as cause and effect factors to achieve more positive and useful results by such interventions.

The positive results of life review therapy in this research are consistent with the results obtained by Watt and Cappeliez [12] and Esmaeili [13] who reported the effectiveness of life review therapy in people with PTSD and also with the results obtained by Kazemian and Delavar [7] who reported the effectiveness of life review therapy in increasing general health among self-treatment drug addicts. Moreover, this finding is in line with the results of Kazemian [7], indicating the effectiveness of life review therapy in reducing the anxiety of young girls whose parents were divorced. The results are also consistent with the results of Flannery [14] who reported the effectiveness of this treatment compared to other cognitive treatments. Therefore, it can be concluded that not only life review therapy increases

life satisfaction, but also it is in harmony with other cognitive therapy approaches and with cognitive reconstruction of negative experiences of the clients, which is among common techniques of cognitive treatments.

Foa, Keane, Friedman and Cohen [15] in their meta-analysis showed that imaging and reviewing traumatic events (which are elements of life review therapy) are effective in many mental participants including life satisfaction. Haight, Michel and Hendrix [16] found that meta-analysis of treatments that use mind imaging orders are actually taking advantage of exposure, emotional drain, and mastering mechanisms. Experimental studies show that the clarity of mind images is effective in the control and promotion of life satisfaction [17]. Jim & Andersen [18] in a case study showed that life review technique is effective in life satisfaction. Therefore, the effectiveness of this intervention seems logical. The limitation of the present research is the selection of female participants that we should take cautions in generalization of the results.

### **Conclusion**

The results showed that life review therapy with emphasis on Islamic ontology could significantly promote the life satisfaction in infertile women. Indeed, this effective therapeutic and promising intervention method played an important role in life satisfaction. Since anxious patients lose the integrity and connection of their experiences, while focusing on a traumatic event and generalizing it to other conditions and situations and all their energy is spent on fighting and pushing back invasive and disturbing thoughts, their therapeutic intervention should target these elements. Therefore, in the intervention provided in this study, the effort was to challenge the relationship formed between the traumatic event and other situations by reviewing a set of events and incidences and then replace it with a relationship between the traumatic event and positive ontology. In this way, patients will find a constructive meaning for their experience and revive their wrongly spent energies. Although

this integrative model was planned and performed for the first time in this study, many other studies have approved the effectiveness of its elements such as exposure and giving meaning to events in life satisfaction.

It is recommended that some measures be taken to introduce and train this treatment technique to staff in various institutions, including institutions for the elderly and well-being centers.

The limitations of this study include: This intervention cannot be effective for those who lack a serious and clear belief about existence and its rules.

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Study design: SK

Data collection and analysis: SK

Manuscript preparation: SK

### **Conflict of Interest**

"The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

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