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TOWARD DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TO EXPLAIN POSITIVE THINKING BASED ON ISLAMIC VIEW

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to critically review theories and approaches related to positive thinking and to develop a theoretical model based on Islamic view, which is compatible with cultural values in Iran. To fulfill the stated aim, philosophical and historical foundations of positive thinking in different schools of thought including Leibnitz, Sadra, Kant, Freud and James were critically reviewed. In addition, the theoretical constructs associated with positive thinking including hope, positive automatic thoughts and paradigms of Seligman, Scheier and Carver in this regard were critically studied. Finally, based on the attachment theory of Bowlby, positive thinking was established on and its applications were explained for individuals' thinking styles about past events, present interpretations of events and future expectations. Since the attachment theory is a relational theory, positive thinking in this paradigm was discussed in a way that included individuals' relationship with transcendental being, others, nature, and the self.

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Introduction

Science of psychology has long been focusing on understanding and helping individuals to face illness, adversity and calamity (Seligman, 2002). In the second half of the twentieth century, psychology had a great deal of instruction about depression, racism, violence, self-esteem management, disorders and growth in adversities; but, it has much less to say regarding personal abilities, virtues and conditions, which lead to satisfaction and urban commitment. According to a metaphor, it has been said that psychology deals with educating how to raise people from minus eight to zero point; but, it is not sufficiently able to understand how to take people from zero to plus eight (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

In pathology oriented psychology, before studying the reasons that make people have positive feelings like hope and happiness, the focus is on the reasons that lead to depression and anxiety. But recently, positive psychology

deals with helping individuals achieve physical and mental well-being and it guides psychologists toward studying more positive aspects of life. Positive psychology consists of studying the conditions and processes that lead to self-actualization and optimized performance of individuals, groups and organizations (2005). This approach, with a positive perspective, deals with improving well-being and happiness rather than treating disorders and defects. Therefore, positive psychology is a supplement to traditional clinical psychology. Positive psychology researchers investigate predictors of well-being; this new emphasis on positive psychology provides an understanding of the contribution to individuals' adaptive functions. Therefore, it may result in growth and perfection of individuals, groups and societies (Khanjani, 2013).

Positive psychology does not claim to provide a good life or guide scientific studies; but its value lies in the fact that it improves all elements of the life. This collects diverse lines of theories and studies regarding this subject (Paterson & Park, 2003). Explaining that psychology needs a review of its goals and should deal much more with happiness and satisfaction, positive psychology has recently turned to developing new psychological perspectives. The psychologists following this school claim that their techniques not only decrease level of depression in individuals and societies, but also bring a proper way of life, life satisfaction and ultimately happiness and well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000). Reliance of positive psychology on empirical studies for understanding people and their lives is the point that differentiates positive psychology from existential psychology of 1960s and 1970s as well as positive thinking movement (Khanjani, 2013).

During the recent decades, positive psychology has become one of the major branches of psychology and has quickly found a suitable place in the field of psychology. This quickness has become salient, particularly in becoming a pragmatic approach based on empirical evidence and using new methods and interventions. Application of positive interventions is intended for improving life quality, happiness and attaining well-being. The extent of these applications was so wide spreading that emergence of positive therapies has been followed. Techniques and methods used in positive psychology are neither merely cognitive nor utopian, but they are scientific methods or activities that individuals apply in their daily livings (Seligman, 2002).

Most of the past researches on positive psychology during the recent decade (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006; Frisch, 2006; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Seligman, 2002; Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox & Seligman, 1995; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2000) have taken important steps in terms of both measurement and evaluation of the dimensions studied in positive psychology and development, application and effectiveness of its related interventions. Some salient advances can be observed in most areas (Khanjani, 2013). Dacures, Steen and Seligman (2005) mentioned more than one hundred positive methods for intervention and therapy. Some of these methods have been formulated as positive therapies: well-being therapy based on psychological multi-dimensional well-being model (Ryff, 1989) and positive psychotherapy (Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006; Buchanan, Rubenstein & Seligman, 1999; Gillham & Reivich, 1999; Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox & Seligman, 1995; Seligman, Schulman, DeRubies & Hollon, 1999; Seligman, Rashid & Parks, 2006) and life quality therapy (Frisch, 2006). It seems that positive psychology interventions are applied both in prevention (improving individual's conditions) and in psychotherapy and counseling practices (Seligman, 2002). Additionally, Fordyce's study (1983) on effect of happiness interventions, Emoon and Mecullough's (2003) about intervention to enhance thanksgiving and appreciation, Berton and King's (2004) regarding effectiveness of writing positive experiences on temperament, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade's (2005) about intervention called "Count your life's blessings" have suggested effectiveness of these positive interventions in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression and enhancing well-being and positive experiences and emotions.

Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) performed a meta-analysis on positive psychology interventions for reducing depression and enhancing happiness. 49 out of 50 studies done in this meta-analysis have revealed an enhancement in well-being, happiness and life satisfaction. Twenty Five cases of these studies have directly shown high effectiveness in reducing symptoms of depression. Effectiveness rate of interventions has been reported above average, which shows that positive psychotherapy has good and desirable effectiveness and efficiency. According to positive psychology, loss of positive emotions and features in life may lead to different types of mental problems and disorders (Joseph & Linley, 2005).

According to positive perspective, abilities and positive emotions are two best predictors which prevent mental disorders. The researchers who are active in the area of prevention believe that prevention is an emphasis on developing abilities, rather than correcting weaknesses. Therefore, humans' ability is a shield against mental illnesses. Fearlessness, optimism, interpersonal relationship skills, observing occupational ethics, honesty, efficiency, openness of mind and insight are counted as samples of these abilities (Rashid & Seligman, 2010). The results of many studies about effectiveness of positive preventive interventions (e. f. Gillham & Reivich, 1999; Danner, Snowdon & Frisen, 2001) demonstrated that diagnosing and enhancing positive emotions as well as psychological well-being prevent individuals from depression, anxiety, chronic disorders and life tensions. According to the previous discourse and due to the importance of mental health and importance of preventing mental disorders in students, it is inevitably essential to implement psychological and preventive interventions (such as preventing depression, anxiety and stress and enhance life satisfaction, psychological well-being, meaning, commitment and positive emotions).

Few studies have been conducted on positive psychology in Iran. Khodayarifard (1999) explained application of positive thinking in psychotherapy with an emphasis on Islamic perspective. According to his study, the emphasis of Islam and Quran on the positive and strong points of individuals was tested as positive psychology

interventions in personal psychotherapy for depressed people and family therapy for family inconsistency and personality disorder and its effectiveness was confirmed. In the study conducted by Kordmirza and Nikoozadeh (2011), the effectiveness of positive perspective intervention and cognitive narrative telling intervention on enhancing tolerance of addicts was shown. Parcham and Mohaqeqian (2011) studied the effectiveness of reciting Quran and positive perspective on enhancing hope. Their results showed usefulness of these interventions.

It is just a few decades that positive psychology has had a suitable growth in area of theorizing and determining the components which are effective in positive thinking. The outstanding theories in this area include optimism theory (Seligman, 1991), Scheier and Carver's theory (1985) and hope theory (Snyder, 2000). Most of these theories have the capability of measurement and evaluation as well as intervention strategies. A brief explanation for these theories is introduced in this paper.

Optimism

The definitions of optimism, which are represented in dictionary, include two notions; the first one is inclination toward hopefulness or the belief that benevolence ultimately will take place. The second one is broader and refers to the belief that this world is "the best of all possible worlds" (Oxford Dictionary, 2000). In psychological studies, optimism refers to the hope-creating expectancies in a particular situation and it also indicates positive general experiences. Therefore, as compared with pessimists, individuals who obtain a higher score in measure of inclination to optimism have fewer symptoms of depression, use more effective coping strategies and have fewer symptoms of physical problems (Scheier & Carver, 1988).

Optimism and pessimism (which may be consistent with the second notion of optimism) have been recently applied to the methods that people usually use in order to explain their life events (Seligman, 1991). Peterson and Seligman (2004) considered individual's expectations about future (based on their expectations of life experiences) to be the basis of defining optimism; they claimed that, if a failure in life is stated as a reflection of stable factors, more failures are expected in future. However, if a past failure is stated as a reflection of unstable factors, this undesirable event may not be repeated in future. The origin of optimism has been attributional style, helplessness model and its structural redefinition (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978).

A few researchers have proposed the question of whether there is any attributional style or not. Studies have suggested a kind of stability in attributional style over time. Tiggermann, Winefield, Winefield and Goldney (1991) in a longitudinal study examined attributional style of adolescents and showed an average relationship between attributional styles and positive/negative life events. Abramson, Alloy and Metalsky (1998, 1989) also mentioned that attributional style might be stable in different areas (such as interpersonal areas and achievement). Since the emphasis of optimism in attributional style (Seligman, 1991) is on expecting no events with negative results in the future, it seems that some of fundamental subjects are controversial in this perspective. First, optimism and pessimism are seen in a continuum and the attention has been merely focused on future events. Second, is it possible to achieve optimism and pessimism by integrating attributional constructs? Finally, individual's relation to nature and God (as a holy concept) was obviously ignored in this perspective.

In the perspective of Scheier and Carver (1985), optimism was established based on generalized outcome expectancies. In other words, optimism was defined as the belief that good events would happen more than bad events in future. In this perspective, optimists continue following their valuable goals when facing difficulties. Scheier and Carver (1992) put outcome expectancies in focus and assumed optimism as a purposeful approach when the goal had a high value. In this model, individuals feel capable of moving toward intended goals and avoiding the undesirable outcomes. In this perspective, optimism is a person-oriented variable, showing the extent to which people keep generalized desirable expectancies for their future; therefore, optimists are those who expect good things to happen for them; pessimists are those who expect bad things to happen for them. Folk psychology had long believed that this difference between people is of importance. Studies conducted over the last 25 years have represented that this belief is correct. This relatively simple difference (good expectancy vs. bad expectancy) is attributed to the main processes of the behavior foundation (Carver, Scheier & Segerstrom, 2010).

Lack of differentiation between pessimism and optimism is one of the noteworthy points in theory of Scheier and Carver (just like attributional style theory). In this theory, optimism is thought as an integrated and extended construct that has no components and human relationships with nature and God have been neglected. On the other hand, it is possible to consider other basic and important dimensions for expectancy which are better interpreters of constructs such as mental and physical health. Finally, future outcome expectancy is accentuated in this theory and no attention is paid to the past and present time. Life Orientation Test (LOT), prepared by Scheier and Carver (1985), was the most common instrument that measures outcome expectancy. Their questionnaire was prepared based on the general belief that "good things happen more than bad things" for optimists, which contrast pessimistic beliefs. According to theory of Scheier and Carver, optimism and pessimism lie in two bounds of a continuum; therefore, both of these two items (optimism and pessimism) are questioned in this test. Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994) have recently revised their life orientation test.

Hope

Hope theory is another positive psychology theory. Hopefulness is defined based on the extent to which the

individual's goals are achievable. In the recent definition of hope, this construct includes pathways toward goals and their fundamental motives (Snyder, 2000). Therefore, hope can be defined as purposeful thoughts in which the person uses strategic thinking (an ability to find a way to achieve desirable goals) and agent thinking (the required motive to utilize those ways). In this definition, positive expectancies are divided into strategic and agent components. In this framework, agency refers to the will for moving toward personal goals and strategies refer to devising some plans and ways to achieve the desirable goals (Bryant & Cvengros, 2004).

According to Snyder et al. (2002), in order to achieve goals, individuals should have the ability of developing and finding functional ways; this process is called strategic thinking in which a hopeful person is able to find at least one way to achieve the desirable goals. One of the requirements of hopeful thinking is to find ways of achieving desirable goals. On the other hand, the motivational component in hope theory is the agency containing thoughts that encompass beginning of movement in a special way and also in the rest of that way. Agency thinking is important in all purposeful thoughts; but, when facing problems, its function becomes more important. In these situations, agency helps people have sufficient motive for applying alternative ways. In summary, agency sparkles strategic thinking and this process is repeated until the desirable goal is achieved. Therefore, agency and strategic components support each other in ways that affect each other constantly until the person achieves the desired goal.

Individuals with a higher level of hope interpret obstacles of the goal as a challenge and try to find other ways and use their motivation in a new way. Noting to the success obtained at time of facing obstacles, hopeful people move forward with their positive emotions. Hopeless people cannot find new ways; their negative emotions prevent them from following up their goals (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). It is based on personal differences that some people have little hope while others are more hopeful. Snyder (2000) explained that hope is learnt and emphasized on the fact that hopeful and purposeful thinking are acquired in the social contexts.

Positive goal-directed expectancies may benefit implicitly from pathways-related thinking. According to Snyder (2002), as for explaining optimism, agency is the main and more important component than strategies. About this issue, Magaletta and Oliver (1999) reported that strategies component has more powerful relationship with items of life orientation test (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Bruininks and Malle (2005) showed that hope and optimism are two different states; although both of them are related to future, they are qualitatively different. In other words, optimism is the general expectation that future will be positive and it is considered the focus on the outcome expectancy that specifies the purposeful behavior; but, hope is the reciprocal action between efficiency expectancies and outcome expectancy. Therefore, hope is a state of positive expectation similar to optimism. So, it is not astonishing that hope and optimism are described as similar constructs in psychology.

The first difference between hope and optimism is in their outcomes. People are often optimist about *general* outcomes (Today is a good day) while they are hopeful for *special* outcomes (getting better when suffering from disease). Additionally, hope contains an emotional element and is related to important events, even if these events are less likely to occur. But, optimism includes more possibility for the occurrence of outcomes. Ultimately, hope theory explicitly describes cause of (positive and negative) emotions. In Seligman's optimism, this issue is implicitly mentioned; however, the optimism proposed by Scheier and Carver is classified in self-regulatory theories (Scheier & Carver, 1988).

Automatic Thoughts

Automatic thought is another construct related to positive thinking. Cognitive models of psychopathology emphasize on the importance of cognition in development of emotional disorders (Beck, 1976). Attention has been paid to cognitive structures (like model and basic assumptions), cognitive operations (like making choices and evaluating information) and cognitive products (like automatic thoughts) (Calvete & Conner-Smith, 2005). This questionnaire was revised by Kendall, Howard and Hays (1989) and some positive items were added to it. To complete this questionnaire, the participants were asked to specify frequency of each thought which occurred to them in recent two months (Calvete & Conner-Smith, 2005). Some serious disadvantages in results of this questionnaire are: 1) one of the aspects of difference between positive thinking and automatic thought is attention to range of time. In this questionnaire, automatic thought is ultimately examined in a range of two last months; but, positive thinking attempts to cover the past up to future time. 2) to what extent the frequency of one thought (positive or negative) in a special range of time can be a trait or treatment of a personality characteristic? Meanwhile, the depressed people's momentary thoughts are the origin of items of automatic thought questionnaire while in positive thinking, the main goal is to develop a model for evaluating positive thinking rather than the continuum opposed to depression.

Positive Thinking in perspective of attachment quality

Positive thinking has a strong relationship with attachment quality (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1988; Heinonen, Raikkonen, Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2004). Individuals with secure attachment think themselves as qualified people and have positive expectations about themselves. These individuals believe that they can convert stressful situations into opportunities in which growth and maturity exist; they believe that challenges of life lead to actualization of hidden talents of humans. These people, when necessary, can attract support of their parents and peers. Attracting support of other people at necessary moments and having positive expectancies of others give them a positive perspective, which itself makes them more successful and optimistic through expectancy law (Mikulince & Shaver, 2007).

Attachment pattern in childhood has its function in developing individual cognitive schema and affects quality of absorbing peripheral information. Therefore, identifying them is important in predicting individual's health and positive thinking quality. Regarding the effects of childhood experiences, pattern formation of the self and other people's pattern (which become persistent and strong simultaneously with the formation of attachment) should be mentioned. Pattern of the self in the attachment system shows the individual's evaluation of him/herself, which is developed in early relationships while living with early caretakers. This pattern can be positive; that is, the person believes that he/she has the value of being cared, respected and loved. These perceptions are achievable when the individual has available, accepting and responsible caretakers.

Most of the parents who cannot respond to their children's physiological and psychological needs frequently (due to occupational and family problems or mental imbalance), grow children with anxious attachment; these children are not sure of their values for being cared. A person with anxious attachment cannot be positive and optimistic because he/she does not have mental predisposition in this matter and his/her past experiences which have formed his/her mental schema do not give him/her such permission. Rather than trusting future, he/she becomes anxious about undesirable events in the future. Those people who have not been sufficiently accepted by others or their subject of attachment has not cared them sufficiently, are not able to trust others as secure models. Although those people apparently seem independent, they devote themselves a style of attachment called "avoidant" because they are not sure whether others fulfill their needs at necessary times. These individuals are not also optimistic about events.

Theoretical and conceptual relationship between attachment styles features of optimism and positive thinking originates from the fact that both concepts were based on the experiences that were coded as cognitive generalized schema and determine orientation of behaviors, thoughts and emotions. Systems of positive thinking and attachment are formed in early childhood and play a main role in regulating emotions and behaviors. Additionally, system of attachment and optimism/pessimism is activated at times of sadness, danger, threat, loss and illness. Because the attachment system begins its formation since early stage of life and it is important in interpreting relational and social world, it is possibly considered as an important factor in formulating optimism and pessimism of individuals. People with secure attachment interpret past events in direction of their schemas and activate them in evaluating the present events as well. Additionally, people's attachment quality affects their expectancies about future events, which shows its active function (as positive and negative expectancies) in relation to natural events and leads individuals to predict and interpret natural events in a specific manner.

These patterns are activated even in relation with God and the transcendental being; they are effective in attributing features of glory and beauty to God and in having a specified expectancy of God. Individuals with a secure attachment, in addition to their optimism to others, are secure about the availability of God and their positive relationship with God (Kirkpatrick, 2005). This relationship with God as a superior power, who is omnipresent and operates as a secure basis, provides the individual with optimism toward the existence in general and its events specifically. Transference of the attachment quality –from parents to God- in religious families is called the process of socialization or consistency which has been supported in many studies (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). When individuals have secure attachment to God and others, a kind of positive expectancy of future events occurs. This can interpret hopefulness, happiness, positive thinking, and optimism (Kirkpatrick, 2005). Many studies (Heinonen et al, 2004; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) have shown that individuals with secure attachment can develop self-regulatory system and enhance their efficiency through obtaining support and help from others. These individuals maintain their hopefulness in stressful situations and adopt a positive perspective toward events.

Early pattern of attachment that is formed in childhood can become a base for attachment style in adulthood (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). The experiences leading to attachment styles are coded as internal working model in early childhood (Bowlby, 1973) and to some extent this system operates as future information processing schema and encompasses the tenets, expectancies and beliefs about the self, others and social environment. Working patterns (self and others) to some extent are fixed in time lapse and constitute individuals' attitude and beliefs in the surrounding world and about self-evaluation. Therefore, the attachment quality can be regarded as a determining factor in perception of God, the self, others and nature. That's why in the present study, positive thinking was viewed in light of the attachment pattern (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1988) and could be interpreted as multiple relationship of humans with the whole universe (relationship with God, the self, others and nature) in Islamic religious culture.

Positive Thinking in Islam

Imam Ali (Nahj al-Balagha, first sermon) believes that the most important goals of divine religions are fulfilling promise of divine nature, recalling divine blessings to believers and motivating hidden abilities of minds of believers. Quran has also regarded rise of people for justice as the primary purpose of prophets. God, in surah al-Nahl (verse 89), has also declared Quran as illuminating and He has stated the purpose of Quran as giving good news and advice and blessing to Muslims; on the other hand, the generous prophet has counted completion of moral virtues as his goal (Kanz al-Amal, vol.13: 151). Therefore, according to the mentioned pieces of evidence, Allah also has put the responsibility on prophet to direct individuals towards positive outlook and hope to solve problems.

God's positive view of humans can be perceived in the case of creation. According to Quran, human creation has been done by blowing of God's spirit (al-Hijr: 29); and after creating human, God has praised Himself. These all

show the compassion and benevolence of God for humans. The second point representing God's positive perspective toward human in creation is acceptance of Adam's repentance that has been mentioned in Quran (al-Baqarah: 37): "Then learnt Adam from his lord words of inspiration, and his lord turned towards him, for he is oft-returning most merciful". Accepting Adam's repentance is not limited only to the Original Sin; in Quran (al-Zumar: 53), there is also good news about forgiving all sins. Additionally, God has represented himself as a secure attachment figure. For example, God considers Himself available to believers and He says wherever you are, He is with you and He knows whatever you do (al-Hadid: 4). Makarem-Shirazi et al. (2011), in interpreting this verse, mentioned that God's availability and omnipresence give humans glory and grandeur and also self-confidence, braveness and courage; this evidence suggests that God wants to introduce Himself to humans as a Secure Base. On the other hand, it is possible to examine positive thinking through analyzing the moral and behavioral advice existing in Islam.

1. "We sent aforetime our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice." [al-Hadid: 25]
2. "And we have sent to thee the book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims."
3. "So blessed be God, the best to create!" [al-Mu'minun: 14]
4. "For God forgives all sins: for he is oft-Forgiving, most merciful"

Therefore, positive thinking construct in Islamic context is subsequently explained by introducing verses and quotations regarding positive thinking, gratitude, trusting and also interpretations originating from them.

Believing in Divine Benevolence

According to Dekhoda (1999), Believing in Divine Benevolence is defined as optimism and positive thought; it refers to the state in which humans are confident and expect good things. In other words, it means having positive views of Allah and favorable interpretations of the annoying and difficult events that dominate the individual during his/her life course (namely, viewing these events as God's blessings); then, this expectancy of the favorable outcome will result in their happening.

Quoting Imam Reza, Majlesi (1987) stated a narration in which God has addressed Moses: "Tell the offspring of Israel that people attract God's blessings according to their favorable presupposition about him; if they have a good presupposition about God, they find Him compassionate and helping." Quoting God, Imam Sadeq stated: "Wherever I turn the believer to, he/she will find the favorable; therefore, he/she should be pleased of My will, tolerate the calamities and thanks to My blessings; then, I register him, O' Mohammad, as the honest servant" (Koleini, n.d., vol.3: p.101). According to these two quotations, positive view and favorable expectance of God and hope for happiness and felicity that exist between servant and God lead to maturity and spiritual flourishing and a satisfactory life among people. Additionally, if a person has good presupposition, he/she will have no bad perception about natural phenomena because he/she believes that the existence (in order to achieve perfection) should pass by some stages, and these events, though initially dangerous and disastrous, make the world of being approach its goal in a general and major view.

According to verses of Quran, benevolent attitude about God in this world has been stated in benedictory phrases. For example (Al-i Imran: 8), believers have asked God in a prayer, "Our Lord, after that You guide us, do not let our hearts be subject to deviation and give us Your blessings since You are merciful". In Hereafter, after the God's promise is fulfilled, the believers confirm their benevolent attitude about God; viewing God's favor, they say (al-Zumar: 74), "Praise be to God who promised us His favor and blessing and made us heir of the whole earth (heaven) in order that we reside wherever we want" and that day the good-doer will be well-awarded.

Leaders and Imams believe that benevolent being is the basis of happiness and felicity in this world and in Hereafter. They consider it as a means to attract God's blessings and to have the sins forgiven. They have asked God to treat them according to their good presupposition about His holy nature. In the grantees' view, there is an emphasis on good presupposition and kindness to the extent that they are considered the basis of other services; Prophet Mohammad says that good presupposition about God is the best service (Hindi, 2010).

Regarding benevolent nature of God (namely, positive thinking about God), Imam Baqer states, "If a believing servant believes in benevolent nature of God, He will be as His servant thinks because God is merciful and possesses all the goodness and He becomes ashamed when His servant thinks Him benevolent but He does opposite to his/her thought and hope. Have a good intention about God and ask Him!" (Nouri, 1987). There are other narrations that recommend having good presupposition about God; for example, Koleini in *Osoule-Kafi* quotes the eighth Imam and declares, "Have good intention about God because God promises that He is adaptive to His believing servant; if his/her presupposition is good about Him, His treatment will be good and vice versa" (Koleini, n.d., vol.3, p.116).

Regarding optimism about others, Hor-Ameli(1983) quoted Imam Sajad, "It is your partner's right that you treat him/her gently, talk with him/her moderately, forget his/her errors, remember his/her good deeds and say him/her nothing except good things". According to the notion of the mentioned Hadith (quotation), features of positive thinking in case of others can be inferred as including kindly speech and behavior, ignoring errors and focusing on individuals' positive aspects.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is another aspect of positive thinking in Islamic context. Literally, it means thankfulness and appreciation for a person's kindness and beneficence. In Molla-Ahmad Naraq'i's view, gratitude refers to recognizing beneficence and favor and thanking the beneficent person; it is the opposite of ingratitude and refers to recognizing the blessing to be from the beneficent and being happy of that blessing and acting due to this happiness; namely, keeping the beneficent favor in heart and praising him/her and consuming the blessing in a way that him/her is pleased (Naraq'i, 2011). Ghobari (1993) defined thanksgiving as the cognition and knowledge of blessing, beneficent, happiness (appearing in heart and soul of humans due to this cognition) and movements (appearing in human's organs in order to thank the beneficent). Generally, thanksgiving is declaration of the blessings in heart, tongue and action. According to the mentioned notions and examples for thanksgiving, the origin of thanksgiving is to see and understand the blessing. Sensing the favor originates from positive thinking about God; namely, a positive person is able to regard what has been given to him/her as a blessing. The hope for repetition of this blessing (which is a factor of thanking for that blessing) is also related to another aspect of positive thinking that is called desirable events expectancy. Quoting Solomon, Quran (al-Naml: 40) reads, "And if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (again) for his own soul. But if any is ungrateful, truly my lord is free of all needs, supreme in honor!" Therefore, there is a personal interest for human in thanksgiving; increase in blessing is one of these personal benefits; in surah Ibrahim (verse 7), Almighty God says, "If ye are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you"; in motto No.236, Imam Ali states, "By whatever gift from God, there accompanies an obligation. Whoever fulfills that commitment, God bestows more on him/her; and whoever fails to fulfill that commitment puts himself/herself in risk of missing the blessing".

Other benefits of thanksgiving can be interpreted from psychological aspects:

1) If a person knows that a blessing has been given to him/her, he/she thinks himself/herself under supervision of a trustful care-giver who has provided him/her innumerable blessings; such a feeling leads to sense of trust and internal calmness; 2) Purity of soul and thought is another psychological outcome of thanksgiving and gratitude which has been mentioned in Quran (Ma'idah:6): "God does not intend to be strict or to be harsh on you, "But to make you clean, and to complete his favor to you, that ye may be grateful." Additionally, the issues of recognizing blessings in life, acknowledging them in heart and tongue and the happiness resulting from this cognition are not personal affairs to prevent psychological depression; but, these issues encourage social movement and strengthen healthy relationships among the people. A grateful person is happy and psychologically as well as physically healthy. In addition, knowing God's favors increases individuals' happy feelings, and this feeling is not an individual affair but it increases society's happy feeling too. Individuals favor interactions with each other are due to this happy feeling. And the possibility of depression and physical illnesses (which have psychosomatic origins) is less observed in grateful people (Ghobari, 1993).

Reliance on God

In Moein dictionary (2008), Reliance on God is defined as surrounding some of one's affair to God's will and entrusting one's affair to the agent. Ansari (2010) considers Tawakkul (Reliance of God) as entrusting the affair totally to its owner and trusting in the owner's agency; so, Ansari regards Tawakkul as entrusting affairs only to God, having no hope to others and hoping only to God's favor. Abolfaraj-ibn-Jozi (quoting Sadri, 2002) and Mohyeddin-Arabi (quoting Mirnasab, 2001) believe that Tawakkul is the heart's trust in God. It has been mentioned in Quran (Al-i Imran: 122; Ma'idah:23) that God knows Himself the only suitable one on whom the believers should have Tawakkul. Hafiz, the Iranian popular poet, has also declared the necessity of Tawakkul in a verse:

In Sufism, relying only on faith and piety is blasphemy,

Even if a Sufi possesses a hundred arts, he should trust in God.

(Hafiz, sonnet 276)

In defining Tawakkul, the person believes in everlasting God's power as the creator and supervisor of all things and His will is superior to other wills. The person is sure that, by having trust in God, the best situation occurs to him/her and he/she asks God success in all affairs. These issues suggested that individual's with high potential of Tawakkul, have more positive attitude about God. Peace and mental health are some of the outcomes of positive thinking about God; Ghobari (1999, p.107) believed that, "The person who has Tawakkul, in all of his/her states and tempers, considers the God's presence; as a result of this presence, he/she becomes peaceful in heart and he/she will found secure base when encounters with challenging events of life. Although the person who has Tawakkul uses all means to attain a goal, he/she considers the grace of achieving the result only with God's will; in addition, although he/she attributes events of the world to God's will, he/she has Tawakkul to God in order to achieve the desired results. He/she is sure that God will help him/her to attain the desired thing". Finally, God promises that whoever has Tawakkul to Him, Allah will suffice him/her (Talaq: 3).

1. "But to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that ye may be grateful."
2. "But on God put your trust if ye have faith."
3. "God is the creator of all things, and he is the guardian and disposer of all affairs. To him belong the keys of the heavens." [al-Zumar: 62]
4. "And my success (in my task) can only come from God. In him I trust, and unto him I look." [Hud: 88]

expectancies. Positive view of events affects the unconscious mind; so, the individuals flourish positive dreams and fantasies in their minds.

It may be possible to demonstrate this type of positive expectancy in narrations of Quran about the prophets. Prophets had positive expectancy from God and those positive expectancies helped them fulfill their duties without any fear of enemies, rely on God and His help, and consider God as a secure base and trustworthy. As an example, story of Abraham can be mentioned. This story was the image that Quran represented about Abraham being thrown into fire. Abraham had such a positive thought about God and His favors that he saw the fire as if it was a garden of flowers. Then, this positive thinking about God appears even in this real world and the fire becomes cool and peaceful to Abraham.

Such a positive thought about the Creator of the whole world of being provides the person with a kind of power and immunity that he/she considers himself/herself embraced by God all the time and knows that He will save him/her from problems.

Most of religious beliefs, including "waiting for Arrival of the savior" that exists in all religions, have been formed based on positive thinking, implying the fact that religions have always encouraged their followers to have positive thinking. Positive thinking in relationship with God has also appeared in God's Majestic Names. Believers think God as forgiver of sins, compassionate, merciful and kind. Positive thinking about God is not necessary to appear in physical world; but, this positive thinking about God can create hope and ability to deal with physical problems (such as tolerating pains) and incurable diseases (such as cancer). It also facilitates dealing with psychological problems (such as depression and anxiety).

Death is another example of the supernatural events; an optimist's view of death is quite different from those of pessimists. The optimists' conceive of death as the moment of union (with God); he/she is enthusiastically in quest of death. This enthusiasm has been introduced in Quran (Al-Fajr: 26-30):

"O soul at peace! Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing!
Then, enter among My servants! And enter My Paradise!"

The fact that one's interpretation of his/her death originates from himself/herself has been introduced in verses of Moulana, the Iranian popular poet (MasnaviMa'navi, book 3, verses: 3439-3442):

O Boy! One's death conforms himself,
To enemy is enemy, and to friend is friend.
O you fearing and escaping death!
You should fear yourself rather than death,
It is your own face that is ugly, not Death's,
Your soul is a tree; and death is its leaf.
If you're hurt of a thorn, you have already planted it!
If you are in a soft silk, you already weaved it!

Generally, those who have secure attachment to God see the existence beautiful and expect blessing and happiness from it. In stories of prophets in Quran, this optimistic view is quite apparent. During facing the worst conditions, prophets have counted on God as a Secure Base and Safe Haven, and they have thought Him to be available and supporting in all conditions.

B) Relationship with the Self: Optimists have positive thought about their abilities. They focus on positive events rather than unpleasant past events. These people attribute their success to their own abilities. When facing hard conditions of life, they rely on their internal resources and activate their constructive and positive reactions in order to deal with the problems. The locus of control in optimists is internal. These individuals believe in their close relationships with God and spiritual resources. Their self-esteem and internal value of the self are high. They are not only appreciative of their abilities, but also have positive interpretations for their past failures in life as if they believe in the saying: a failure is a bridge to the victory.

C) Relationship with others: Carver et al. (2010) mentioned the probable relationship between optimism and interpersonal relationships. When dealing with others, optimists pay more attention to positive aspects of events. In any individual's behavior, they observe a sign of growth in personality and readiness for following stages of life. They consider destructive behaviors as secondary matters without having a fundamental base. Optimists have a philosophy based on altruism; they believe that, if humans become mentally secure and healthy, they are naturally altruist and like to adhere to others positively to form a reciprocal emotional relationship between themselves and others.

Optimists think positively about observing other people's rights (e.g. beneficence, kindness, forgiveness) and consider these behaviors consistent with actualization of their internal talents for removing relationship blocks and proliferating humane relationships. In other words, they know that forgiving others leads to their own freedom from pessimism, sufferings and distress. Optimists do not consider other people's evils as a natural element; but, they think that these evils are due to a loss or deficiency in the controlling spiritual system.

Psychologists like Ellis believe that people's beliefs and interpretations about the happened events have a main function in their emotional management. Since optimists view events of life and behaviors in interpersonal relationships from a positive perspective,

1. They can observe positive behaviors while collecting data from other people's behavior (because they expect such behaviors), and
2. They can act optimistically in interpretation of data.

This positive thinking awards them happiness, hopefulness, peace and pleasure of mind. Additionally, expecting suitable behaviors from others increases the likelihood of observing such behaviors in them. Optimists pick the positive aspect of other people's behaviors because they always see the glass half full; for example, instead of becoming angry, they use other people's constructive criticism and change their behaviors in order to adapt with social environments.

D) Relationship with nature: These people believe that the whole existence takes steps in an evolutionary process. Undesirable events have their own meaning. These individuals' expectancy of natural events is positive and directed toward perfect spirituality. These individuals look at nature with praise and awe; they consider natural events in harmony with the goal of creation. Human beings, who regard nature as the sign of God, drown in nature's beauties, feel spiritual astonishment and rejoice with existence; in their view, existence and nature are reminders of God.

1. "We said," o fire ! be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham" [al-Anbiya: 69]

Conclusion

In the current study Positive thinking or having a positive outlook as a psychological construct was approached and reviewed from Islamic points of view. It was debated that Islam has more positive views of human innate nature than other monotheistic religions. Discussion about human innate nature backs to the theological notion of fall of Adam and its archetypal consequences. Since Islamic scholars believed that repentance of Adam following the fall, was accepted, and its adverse consequences was not passed to his generation, human kind is destined to growth, actualization and spiritual flourishing. In other words, in Islamic view we are optimistic about human nature and its capacity for growth. We are also are optimistic about relation of human and Divine.

This optimistic view is reflected in gnosis and Islamic mysticism as well. There is a path in positive psychology to connect optimism to ongoing practice in counseling and psychotherapeutic research. Current researchers become interested in development of a paradigm to study positive thinking more in depth-passion that is exploring its nature, antecedents, consequences, and other related issues. The more pressing need of studying positive thinking was development of a scale to measure individual differences in positive thinking.

Researcher approached positive thinking from different perspective: 1) positive thinking in cognitive paradigm, 2) positive thinking as observed in relational psychology. In positive thinking correction of automatic, dysfunctional thoughts has been reviewed. The fourfold relational paradigm of individual: relation with Divine, relation with nature, relation with others, and relation with self, have been accepted as a base for all relations, and regulating our relations consciously in accordance with a positive aspect the world have been advocated. Approaching this paradigm and orienting thoughts, feelings, actions toward view item in the positive context can be achieved with ontological gnostic worldview, and reinforcing it in human relationship, the core of which rely on attachment styles, and healthy psycho- social and spiritual development.

The presented view in the paper have not yet been tested empirically, the empirical data may solidarity, refine or bring some changes to its tenets or style of application.

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