A Study of the Effectiveness of Life Review therapy with Islamic Ontological Orientation on the Parent-child Relationships in Adolescents

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Abstract: Introduction: The study intends to evaluate the effectiveness of life review with Islamic ontological orientation on the parent-child relationships in adolescent. *Method:* For this purpose, two families, who were in conflict with their adolescents and consented to participate in the study, were selected out of clients of counseling centers using available sampling method. The model of life review treatment with Islamic ontological orientation proposed by Ismaeeli (2010) was implemented for this group in six 90 minute sessions.

In this study, qualitative data was collected using interviews and open-ended questions designed under the supervision of relevant experts in this field. Since the research method is qualitative (case study), the single-subject design (baseline step after the follow-up treatment) was adopted. The qualitative data were respectively analyzed by descriptive phenomenological method. The results showed that life review therapy with Islamic ontological orientation could effectively reduce conflicts in parent - child relationships (e.g. by changing the view of parents - children toward the universe, God and other humans and their mutual empathy, understanding and acceptance), thus improving their relationship significantly.

Keywords: life review, Islamic ontology, parent-child relationships, adolescences

INTRODUCTION

Family is the organized foundation of the society responsible for the growth and development of youngsters and their performance. The primary character, values and criteria of children are formed in the family, which as a predictive factor, plays a pivotal role in resolution of problems and conflicts (Gallarin, Arbiol, 2012).

When the family environment is replete with conflicts and struggles, the safe psychological and spiritual atmosphere necessary for family members is compromised, giving rise to a plethora of undesirable issues. If such conflicts are addressed properly, the interactions are mended and the intended growth in the family members is achieved; however, if the parties involved in the conflicts fail to manage the issue properly, the conflict is compounded and the persistence of the relationship is jeopardized (Ramona, 2013).

A review of the literature highlights the important role of some factors during adolescence especially the family and peer groups. Among the family variables, the relationship between family members and the way parents control and monitor their children play a key role in creating and encouraging anti-social behavior.

Low parental control and supervision can interrupt the family structure (Schumacher 2009, Schumacher, 2010) with this rupture encouraging the predilection of adolescents toward the company of their friends and delinquent peers (Zan, 2009). The families of maladjusted adolescents have intimacy and effective communication issues and there are serious disparities between the parents (Berk, 2005, translated by Seyyed Mohammadi, 2013).

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There are a variety of therapeutic practices for the prevention and treatment of the relationship between parents and children, the most important of which are cognitive therapy, interpersonal relationships therapy, bibliotherapy, problem-solving therapy and life-review treatment. The latter, rooted in Ericsson's theory of development, was shaped into a therapeutic framework by Butler (1963).

The idea behind the life-review treatment is that a recollection of these experiences and conflicts may lead to their reassessment and resolution, thus consolidating the cohesion and integrity of the character (Holland, 2011).

One of the therapies that can help reduce parent-children conflicts is the life-review based on principles of Islamic ontology, which was first proposed by Esmaeili (2010) in the treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder syndrome. The underlying elements of this therapy include: 1- patient: through a review and evaluation of positive and negative memories of life and reconstruction and integration of life story, they can regain their peace of mind, alleviate their negative feelings, depression or anxiety and prevent re-occurrence of such symptoms; 2- Integrative reminiscence: it is focused on resolving, appreciating and establishing a connection between the past and present conflicts of an individual or other experiences; 3- Instrumental reminiscence: a recollection of successful experiences to show the achievements and problem solving strategies achieved by an individual in the past along with an exploit of successful coping experiences to solve their current problems and issues, and 4-creative reminiscence: it rests on fabricating meaningful stories and encouraging the imagination and artistic expression of past experiences (Haber, 2006).

Life- review is an effective treatment for adolescents with identity issues because they tend to solve their psychological and inner conflicts in search of new meaning to their experiences. During the process of life-review, an individual through revisiting life experiences and cognitive restructuring of critical life events attempts to broadens his perception of personal life, which can indirectly affect his emotions (Weiss, 2010).

The impact of religion on mental health has been the subject of many studies with the results indicating the positive effect of religion on compatibility, mental health and alleviation of the negative symptoms of diseases. Through a meta-analysis of 49 studies, Ano and Vasconcell concluded that religion-oriented stress coping strategies is positively correlated with psychological measures such as life satisfaction and happiness and negatively correlated with anxiety and depression. Desmond *et al.* (2008) found that the religious behaviors are associated with high level of self-control in individuals. In their study on the impact of religion on child-parent relationships, Dolahit and Thatcher (2008) concluded that it had a significant effect on perception and acceptance of each other (quoted from Garban, 2014).

The results of a study by Shah Karami (2014) about the effect of life-review therapy based on Islamic ontology on marital conflicts and the decision to maintain marriage among Muslim visitors showed it had a significant effect on alleviating marital and continuity of marriage in these people.

Thus, in this study, the main question is whether a life-review educational model based on Islamic ontology has any effect on amendment and improvement of the relationships between parents and adolescents.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology (case study) using the available sampling method for data collection. The study population included families referring to Golestan Cultural Center in the city of Fardis in the period between 2013 and 2014 out of which two families (mother-child) with a total of 4 members, who were in conflict with their adolescents and consented to cooperate in the research, were selected. The inclusion criteria for parent-child pairs were: 1- they were required to participate in the sessions; 2- they needed to have reading and writing literacy and 3- the adolescents had to be between 12 and 20 years old.

THERAPEUTIC METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method of Haight and Webster (1995) coupled with some elements of the Islamic ontology in eights 90-min sessions constituted the treatment model.

The researcher designed the therapy sessions based on the type of conflict and the content raised by mother and adolescent in the first session. Overall, the therapeutic methodof Haight and Webster (1995) and its combination with Islamic ontology of Esmaili (2010) are as follows:

Session 1: a review of the birthday events and the risks of childhood with an emphasis on the principle of harmony, objectivity and y trial-nature of the universe.

Session 2: Discussing the most difficult events in the post-childhood period and the potential harms and dangers left behind with an emphasis on the principle of the pain and growth.

Session 3: Exploring the events experienced by the relatives of the patient with an emphasis on the principle of liability and capabilities of human beings for resistance and endurance.

Session 4: Discussing the issues related to people respected and valorized by the patient with an emphasis on the principle of "continuity of existential effect of humans along with the eternal persistence of the universe".

Session 5&6: A summary, evaluation and conclusion of parent-child life with an emphasis on the principle of choice, decision and action.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the first family

Economic status of parent families	Number of parent family members	Economic status	Education	Job	Age	Family members	No
Average	6	Average	High school	Vehicle battery maker	47	Father	1
Low	7	Average	High school	Housewife	45	Mother	2
-	-	Average	High school	Student	17	Teenage boy	3
-	-	Average	Elementary school	Student	8	Girl	4

Table 2
Demographic characteristics of the second family

Economic status of parent families	Number of parent family members	Economic status	Education	Job	Age	Family members	No
Good	The first child of a 5-member family	Above average	Bachelor degree	Heavy vehicle mechanic	41	Father	1
Low	The last child of a 5-member family	-	High school	Office employee	42	Mother	**2**
-	-	-	Middle school	Student	13	Teenage boy	3

In all sessions, attempts were made to remind the participant that "there is convenience in the midst of any adversity and life is meaningless without events and challenges.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Interview: As the main method of data collection in qualitative research (case study), a semi-structured interview was used for gathering data in this research. Also, a single-subject research design was adopted

Table 4
Results of interviews with mothers in three stages (baseline, post-treatment and follow-up)

Selective encoding	Axial encoding	Open encoding	Content and important statements		
			Follow-up	Post-treatment	Base line
Ontological view of a person	1 1 Parents' view about people/ universe/ God	Cognitive	We have responsibilities as parents and we need to show respect for the thoughts of our children too.	Before these sessions I used to insist on my demands and do anything to prove others wrong. I was not the type that stepped back. In retrospect, I can see that I was wrong in many cases and I do not try to convince others anymore.	I keep thinking that the evil ones are more successful in their life – I see life as full of hardship and struggles, but my son thinks the opposite and refuses to put any effort in it.
		Emotional	I feel wonderful. I have never been so clam and peaceful.	It is reaffirming to know that He always connects me with good people.	People tend to keep their distance. Kindness and affections are rare assets in these stressful days.
		Behavioral	I don't believe I managed to control myself and put off the decision making until I felt better.	I refrain from humiliating others and try to express my opinions in an apt situation.	We cannot get what we want through screaming, yelling and rebellion. People usually display such a blackmailing behavior willingly.
	1-2 The presence of God in life	Knowing God	He has said, "Invoke me to answer your prayers". I believe in God and know that there is comfort after any adversity.	He is glowing in my heart. I feel Him around all the time. I do not think that people owe me anymore. I believe in providence and His will, feeling much closer to Him.	I am not much of a believer but God gave me a sick child to signify His presence and teach me a lesson.
	1-3 General attitude toward life	Hopeful	I look forward to the future hoping that my life would improve. I trust in God to forgive our sins and let us leave this world pure and innocent.	I, happy to have time to make up for past mistakes, do not complain anymore. When I see how people are entangled in their problems, it assures me that my life is good and I need to try a bit harder.	- I'm tired of all the hype and hardship of life -What does the future mean anyway? Is it possible to remain hopeful after the loss of a loved one?

1. Dominant atmosphere in the family	2-1 Sympathy	Listening	Although we tend to disagree over many mattes I understand him and his feelings and try to listen to him.	My husband works hard to provide for his family. My son walks all the way to school, which is a long distance, to save his pocket money. He keeps his demands from us. His father and I are grateful for the progress.	I've listened to him a thousand times but it was all in vain. I keep yelling and interrupting him.
	2-2-Unconditional support	Positive attention	I found that my children were my real assets. I should not question their character because of their mistakes. My son and I appreciate the value of being together and it is really important.	All of my family including my son has improved significantly and my son has become less aggressive. His behavior still annoys me at times, but I dismiss it as juvenile acts.	-If he scratches my back, I'll scratch his. I acknowledge my faults as the older generation but should he not be more polite as the new generation? His father says it is either his way (school) or the highway (leaving the house).
	3-2 Mutual relations of the family members	Cooperation	They have improved remarkably and share chores without any competition.	I try to explain him through movies and animations that competition does not get him anywhere and he is a role model for his sister. We have agreed that he cleans his room once a week and helps around in the house.	Throughout Ramadan I was waiting for him to go and get some bread for the dinner, but he always complained why I had not asked his sister to do this chore. My daughter is beginning to learn from her brother.
	2-4 Emotions dominant in the family	Interaction	I wish there was more affection in the family but I know that people are different and some simply do not like to express their emotions, though they love you in their heart.	I try to show him kindness. Although his father is a disciplined man, he cares about us as much as he can.	For my in-laws, showing affection is meaningless. They are so cold and their behavior has put my child in a dilemma. -I showed too much kindness to my son and it has alienated him from the society.

	2-5 Supervision	Moderation in control	I think I have been oversensitive in some cases with my bossy attitude.	He is a grown-up now and I do not think it is a good idea to badger him to change.	I get nervous when I see that he is always busy playing with his cell phones or surfing internet. I even broke down his modem several times.
3. Feelings	3-1 Centeration on self-others	Acknowledging feelings	I have managed to curb my anger and fury even under difficult situations. Relaxation has been really helpful and I feel more peaceful these days.	He has made some plans that were comforting to me. I try to laugh at his funny remarks and humors.	-I am sad and furious. My heart aches. I feel sad, lonely and weak, unable to communicate my feelings to others. My husband and I are cold in our relationship.
4. Family's relationship with others	4-1 Relatives, original families	Setting a model	I feel much better. I made peace with my in-laws to gain comfort and now everyone is focused on their life. In this holy month of Ramadan, Quran told my mom to forgive to be forgiven and that is what she did.	Since I lost my father early, I do my best to not upset my mother. I'd like to talk with my mother and sister in law to settle our disputes.	I am in good terms with my own family but I broke up with my sister-in-law. My mother and I were great, but she passed away. I lost my father so early that I can barely remember him. I do not socialize with my in-laws because they tend to humiliate me, and this has driven my son crazy.
5- Reactions in the event of a conflict	5-1 problem solving	Cooperation	We both know that we should stay calm in the moment and try to talk it over at a proper time. I try not to sound condemning.	I used to get angry a lot. Now, I get upset for a while but I put it aside for a few days so that we can talk it over calmly and reach an agreement	I think I always know better and can tell right from wrong. I tend to yell and scream,resorting to threats, frowns and anything that might be effective.
6. Academic achievement	Planning	Creating and maintaining motive	I try to nurture him because he suffers from anemia. He got excellent marks at school. His father also rewarded him by buying a new bicycle which I think has been a good motive for him.	He began studying half an hour a day and now he has improved significantly. I do not care about his grades anymore. He has put his cell phones and wicked friends aside. I got some medicinal plants for him.	That my son does not care about school has upset his father and I. I know he has lots of homework to do, but he is careless and delays anything for the exam night.

in this study. There are a variety of single-subject designs out of which a two-stage design was used in this paper. The follow-up stage was also implemented after the completion of the sessions in order to determine the persistent effect of the therapy.

A qualitative method (phenomenology) was used for data analysis. To do so, first the interview texts were studied meticulously in three stages (basic line, post-treatment, follow-up) and in keeping with the concepts of the researcher, they were revised line by line and the main concepts were extracted. Then, these

concepts were encoded and the identical codes were classified in the same categories. After the initial coding, the data were organized and re-encoded after several revisions to create a unified category and implement the selective encoding.

Table 5
Results of the interviews with adolescents at different stages

Selective encoding	*Axial encoding*	*Open encoding*	*Content and important statements*		
			Follow-up	**Post-treatment**	**Base line**
1= Ontological view of a person	1-1 Parents' view about people/ universe/ God	1-1-1 Cognitive	I ask God help me to have a better life and give me the strength to survive the difficulties. I think life is beautiful despite all of these hardships	Life is a wonderful thing if spiced with a little of work, but I wish it was a bit easier. God is merciful and I feel Him around me at all time.	I can't stand the world and its people. Life is full of hardship and struggles and we should be ready to face danger at any moment.
		1-1-2 Emotional	I feel wonderful Thanks God I passed my exams with flying colors.	I am a little concern about my exam but anything else is okay at home.	I am frustrated with life and people. I have lost my interest in them and feel lonely and sad.
		1-1-3Behavioral	I feel great. I passed exams with excellent grades. We get along better and when there is a problem, we consult to reach a collective decision.	I am a bit worry about my exam but we do not have any problem at home. I asked them to listen to me and try to understand me.	I begin yelling and screaming and get mad. I keep crying and try to bottle it up inside me.
	1-2 The presence of God in life	Knowing God	I can feel His presence He is always there and I love Him.	-I talk to Him and ask him to help me / He is a great help	I only believe in God He is almost everywhere with me.
	1-3 General attitude toward life	Hopeful	I am grateful of God. I ask him to help me lead a better life and accept hardships with an open arm. I am optimistic.	Despite all the hardships, life is still sweet, but I wish it was a bit more comfortable. Anyway, I am content and I am working on myself to become more successful.	I have totally lost my interest in the world and its people. I just go through motions. My mom is not happy and my dad thinks it is boring too.
2 1. Dominant atmosphere in the family	2.1 Sympathy	Listening	I feel much better now as I am trying to understand them and take advantage of their useful experiences.	Although the strictness of my father is torturing, his little support has encouraged me to go to work and make my own money.	I wish my family could understand and listen to me. My dad's view is badgering. He lives in the past, thinking like his father and does not care about me.
	Unconditional support 2-2	Positive attention	I appreciate these moments and the efforts of my family. My mother always supports me and I do my best to show mutual respect. I want to be a perfect model for my sister.	I try to show more respect and my family has also improved conspicuously. My father still talks dirty but it is his habit and I love him anyway.	If my father stopped swearing at me, I would not dislike him this much. It is really annoying when your father keeps saying its either school or street. I might have been disrespectful but my family do not respect me either

	2-3 Mutual relations of the family members	Cooperation	I always help around.	I am doing my best to have a healthy competition with my friends at school and catch on with them I am back at my father's shop again.	I am not at any competition with my sister. It is just in my mother's head. I used to go to my father's shop but I am sick of his yelling and screaming.
	2-4 Emotions dominant in the family	Interaction	I love my mom and dad and they love me too, but we express it differently. There are some rules in the house and I try to follow those rules.	I feel much better after these sessions and I am no longer treated as a child / I do not conceal my resentment and try to discuss it over.	I wish my father once said he loved me. My mom talks to me as a child and it bothers me in front of my friends
	2-5 Supervision	Moderation in control	My mom trusts me because I have assured her with my planning. I go out at certain hours and cut down on my mobile plays.	I do not do anything wrong. I just want them to believe me. The family rules do not allow me to work anywhere.	My father has not accepted that I have grown up and he should not treat me like a child. My mother is so sensitive and she monitors my phone calls. I like to be trusted but they do not trust me.
3. Feeling	3-1 Centeration on self-others	Acknowledging feelings	I managed to pass the make-up exams My self-confidence has improved because I built it from scratch.	I feel so much better. Organization and planning has boosted my self-esteem, though it was really hard. I am more peaceful and my headache has alleviated.	I feel nothing. I am mad at me and know that there is something wrong with me, but I am bored. My dad still lives in the ancient times and I am angry with him. I'm anxious and it does not comfort me.
4. Family's relationship with others	4-1 Relatives, original families	Setting a model	I do not see much of my friends / The family of my aunt and grandmother are busy with their own life.	I send an sms to my aunt to congratulate her birthday / I go to my grandfather's house but my mom still refuses to come with us	I hate my aunt's family and we do not see each other a lot. My mom does not like her father in law and I feel embarrassed.
5 Reactions in the event of a conflict	5-1 problem solving	Cooperation	I feel much better and discuss problems with family at proper time. We listen to each other and try to find a solution.	I try to answer my mom softly and discuss it with my mother and father.	I make a fuss out of any problem and yell at anyone. I have become impatient and aggressive.
6- Academic performance	Planning	Creating and maintaining motive	That's great. I passed the failed exams. I go bicycling 2 hours a day regularly and it has helped me psychologically and physically.	I don't take it seriously and try to improve myself with planning. I have been weak and intend to make up for the failed courses. It was very difficult, but I managed to change my sleeping schedule from 11 pm to 9 am.	I have fallen below zero. My family has lost their hope in me. I stay up till morning and instead go to sleep from 8 am to 6 pm. I do not have time to study and have failed in 7 courses.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study consist of descriptive and qualitative research data. First, the descriptive data including demographic characteristics of participants are presented in the following tables.

Then, the qualitative research data derived from the analysis of interviews were encoded in three-stages (basic line, post-treatment, follow-up) through open encoding, axial encoding and selective encoding.

Table 4 and 5: The research findings derived from interviews with mothers and adolescents during steps (base line, post-treatment and follow-up) in connection with the effective communication with children and families suggest that at the base line and before the treatment, they had conflicted relationships, irritated when a problem arose and tended to display defense mechanism instead of trying to solve the problem. Moreover, with aggressive behaviors, threats, disregard and lack of understanding and empathy, not only the conflict was not solved, but also it was confounded through humiliation and inconsistency in upbringing that hindered effective communication between the family members.

After an analysis of factors involved in relationships such as the ontological view of an individual, (attitude, perception of God, general perspective on life); the dominant atmosphere of the family (relationships, emotions, supervision), problem solving strategies and academic performance of adolescents as well as the statements of adolescents' mothers (base line, post- treatment, follow-up) attempts were made to amend the manner and improve relations through the creation of common space.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, it can be stated that life-review therapy based on Islamic ontological views was effective in treating the problems associated with parent-child relationships.

To the knowledge of the author, since this therapeutic model has not been applied to parent-child relationships so far, it lacks a robust research background. However, as an independent variable, some elements of this study are consistent with the study of Esmaeili (2010) entitled "a study of the effectiveness of life-review treatment based on the principles of Islamic ontology in reducing posttraumatic stress disorders syndrome" as well as the study of Shahkarami (2014) entitled "The impact of life-review treatment based on Islamic ontology on marital conflicts and the decision to maintain the marriage" and the research conducted by Rezapour Mir Saleh et al (2013) entitled "The effectiveness of the teachings of Islamic ontology on marital satisfaction of married women".

Family is a small social organization in which the relations between family members, particularly parent-child relationships is the most important element. Therefore, the desirable and holistic growth of children is largely dependent on their desirable and effective communication of with parents.

Amongst the factors affecting socialization, parents are the most important factor. Since conflicts between family members are pervasive and often treated as internal, unknown and insignificant matters and parents are reluctant to take them seriously. This exacerbates these problems, giving rise to emotions like anger, hostility, hatred, jealousy, which leave a devastating effect on the development of relationships (Ngozi, 2013).

The results of life-review sessions based on Islamic ontology suggest that the attitude of people toward stages of life, growth and maturation, which is often in conflict with ontology, particularly Islamic ontology, has been the root cause for the gloomy view of life, which instead of cultivating intimate relationship has led to alienation.

Thus, by raising awareness, encouraging a decision to change and planning to achieve such a relationship, accepting the reality, taking actions, living with facts and treating maturity changes as natural, a good relationship with parents and friends can be established, which in turn can help resolve conflicts in relationships.

When adolescents think that they are treated with respect, empathy and understanding and their family look highly upon them, the relationship between family members is improved. The results of this study consistent with the findings of Safouraee (2011), Hosseini (2012) and Seydi (2011) who showed that religious attitudes was related to the enahnced family health.

Further, the results of research in other countries have also highlighted the role of faith and spirituality in reinforcing intimate relationship amongst family members (Hodge, 2012).

Overall, it can be concluded that life-review treatment based on Islamic ontology highlights the points of conflicts in the life and creates a common ground between the mother and child that can nurture affection and sympathy in their relationships.

By applying the principles of Islamic ontology such as the principle of choice, pain and growth, continuity and order of the universe, objectivity, the continued effects of actions in the universe, the relationship of the man with his self, other men and the universe as well as the relationship with God, which are all general principles applicable to all human beings, we can reconstruct cognitions, behaviors, attitudes and incorrect evaluations of man in life, inform him about the reality and facts of life and thereby resolve the conflicts and disputes in the relationships with the family and life in general. In his study, Seydi (2011) showed that a spiritual environment, empathy and appreciation of each other in families help alleviate conflicts and properly manage problems caused in families. Barbee (2008) also revealed that sympathy and mutual understanding was a good predicator of variance in beneficence of people with forgiveness also playing a major role in resolution of conflicts. One of the limitations of the present study is concerned with the extension of its results to other study population. Moreover, since this was a qualitative research (case study) the available sampling method was used. Thus, caution should be practiced in generalizing the findings to other families.

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