



RESEARCH PAPER

Development of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Islamic Concepts for Treatment of Depression and Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

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This paper engages with the Islamic treatment of the psychological disorders like depression and anxiety. To be more precise in this study cognitive behaviour therapy was developed with Islamic concepts for the treatment of patients of anxiety and depression. Cognitive behaviour therapy with Islamic concepts was developed by addition of Quranic Ayaat and Ahaadiis of Prophet Muhammad PBUH in the techniques of regular CBT. These Ayaat and Ahaadiis were used for cognitive restructuring of the cognitive errors in the patients of Anxiety and Depression. The pilot study was also conducted on three clients to check the efficacy of newly developed CBT with Islamic concepts. The post-test results showed efficacy of CBT with Islamic concepts. Pre-test, post-test experimental research method was used. In the quantitative analysis t-test results showed efficacy of CBT with Islamic concepts. Qualitative analysis of the verbatim of the clients was done using Interpretative phenomenological Analysis. Themes deduced showed that Islamic content in the CBT like Ayaat and Ahaadiis helped the clients in cognitive restructuring of their cognitive errors and which helped in their overcoming of the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Introduction

Depression and Anxiety are conditions which affect a growing population of individuals around the world. It does not discriminate with regard to race, educational background, social status or religion. *Depression* is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how one feel the way one think and how one act. *Depression causes* feelings of sadness and a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed (Sheeran, Byers, & Bruce, 2010).

Anxiety disorders are forms of mental disorders that start early in life, and negatively affect work performance, as well as later psychosocial functioning, is much more affected. It is also noticed that anxieties are the most chronic forms of mental illnesses. It is also evident that the prevalence rate of anxiety disorders is increasing very much. And their implications and consequences are increasing by a rapid speed (DSM-5, 2013).

Symptoms of Anxiety include excessive worry about a variety of topics, events, or activities. Excessive worry means worrying even when there is nothing wrong or in a manner that is disproportionate to the actual risk. This typically involves spending a high percentage of waking hours worrying about something. The worry may be accompanied by reassurance-seeking from others. In adults, the worry can be about job responsibilities or performance, one's own health or the health of family members, financial matters, and other every day, typical life circumstances (DSM -5, 2013).

Research has shown that the perceptions and interpretations of depressed persons are usually not accurate and can initiate a vicious cycle. Those who are depressed have a greater tendency to engage in "cognitive errors," such as jumping to conclusions, using a negative mental filter, all-or-nothing thinking etc. CBT teaches individuals to identify, challenge, and replace maladaptive thoughts and distorted thinking styles with healthy thoughts and behaviours. (Beck, .et.,all 2005).

CBT is found very effective in treating depressive disorders and Anxiety disorders. According to cognitive behaviour therapy, irrational thinking is the cause of stress, anxiety, depression and other disorders. But for a Muslim the causes of anxiety and depression are not only the environmental factors and irrational thinking patterns but also a weak bonding of the individual with Allah SWT. Because for a person to be depressed and hopeless is having the view that he will never have something good in life. For a Muslim it is never like this, Allah SWT is always there to help the poor, needy and weak.

For thousands of years, humans have looked to faith and religious belief for answers to their emotional problems. The majority of studies show that having a faith or belief is, in general, good for mental health (Koenig, 2009). The psychotherapies constructed in west are helpful in alleviation of psychiatric symptoms. But they sometimes do not cover our cultural demands. It is required in the present time to modify those psychotherapies according to our religion.

The present study was an effort to integrate Islamic concepts in the cognitive behaviour therapy by the help of QuranicAyat, Ahaadis. The present study modified the existing cognitive behaviour therapy with Islamic concepts and a new Islamic version of cognitive behaviour therapy is developed for Muslims. The study developed Quranic thought restructuring technique for changing the irrational thinking into the rational one. This study developed Islamic mental imagery technique for the relaxation of the patient. This technique helps in strengthening the

connection of the person with Allah SWT. It helped in reducing the feeling of the patient being alone.

Patients were helped in maintain a more organized and comfortable life style by giving them Islamic homework assignments such as offering prayers on time and recitation. This study helped in long lasting removal of symptoms of anxiety and depression, as by using the Islamic concepts and Islamic practices in cognitive behaviour therapy during intervention the clients were trained in having rational and adaptive thinking.

Cognitive behaviour therapy helps the individual with depression and anxiety in developing adaptive coping strategies which help them in dealing with their daily life distresses and problems. Likewise Islam provides Muslims with a code of behaviour, ethics, and social values, which helps them in tolerating and developing adaptive coping strategies to deal with stressful life events. The word Islam in Arabic means "submission," reflecting the central core of Islam, which is the submission to the will of Allah. Depression is caused when a person is not accepting the things which are going in his life. But when a person submits to Allah he is satisfied with his all decisions and deals better with the problems and distresses. Islam encourages people to stay hopeful, even if someone has committed the worst sin or faced with most troublesome life event as there is always Allah's mercy. Negative life events are one of major risk factors for depression. Islam plays an important role in helping Muslims to cope with negative life events, which helps them in both prevention and treatment of depression. As Islam is a religion of hope and discourages hopelessness. As Islam is having the philosophy of mercy and kindness from Allah SWT for his people. Allah SWT gives hope to his man that don't become desperate when something bad happens to you because it will follow something very good.

"So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief: Verily, with every difficulty there is relief." (Quran, 94: 5-6)

Grief is a common emotional pattern of a person which he feels having any troublesome event in his life. Some people come out of the feeling of grief after some time of that dreadful event. But for some people it becomes difficult to come out of the grief because their thinking pattern or their cognitions have distortions. Grief is a normal reaction toward any life losses. A practicing Muslim believe that all sufferings in life, death, joy, and happiness are derived from Allah and that Allah is the one who gives us strength to survive. They believe that any loss or deprivation experience is a form of a test from Allah to his slave of how he will stand this suffering with patience and full trust in Allah's mercy.

These beliefs usually help to comfort and aid the healing process. In addition, anxious patients may have maladaptive thoughts such as "I feel that I am no longer able to cope," "Life is too difficult for me," or "No one is there for me." It can be helpful for those who are suffering to recall that Allah is always there and can assist those who place their trust in Him.

One of the foundations of Islamic belief is the understanding that Allah is able to do all things and He runs all affairs. This is an aspect of tawheed (belief in the oneness of Allah) that specifies oneness in Allah's Lordship.

“And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely (upon Him)” (Quran, 3:159).

“And when my slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then (answer them): I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me” (Qur’an, 2:186).

The more intense the stress and depression, the closer one is to assistance and relief. Prophet Muhammad said, *“Know that victory (or achievement) comes through patience, and that ease comes through hardship ...”* (Musnad Ahmad, 2803).

In the CBT with Islamic concepts the therapist challenged the dysfunctional beliefs of the clients having depression and anxiety by using quranic Ayaat and Ahaadees. For example the patients of depression and anxiety disorder are having one common cognitive error of hopelessness and the feeling that nothing good is going to happen in their life. This thinking error can be challenged by using quranic Ayat. Allah SWT says in Quran

فَأَسْتَجِبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Then we responded to his call and delivered him from the grief and we shall likewise deliver the Muslims.

يَتَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Believers; seek help with patience and prayer: no doubt, Allah is with the Patients.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

And east and west all is for Allah, and then whichever side you turn your face there is the face of Allah (the mercy of Allah inclined towards you). Undoubtedly Allah is all embracing, all knowing.

Another cognitive error in Anxiety and depression is Minimization & Magnification, the patients magnifies the negative events happening in his life and minimise the positive events happening in his life.

وَعَاتِبْكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ
اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصَوْهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

And He gave you many things you asked for, and if you count the favours of Allah, you cannot count, no doubt, man is very unjust, unthankful

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ
عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

And remember , when you Lord proclaimed , “if you will be grateful, then I shall give you more , and if you are thankless, then my torment is severe.”

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ ۗ وَإِذَا
مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا ﴿٨٣﴾

And when we bestow favour on man, he turns away his face and moves far away towards himself, and when evil touches him then he becomes disappointed.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَعُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

And there had not been the grace of Allah and, mercy upon you and that. Allah is kind enough, Merciful to you, (then you would have experienced its hardships).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Therefore remember Me, I shall remember you, and accept My right and do not be ungrateful to Me.

Stressful life Events

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

And remember Ismail and Idrees and Zulkifl . They were all men of patience.

﴿٨٢﴾ وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And remember Ayub when he called his Lord that distress has touched me and You are the most Merciful of the merciful.

﴿٦٩﴾ قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

We said , O Fire Be you cool and safety for Ibrahim,'

أَمَّنْ يَجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ
أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَلْبَسًا مَا تَذْكُرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

He who listens to destitute when he calls upon Him and removes the evil and makes you successors in the earth. Is there any other God along with Allah? Very little, you reflect.

﴿٨٨﴾ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Then we responded to his call and delivered him from the grief and we shall likewise deliver the Muslims.

فَأَسْتَجِبْنَا لَهُ وَفَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَعَاتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ
رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

Then we responded to him and we removed distress which he had and we gave him his family and along with them the like thereof as a mercy from us and as an admonition to the devotees.

وَإِن يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا
هُوَ وَإِن يَمَسُّكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾

And if Allah causes any evil to you, then there is none to remove it but him. And if He brings you good, then He brings you good, then He can do everything.

Depressed Mood

He said, I cry out for assistance in my anguish and sorrow unto Allah, and I know

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

those glories of Allah which you know not.

أَدْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

Call on your Lord humbly and secretly. Undoubtedly, He likes not those who cross the limit.

Vengeful feeling (outward aggression)

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانتَصِرُ ﴿١٠﴾

He therefore prayed to his Lord, saying I am vanquished; do then take revenge for me.

And Allah is with the steadfast.

وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٢٤١﴾
 مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ
 الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

What is with you will be exhausted and what is with Allah is to remain forever, and certainly we shall give to those who are patient that reward befitting to their best work.

وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

And Allah is Kind enough over His bondmen.

Anger

مَنْ كَظَمَ غَيْظًا وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَىٰ إِنْفَاقِهِ، مَلَأَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ أَمْنًا وَ إِيْمَانًا.

Whoever curbs his anger, while being able to act, Allah will fill his heart with certainty of faith”.

Interpersonal Conflicts

Islam encourages people to stay hopeful, even if someone has committed the worst sin or faced with most troublesome life event as there is always God's mercy.

“And never give up hope of Allah's soothing Mercy: truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith.” (Quran, 12:87)

To counter maladaptive thoughts related to hopelessness and feeling overwhelmed with life, as there is no place for despair because Muslims believe that

it is Allah Himself who is in charge of everything, the all Seeing, All Knowing, and All Fair and Wise God.

As God says: *“And for those who fear Allah, He always prepares a way out, and He provides for him from sources he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is Allah for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.”* (Quran, 65: 2-3)

In depression and Anxiety the patient is having socialization problems and issues with relationships and having conflict with other people. Islam teaches how to live in harmony with others *“Seek the life to come by means of what God granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for God does not love those who do this”* (Quran, 28:77).

Islam helps to prevent suicide by two ways, directly by prohibiting it and indirectly, by lowering the causes of suicide such as substance abuse and maintaining mental and emotional well-being. In Islam, suicide is considered to be strictly prohibited. The Quran mentions *“... [do not] kill (or destroy) yourselves, for surely God has been Most Merciful to you”* (Quran, 4:29). On the contrary Muslims should remember God in times of suffering and pain and have faith and hope in God's mercy and compassion to ease the suffering.

Formation of the structured CBT-IC module

General Session Structure

The cognitive behaviour therapy with Islamic concepts was moderately structured. The goal of the therapy was to balance those essential skills that were proven to promote a positive working alliance with the application of the intervention. At times, the therapist may need to tailor specific elements of the treatment to the client. While the structure in this study served as a guideline, it should be noted that the skills and interventions outlined there were necessary for reduction in depression and anxiety symptoms.

Sessions were usually one hour in length (60 minutes).

1. During the first third of the hour, the therapist set the agenda with the individual, analysed mood, reviewed any significant events that occurred throughout the week and discussed homework assignments.
2. The middle third of the session involved psycho- education and the learning of new skills. The clinician linked the problems that the client was experiencing with the skills that were presented.
3. The final third of the session was used to complete other items on the agenda and to plane the homework assignments .The rationale of homework assignments must be explained so the individual could see the relevance of

that task in treatment. The therapist worked with the client to plan how the homework should be completed and to problem- solve any barriers that may be present.

Research Design

Experimental design pre- test & post- test was used in the current study. The research design was a mix design using quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data for obtaining results. The subjects having depression and anxiety and were already diagnosed were included in the study. Follow-up after the treatment was also taken and follow- up assessments of the subjects were also taken.

Sample

The patients (N=3) of anxiety and depression were taken from the clinics and hospitals of Rawalpindi i.e., Maryam Memorial hospital, Anwaar hospital, AFIMH (Armed forces Institute of Mental health). Pre-testing was done by using Beck's depression Inventory and Beck's anxiety Inventory, religious orientation of the clients was assessed by using Bonding to God Scale (Saleem, 2004). Convenient sampling was done by taking the consent of the clients whether they were ready to become part of a study or not.

Fitness of the Client for CBT

Fitness of the clients for CBT and CBT-IC was also assessed. In the start of the sessions clients were pre tested on Bonding to God scale and clients with depression were pre-tested on BDI Beck Depression Inventory and the clients with Anxiety disorder were pre-tested on BAI Beck's Anxiety Inventory. The clients who scored higher on the religiosity scale were selected for CBT-IC.

Quantitative Assessment

Scores of the clients on the psychological tests were recorded in the start sessions and on the ending of the therapeutic process.

Qualitative Assessment

The data gathered during the therapeutic process was also analysed by using the qualitative method, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

The data gathered during the therapeutic process was also analysed by using the qualitative method, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The aim of **interpretative phenomenological analysis** (IPA) was to explore in detail how participants were making sense of their personal and social world while going through cognitive behaviour therapy with Islamic concepts and the main focus of IPA was the experiences the clients were having through restructuring of thinking patterns by Ayaat and Ahaadiis.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Following themes were extracted from the data under the technique of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

- Belief on prayer
- Belief on forgiveness
- Spirituality gives inner peace
- Allah is most forgiving than humans
- Recitation and listening to tilawat gives inner peace
- Closeness to Allah SWT takes away worries
- Discontentment takes towards distress
- Acceptance of cognitive distortions helps in cure
- All the crisis are from Allah SWT
- Supplications gives peace
- Recitation of different Surah relieve depression
- Following prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is a real source of calmness.

So the cognitive distortions of the clients about the relationship issues were decreased as it helped them in developing attitude of forgiveness and merciful attitude in them. Cognitive restructuring of feeling that every relation was made by Allah SWT and it was HIS will from us to proceed with the relation in good manners. And everything which was happening in life was from Allah SWT not the humans living around. So the clients were psycho-educated about the cognitive distortions of them about their relations and the life going on. The clients accepted the distortions in their cognitions which was leading them towards distress. In the qualitative analysis of the sessional reports themes were derived from the verbatim of the clients about cognitions. The main theme derived from sessional reports was Acceptance of cognitive distortion helps in cure (f=9 , 75%). The sub themes of this main theme were Positive thinking (f= 8, 66 %), Behavioural control (f= 9 , 75%) and Feelings become positive (f=9 , 75%). The other main theme extracted from sessional data was that "All the crisis are from Allah SWT" (f=9 , 75%), the sub themes derived from this main theme were "Acceptance of life circumstances pre planned" (f=8 , 66%), "Humans cannot change some one life" (f=9 ,75 %), "Negative Events happening by some people are by Allah's will" (f=7 , 58%).

Conclusion

So in this way cognitive restructuring of the clients was successfully done as the resentment and anger of the client about the significant others was reduced. Earlier they were having the belief that their life was miserable due to the people living around like spouses, parents, kids and colleagues but after going through I-CBT they developed the belief that everything going in life was due to Allah SWT which helped in their treatment. It is also supported by past researches that CBT with Islamic concepts helped in improvement of socialization and better relationships. In a study islamically modified cognitive behavioural therapy was developed for enhancing outcomes of therapy by increasing the cultural congruence of cognitive behavioural therapy self-statements. Areas of differing values were emphasized that were noted between Islam and traditional CBT. The researcher reported faster recovery, better treatment compliance, lower rates of relapse, and reduced treatment disparities. This article concluded by providing suggestions to assist social workers implements islamically modified CBT statements in a manner that maximizes the potential to achieve these salutary outcomes in better socialization and individual relationships. This was not being catered by the traditional CBT (Altaf Husain, David R Hodge, 2016).

In the present study it was observed that the clients in whose support system was some religious or spiritual person Islamic cognitive therapy affected them more than others. For example some of the clients reported that their mother, wife or any other relative were having religious practices regularly, they helped them in understanding the Quranic Ayaat and Allah talah's messages towards his man. They helped the client in changing life style and offering prayers on proper time and recitations of Quran and helped improvement of their condition. It is also evident in the past researches.

Therapeutic concepts that incorporate Islamic values may be expressed in numerous phrasings. Statements that resonate with one Muslim may not resonate with another or even be consistent with the values of another client. Consequently, helping professionals should work with clients to co-construct interventions that resonate with each client's values (Azhar & Varma, 2000; Beck et al., 2004).

In the present study when clients were asked about their Islamic relaxation methods, some of them told that even they were not practicing but they believe in listening to recitation of Quranic Surah will give them calm and peace, they were given the option which surah they want to listen, most of them wanted to listen surah Rahman and Surah yaseen.

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