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The Quranic-based Healing through Sound and its Psychological Effect: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

The effects of sound in human psychology and physiology are complex. The psychology of sound, also called auditory psychology, has its own features of pitch, intensity and timbre. The study of the effect of healing through the sound of recitation the Qur'an is an important issue that has not been given sufficient attention to research. Also, Muslim believes that the Qur'an is not like other books whose sources may be obscure. Furthermore, in several verses, the Qur'an has been said as a "cure", and also it is known as a heart healer (And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss, (Al-Israa 82). Many studies have been conducted on the effect of healing through the Qur'an in many areas. Based on the studies, the sound of recitation the Qur'an can improve the psychological and the physiological parameters including reducing heart rate, anxiety and stress, increasing mental health and memory performance for children and adults. Therefore, listening and reading the Qur'an can be recommended as supportive care improvement especially the psychological performance of people. This article reviews studies that have been conducted on Quranic recitation and the psychological effects associated with it.

Keywords: Sound Healing, Quranic recitation, Psychological Effects

INTRODUCTION

All sound components are represented in the human auditory system, from the cochlea, cochlear core and central auditory passage to the temporal lobe. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by Sound Healing. Sound healing refers to a set of treatments in which sound is used to treat physical and mental conditions (Sound Therapy, 2020). One such therapy is Qur'an therapy, which can include someone listening to Qur'an for conditions such as stress and muscle tension (Tumiran et al., 2013).

The Qur'an is a miracle book. Its recitation can further provide a positive effect on the human mind by its phonological framework (Tajweed). Healing through the Qur'an is an important issue which has not been given sufficient consideration for research. Also, Muslim believes that the Qur'an is not like other books whose sources may be obscure. Furthermore, in several verses, the Qur'an has been said as a "cure", and also it is known as a heart healer (And We send down of the Quran that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss, Al-Israa 82) (Tanzil.net, 2019). Indeed, there have been many studies on using the Qur'an recitation to heal human illness such as anxiety, stress, depression and psychological problems (Kamal, Mahmood, & Zakaria, 2013; Sadeghi, 2011).

The developing pattern of studies on the impact of Quran voice and its effects demonstrates that focusing on this issue has been reached out among specialists more than previously and these investigations have been published step by step in particular journals (Sadeghi, 2011). An examination of the impact of Quran recitation and its effects on the psychology of human being will demonstrate the importance of his contributions.

Awareness of the effect of Qur'an on the human is not recent, the first serious discussions and analyses of the effect of Qur'an emerged by El Imam Al-Khattabi when he said there is a strong influence on the Qur'an on the human heart and soul when listening to the recitation of the Qur'an, the

heart will taste a unique sweetness and have a terrible feeling that reaches the feeling of body shivering (Al-Rummani, Al-Khattabi, Al Jurjani, 1976).

Human nature has an internal tendency to harmony and rhythm and likes order and coordination. The Qur'an has an eloquent expression, expressive style and a charming song that affects the audience. In general, the Qur'an invites people to remain calm and relaxed (It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise, Al-Fath 4) (Tanzil.net, 2020). The following paragraphs will describe and discuss several studies that have been conducted on the issue being discussed. The discussion is divided into the effect of the Quran on the heart, mental health, stress and anxiety.

There are a number of important differences between reading a book and reading the Qur'an. A study cared by (Kamal et al., 2013) aims to find the differences between reading a book and reading the Qur'an. The ten participants were conducting the experiment by four phases which are before reciting the Quran, before reading a book, during reciting the Quran and during reading a book. To compare the difference between reading a book and reading the Quran, the researchers utilized the measurement of EEG brainwave to test the alpha band in the electrodes P3, P4 and Pz which represent the resting state and calming mind of human beings. Further analysis showed that the EEG power spectrum is high in the frequency range of the alpha band, which the frequency is between 8 Hz to 13 Hz during reciting the Quran compared to reading a book. Though, the authors suggest increasing the number of participants as well as examining different kinds of text materials.

Effect of Listening to the Qur'an on Heart

It has previously been observed that there are many internal and external factors that affect the heart rate variability of the human body. One of the previous studies done by Al-Zaben, Hamad, Alfahoum, and Saefan, (2014) compared the heart rate variability for 19 university students at the age of 20–22 years while listening and not listening to the Qur'an. The study used the ECG to record for each subject for a period of 20 min while at rest and listening to the Qur'an through a headset. Paired-samples t-test and the Wilcoxon test have been used to test for the significance. They found that while listening to the Qur'an, the heart rate does not change significantly while there is a decrease in heart rate fluctuation and a decrease in the strength of the low-frequency power (LF) indicating a decrease in friendly stimulation. It can be said that low sympathetic activity and low-frequency strength may provide protection against arrhythmias and against the development of coronary heart disease (Al-Zaben et al., 2014). However, a better study would examine a large, randomly selected sample of societies.

A study by Ghanem and Wahab, (2018) suggested that Listening to the recitation of the Qur'an is a highly recognized kind of Islamic repentance among the Muslim community. Therefore, this form of repentance has the potential to reduce a person's anxiety and stress. The study aims to assess whether the biofeedback of heart rate fluctuations can reduce the operator's negative emotional symptoms, especially in relation to depression, anxiety and stress. The experiment included four seasons, all of which showed a similar trend, Coherence rate increased between 54 to 85 while average heart rate was within 81 to 85 and the HRV power spectrum was among 0.08 Hz to 0.12 Hz. Nevertheless, the study would have been more interesting if it had included more participants. Another problem with this study is that it fails to take the language into account. These results are similar to those reported by Daud and Sharif, (2018), Where it turns out that by listening to Surat Al-Hasyr, a state of calm can be achieved. The authors explore the effect of heart sounds when listening to selected verses from the Qur'an using Thinklabs Phonocardiography software powered by Audacity. The authors compare the analysis of the diastole's frequency of the heart sound between before and after listening to the verse of the Quran. A positive correlation was found between the voice of the heart and listening to the Qur'an, as the frequency of the heart's sound while listening to the Qur'an is lower than before. However, the author suggests taking into account the procedure of collecting data to avoid any factors that affect the data collections, such as handling the stethoscope and the position of the volunteer. In summary, it has been shown from these reviews that listening to the Qur'an have a powerful impact on the Heart rate variability (HRV).

The effect of the Qur'an on Human Mental Health

In terms of mental health and in order to identify the prognostic factors of mental health, Sooki, Sharifi, and Tagharobi, (2011) explored from a study conducted on 56 elderly resided in the Golabchi nursing home in Kashan, that Qur'an is a predictive factor of mental health in old people who reside in nursing homes. Participants were selected by a purposeful sampling method. They had a normal IQ, were able to understand questions, and were in good psychiatric condition. The study used a questionnaire consisting of 28 articles from the standard general mental health questionnaire (GHQ-28) and a questionnaire prepared by the researcher that includes demographic and personal questions. Statistical tests including Chi-square and multivariate linear regression analysis was used to examine the relation between evaluating indexes and psychological health and the relation between independent variables and the index of mental health and define the share of each in determining the level of health. Research finding illustrates that 41.1% of the participant lacked the index of mental health, while the factor "Quran recitation while staying in a nursing home" was presented as the most effective predictive factor on mental health. According to their research, the state of mental health in elderly residents showed a great correlation with the agreement to stay in the nursing home and recite the Qur'an during the stay.

Another significant study that examines the effect of Quran on mental health is conducted by Hojjati, Rahimi, Farehani, Sobhi-Gharamaleki, & Alian, (2014). They studied the effect of Qur'an tune on children's memory grade 5. The study used an experimental design with pre-test, post-test with control and experimental group for data extraction. The number of the sample was 32 females among 12-year-old divided into an experimental and control group. Wechsler's digit span and alphabet succession tests (version 4) were used to evaluate the performance of memory. The tests were used before and after listening to Qur'an tune within 15 minutes. After that, the control group has to sit for 15 minutes not doing anything that affects the memory. As it is presented in the study, the control group showed a decrease in letters sequence subscale while it has increased for the experiment group from 17,66 to 19,37. Similarly, there is no significant change in the control group while it has increased from 18,75 to 20,62 in the experiment group for the mean of digit span subscale. The digit span of the Quran group was significantly different from the control group ($p < 0.001$) and alphabet succession ($p < 0.001$).

These results are similar to those reported by Suteja Putra, Gumilar, Rahma Kusuma, Purnomo, and Basumerda, (2018) studied the effect of listening to the Qur'an murottal's (intoner) audio on short term memory. However, The experimental design with pre-test, post-test was used to collect data from 26 men and 24 women aged between 19-22 years. In order to understand how Quran murottal's audio effect short term memory the researchers used notebook Toshiba 11 tool, handsfree, design tools software and experimental room to test short term memory performance influenced by murottal. The benefit of this approach is to prove the null hypothesis, or disprove it and accept the alternative hypothesis which is $H_0 =$ There is no difference in the average short term memory between pre and post-listening murottal, $H_1 =$ There are no difference in the average short term memory between pre and post-listening murottal. Participants have experienced two experimental conditions, the first one without listening to murrotal juz amma and the second one is with listening to it. Paired sample t-test revealed that there was a difference between the two treatments in the experiments caused by the use of murrotal. The study showed that the average ability of short-term memory without listening to murottal was 11.8 and the average ability of short-term memory by listening to murottal was 12.62.

Based on these findings, both studies showed a significant effect of listening to the recitation of the Qur'an on memory performance among children and adults and give a critical increase within the capacity of the brain. Based on the effectiveness of music on memory the two studies conducted this research to prove that the recitation of Qur'an has the same effects of music or more on memory which are consistent with sound healing. Therefore, it has been suggested from the authors to the academic centres and school managers to adopt this strategy as a memory fortifying technique to improve their student's memory achievements. However, the main weakness of the studies is the failure to address how memory was doing in the brain while listening to the Quran. Other problems with these studies were not treated how the verses of the Quran were chosen in much detail, and what the differences between children and adults participants are?

Fauzan & Abidin, (2017) examined the effectiveness of Ayatul Kursi with neurofeedback training (NFT) on memory performance by using the method of quasi-experimental pretest and posttest design, utilising Weschler Bellevue Intelligence Scale (WBIS) for measuring before and after (NFT) and EEG to monitor the brain waves while the participants were reading and listening to Ayatul Kursi. The researchers selected ten students in Year Two who were chosen based on the number of credit hours completed and their memory problem and stress and were divided into two groups. Five students in the experimental group were purposely selected to practice the neurofeedback training, and five were in the control group. The main aim of this research was to find out the variation between reading and listening of Ayatul Kursi while doing the neurofeedback training to improve memory and to follow the alpha wave changes during the procedure using EEG monitor. The authors found significant differences in the improvement scores in reciting Ayatul Kursi than listening to the verse. The recitation of the Qur'an verse stimulates the generation of Alpha waves which help students to relax and retrieve the information needed for problem-solving. Yet, these results were based upon data from 10 participants, as we observe the number of participants is not sufficient. The research would have been more relevant if a wider range of situations had been explored, which are before, during and after listening to the Qur'an.

The Effect of the Qur'an on Stress and Anxiety

The Qur'an for Muslims is a source of grace, merit, calmness and guidance. The Prophet Muhammad said: "There are no people assembled in one of the houses of God to recite the book of God and study it together only that the *sakinah* (divine tranquillity) descends upon them" (Sahih Muslim, 2007). Muslims and non-Muslims have rightly described the Noble Qur'an as a symphony of words. Not only were the teachings and ideas of the Qur'an read, but his words and phrases have permeated the lives and discourse of Muslims, regardless of differences in language, race, and culture. With the words of the Qur'an, especially by its opening chapter or surah, marriage is blessed, the agreement is concluded, and fear and danger are believed to be avoided. Muslims have considered the Qur'an a miracle of speech, which affects the person in all areas of life, scientific, economic, social and cultural.

The most current studies have been conducted on the effect of healing through Quran are related to the stress, anxiety, pain, physiological side effects and fertilization. In 2015 in Iran a research conducted by Babamohamadi, Sotodehasl, Koenig, Jahani, and Ghorbani, (2015) on the effect of Holy Qur'an recitation on anxiety in Sixty hemodialysis patients. The specific objective of this study was to reducing anxiety by listening to the verses of the Qur'an for 20 minutes three times a week for 1 month. The reaction was then measured for anxiety using the randomised experimental and control group method. In order to state and trait anxiety, the participants were asked two questionnaires at baseline, the demographic and the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). For the attitude questions in (STAI), a Likert scale was used from "very low" to "high," 20 to 80. Data were gathered by the (STAI) at first time before the dialysis treatment and then after one month. The 30 intervention participants were listening to the recitation of Surah Yasin from the Holy Qur'an by a Shateri reader via MP3 players 5 min before dialysis and 15 min after the start of dialysis whereas the 30 participants control group did not. After one month, intervention and control groups performed the STAI a second time. Comparisons between the two groups were made using Student's t-tests to compare sample characteristics and to examine between-subject differences between STAI subscale scores and total score at baseline and follow-up. A repeated measures general linear model (mixed factorial ANOVA) was constructed with time 1 and time 2 STAI scores and group (intervention vs. control) to compare between subject at follow up. The first set of analyses Student's t-tests provides a positive impact of Quranic recitation on anxiety. STAI showed a decrease score at baseline from 128.5 (SD = 13.0) to 82.1 (SD = 11.3), whereas no change in anxiety scores from baseline to follow-up for the control group (118.3, SD = 14.5, vs. 120.1, SD = 14.4, respectively). The second set of analyses (mixed factorial ANOVA) indicated that the effect of Qur'an recitation on anxiety from baseline to 1 month later (between subjects), had a significant reduction in anxiety in the intervention versus the control group ($F = 15.5$, $p = 0.0002$, Cohen's $d = 1.03$). However, one major drawback of this approach is that it is very difficult to conduct clinical trials on the effects of recitation of the Holy Qur'an on critically sick patients because it is difficult to determine the effects of physiological factors while separating the potential effect of confounding factors and risk of bias.

Similarly, Jabbari, Mirghafourvand, Sehhatie, and Mohammad-Alizadeh-Charandabi, (2017) examine the effect of listening to the Qur'an on stress, anxiety and depression in Iranian pregnant women. A total of 168 members were designated randomly into three groups. Group one have gotten broadcast of the Qur'an with interpretation. Group two got broadcast of the Qur'an without interpretation, and group three was the control group. After the intervention, scores of the perceived stress, state anxiety, trait anxiety and depression in group one and group two were altogether lowered compared to the control group. Based on the findings, it shows that the Qur'an with interpretation and without it, both are compelling for decreasing stress, anxiety and depression among pregnancy. Moreover, substantiates the claim that all of these studies show that listening to the Qur'an can affect the brain positively.

In summary, Stress and psychological distress are two of the most common problems in our daily life. Stress therapy has been the subject of much research. Human beings always strive for supernatural power to fill the spiritual gap in human life, and the need for superior strength is necessary for humans to feel safe and protected, and superior power is usually referred to Allah. There are many exciting results indicating the potential of using the recitation of the Qur'an as a remedial for stress and anxiety. Holy Quran Recitation is a safe complementary therapy, widely available and cheap intervention that may be used as an auditory stimulus on anxiety and other psychological disorders as well to achieve an improved outcome.

METHOD

The strategy for searching related articles was using PubMed, ISI Web of Knowledge, MEDLINE, Scopus, Al-Quran & Medicine and Google Scholar. Keywords such as Quran, listening, recitation, sound and Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" were used. The search was limited to original articles available in English and Arabic from January 2011 to September 2020. Titles and abstracts of the articles were read and only those linked to sound healing, Quranic recitation and psychological performance were chosen. We excluded in our review the articles that not related to the effect of the Qur'an on heart rate or mental health or anxiety and stress.

DISCUSSION

What have these reviews indicated the efficacy of Healing through the Qur'an recitation on psychological effects? First, there are a sufficient number of studies in some areas despite claims often heard about the lack of evidence for Healing through the Qur'an recitation. Second, research findings for some of the Healing through the Qur'an recitation reviewed here have demonstrated consistent beneficial outcomes for patients with psychological disorders and related diseases.

Specifically, there is moderate support for healing through listening to Quran recitation in reducing some psychological disorders as compared with a non-pharmacological tool. However, there are many claims made for the superiority of healing through listening to Quran recitation across comparison groups. Further, only limited support exists for the efficacy of healing through listening to Quran recitation with the knowledge that listening to Quran recitation may actually help to achieve an improved outcome for some patients with psychological disorders. At this point, little is known about healing through listening to Quran recitation for patients with psychological disorders.

CONCLUSION

Healing through listening to Quran recitation has been demonstrated to be twice as efficacious as a non-pharmacological tool for patients with psychological disorders. Furthermore, the interventions included numbers of different method and process that may not represent the system of healing through listening to Quran recitation as practised. More research is needed in this area. Healing through non-pharmacological tools like the listening to the recitation of the Qur'an has to support from Muslim scholars due its benefits and safety.

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