

# A Comparison of Favorable Opinion in Religious Texts with Optimism in Psychology with an Emphasis on Sahifah Sajjadiyah

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## Article Info

Received: Jan 23, 2020

Received in revised form:

Apr 11, 2020

Accepted: May 18, 2020

Available Online: Dec 22, 2021

## Keywords:

Mental Health

Optimism

Positive psychology

## Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Positive psychology is one of important branches of psychology that investigates the psychological positive aspects of human such as well-being, welfare and experiences of flow. Optimism is of this kind of variables and many studies on optimism show that optimists have a better status in terms of psychological variables compared to others, which is one of indexes of mental health. It may be understood that the closest concept to optimism in religious contexts is “favorable opinion” meaning “good thoughts”. The objective of this study is to investigate “favorable opinion” as a mental health index from the perspective of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya and explain its difference with optimism.

**Methods:** This study was carried out using analytical and interpretive method by referring to the Quran verses and narrations of other infallibles with an emphasis on Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya and comparative analysis of the psychological findings. The authors declared no conflict of interest.

**Results:** Favorable opinion has various concepts in Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya. In spite of optimism in psychology, which is interpreted from an “individual” and “human” perspective, favorable opinion in Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya is interpreted from a “God” and “Human” aspects.

**Conclusion:** The most important innovative aspect of this research is studying the concept of favorable opinion in all applications of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya and interpretive use of the Quranic verses and narrations to show the influence of favorable opinion on mental health. Results of this study show that favorable opinion of God and human may cause spiritual peace, reduction of grief and better communication with the others. These features cause mental health. In spite of some common subscriptions, “favorable opinion” and “optimism” have some differences. A major difference between them, as emphasized in religious contexts is that the human must fully trust God while such a view is not a scientific approach about optimism in psychology. Finally, considering the differences between these two concepts, it may be concluded that the concept of “favorable opinion” is wider and deeper compared to optimism.



 <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i4.28327>

**Please cite this article as:** Imanieh MH, Raeisian KHR, Pirouzfard S, Abdkhodaei MS. A Comparison of Favorable Opinion in Religious Texts with Optimism in Psychology with an Emphasis on Sahifah Sajjadiyah. Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat. 2021;7(4):149-162. <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i4.28327>

## Summary

### Background and Objective

As defined by the World Health Organization, “Health” is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease (1). The concept of “Mental health” as

a subset of “Health” is a well-being condition in which everybody understands his or her potential capabilities and may perform usefully and help the society (2). Psychologists have specified many indexes for mental health such as personality harmony and personal self-control (3). Meanwhile, one of the branches of psychology titled “positive psychology” concentrates on positive experiences in three time periods including future and concepts such as optimism and hope (4, 5). Optimism means an optimistic orientation toward life in which daily events of life are experienced more positively expecting positive consequences (6). Many studies on optimism show that optimists have better conditions in terms of mental health variables compared to others (7-9).

Since Islam is the last religion with a revelation discourse, the type of interaction it has with human knowledge especially in psychology is noteworthy. Deduction of authors of this research based on the religious texts is that “favorable opinion” can be considered as a close concept to optimism. The goal of this study is to study whether we can find phrases which indicate favorable opinion in supplications of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya or not. The other objective is to study the relationship between the concept of favorable opinion and mental health explaining differences between them.

### Methods

The present study is a library-based analytical-interpretive study. Due to inter-disciplinary nature of present research, religious data were collected from Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya and other Islamic resources and psychological data from books and scientific articles published in this field.

### Results

Favorable opinion lexically means good thoughts (10, 11). It is defined in two parts, favorable opinion of God and favorable opinion of human. Phrases of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya that are derived from Quranic knowledge indicate that it is defined in two mentioned parts. First part is favorable opinion of God, As stated by Imam Sajjad in Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya, God is the One whose mercy covers everything and who allocates a share to all creatures from his blessings (12) and His kindness is greater than needs of servants (12). He has also guaranteed answering His servants' prayers (12) and has been waiting for His servants to stop committing sins (12). All these show Imam's favorable opinion of God.

The second part is favorable opinion of human. Imam in 26<sup>th</sup> prayer about neighbors and friends states that: “God, help me reward the evil doers with benefaction and forgive the cruel and have good opinion of them and treat them respectfully” (12). It should be noted that what Imam Sajjad means by good opinion of human can be seen in other supplications of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya. The scope of this opinion includes close relatives such as parents (12) and also strangers like the cruel (12).

### Conclusion

According to findings of the present study, within supplications of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya there are some phrases that indicate favorable opinion is necessary in relation to God as well as other human beings. In the following section, these two fields and their relationship with mental health may be investigated.

#### A) Relationship between good having opinion of God and mental health:

The question is how good opinion of God may help mental health of people. This question may be answered from two perspectives. First, everybody may find that if he has favorable opinion of God, he may be in peace (13) and make sure that God will support him. Such a person will be less depressed and helpless when facing difficulties and problems (14). Second, there is a relationship between favorable opinion of God and peace in supplications and narrations (15, 16). Peace is among the features that help mental health.

#### B) The connection between having favorable opinion of human and mental health

Favorable opinion of human has results that may influence mental health of people. According to some narrations, everybody who does not have favorable opinion of others will be afraid of people in the society (17). As against these narrations, everybody who has good opinion of people shall make friends and will live a more peaceful life in the society. Finally, two points may be noted. In religious teachings favorable opinion of people in corrupt societies is prohibited (18). Also according to religious contexts, the source of favorable opinion of people is to emphasize the spirit of unity among believers (19), while this is not the case for optimism in psychology.

In the present study, the concept of “favorable opinion” was studied and investigated in all supplications of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya for the first time. On the other hand, an attempt was made to explain some of the similarities and differences

between favorable opinion and optimism. The evidence for favorable opinion of God in Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya include: inclusiveness of God's mercy, giving livelihood by God, responding to the servants' prayers, and waiting for people to repent, and God's greater grace compared to the needs of the servants. Also favorable opinion of human beings is defined as a deeper concept of optimism. It should be noted that there is a wide relationship between favorable opinion and some variables in the narrations. For instance, favorable opinion is believed to originate from wisdom (19) and good faith (19). Also preventing sins (19) and preparing the way for praying to God (20) are among the consequences of favorable opinion that are noted in the narrations. Therefore, it can be stated that the concept of favorable opinion in religious contexts is wider and deeper compared to optimism in psychology and can be applied as a mental health index.

#### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all those who helped researchers in conducting this research.

#### Funding

According to the authors of the article, this study was conducted at personal expense and received no financial support.

#### Conflict of interest

The authors of the article did not report any conflict of interest in this study.

#### Authors' contribution

Article writing: first author; and providing advice and supervising: second, third and fourth authors.

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## دراسة مقارنة بين حسن الظن في النصوص الدينية والتفاؤل في علم النفس مع التأكيد على الصحيفة السجادية

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### معلومات المادة

الوصول: ٢٧ جمادى الأولى ١٤٤١  
 وصول النص النهائي: ١٧ شعبان ١٤٤١  
 القبول: ٢٤ رمضان ١٤٤١  
 النشر الإلكتروني: ١٧ جمادى الأولى ١٤٤٣

### الكلمات الرئيسية:

التفاؤل  
 الصحة النفسية  
 علم النفس الإيجابي

### الملخص

**خلفية البحث وأهدافه:** يعتبر علم النفس الإيجابي من الفروع المهمة لعلم النفس، والتي يتم التعرض فيه للأبعاد النفسية الإيجابية للإنسان، مثل الرفاه والسعادة وتجارب الغرق. ويعتبر التفاؤل من جملة هذه المجموعة، وتشير الكثير من البحوث التي أجريت حول التفاؤل إلى أن الأشخاص المتفائلين هم في حالة أفضل من الآخرين فيما يرتبط بالتغيرات النفسية، وهذا بنفسه أحد مؤشرات الصحة النفسية. ولعله يمكن القول بأن أقرب مفهوم معادل للتفاؤل في النصوص الدينية هو "حسن الظن" وهو واضح في مدلوله اللغوي. والهدف من هذه الدراسة مطالعة حسن الظن باعتباره مؤشراً للصحة النفسية من منظار الصحيفة السجادية، وبيان فرقه عن التفاؤل.

**منهجية البحث:** تعتبر الدراسة الحالية من النوع التحليلي-التفسيري، وهي من نوع الدراسات المكتبية، وقد تم إنجازها بالرجوع إلى الآيات القرآنية وروايات سائر المعصومين، مع التأكيد على الصحيفة السجادية، ودراستها مقارنة مع معطيات علم النفس. ولم يلحظ مؤلفو المقالة أي تعارض للمنافع.

**المعطيات:** يعتبر حسن الظن في الصحيفة السجادية مفهوماً متكرراً جداً. بخلاف التفاؤل في علم النفس الذي يجد معناه فقط في مجالين الفردي وبين الناس فيما بينهم. فحسن الظن في الصحيفة السجادية يشمل مجالي الله والناس.

**الاستنتاج:** إن أهم الوجوه الابتكارية لهذه الدراسة هي دراسة مفهوم حسن الظن في جميع أدعية الصحيفة السجادية، وكذلك الاستفادة التحليلية من الآيات القرآنية والروايات بغرض الكشف عن مدى تأثير حسن الظن على الصحة النفسية. وتشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن حسن الظن بالله والناس يمكنه أن يؤدي إلى خلق السكينة الروحية، والتقليل من الغم والحزن، وتحسين التواصل مع الآخرين. وتؤدي هذه الخصوصيات بدورها إلى الصحة النفسية. ورغم وجود بعض المشتركات بين مفهومي حسن الظن والتفاؤل فإن هناك اختلافات بينهما. والاختلاف الأساسي بينهما والذي أكدت عليه المصادر الدينية هو لزوم حسن الظن بالله بنحو تام، بينما لا تعتبر هذه النظرة علمية تجاه التفاؤل في علم النفس. وفي المجموع فإنه بملاحظة الاختلافات الموجودة بين هذين المفهومين فإنه يمكن القول بأن مفهوم حسن الظن أوسع وأعمق بالقياس إلى التفاؤل.

يتم استناد المقالة على الترتيب التالي:

Imanieh MH, Raeisian KhR, Pirouzfzar S, Abdkhodaei MS. A Comparison of Favorable Opinion in Religious Texts with Optimism in Psychology with an Emphasis on Sahifah Sajjadiah. Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat. 2021;7(4):149-162. <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i4.28327>

## بررسی مقایسه‌ای حُسن ظن در متون دینی با خوش بینی در روان‌شناسی با تأکید بر صحیفه سجادیه

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### اطلاعات مقاله

دریافت: ۳ بهمن ۱۳۹۸

دریافت متن نهایی: ۲۳ فروردین ۱۳۹۹

پذیرش: ۲۹ اردیبهشت ۱۳۹۹

نشر الکترونیکی: ۱ دی ۱۴۰۰

### چکیده

**سابقه و هدف:** روان‌شناسی مثبت‌نگر از شاخه‌های مهم روان‌شناسی است که در آن به جنبه‌های مثبت روانی انسان مانند بهیاشی، شادکامی و تجربه‌های غرقگی پرداخته می‌شود. خوش‌بینی نیز از این دسته است و بسیاری از پژوهش‌هایی که درباره خوش‌بینی انجام گرفته است نشان می‌دهد که افراد خوش‌بین در متغیرهای روان‌شناختی وضعیت بهتری نسبت به دیگران دارند که این خود شاخصی از سلامت روان‌شناختی است. شاید بتوان گفت نزدیک‌ترین مفهوم متناظر با خوش‌بینی در متون دینی «حُسن ظن» است که معنای لغوی آن «خوش‌گمانی» است. هدف از این پژوهش بررسی حُسن ظن به‌عنوان شاخص سلامت روان‌شناختی از منظر صحیفه سجادیه و تبیین تفاوت آن با خوش‌بینی بود.

**روش کار:** مطالعه حاضر پژوهشی تحلیلی-تفسیری از نوع مطالعات کتابخانه‌ای است که با مراجعه به آیات قرآن و روایات دیگر معصومان با تأکید بر صحیفه سجادیه و بررسی تطبیقی آن با یافته‌های روان‌شناسی صورت گرفته است.

**یافته‌ها:** حُسن ظن در صحیفه سجادیه مفهومی پربسامد است. برخلاف خوش‌بینی در روان‌شناسی که در دو حوزه فردی و انسان‌ها نسبت به یکدیگر مفهوم می‌یابد، حُسن ظن در صحیفه سجادیه در دو حوزه خدا و انسان‌ها مد نظر قرار می‌گیرد.

**نتیجه‌گیری:** مهم‌ترین وجوه نوآوری این پژوهش بررسی مفهوم حُسن ظن در تمامی دعا‌های صحیفه سجادیه و نیز استفاده تحلیلی از آیات قرآن و روایات جهت نشان دادن تأثیر حُسن ظن بر سلامت روان‌شناختی بود. نتایج این مطالعه نشان می‌دهد که حُسن ظن به خداوند و انسان‌ها می‌تواند موجب ایجاد آرامش روحی، کاهش غم و اندوه و ارتباط بهتر با دیگران شود. این ویژگی‌ها به نوبه خود سلامت روان‌شناختی را در پی دارد. با وجود برخی اشتراکات، دو مفهوم حُسن ظن و خوش‌بینی تفاوت‌هایی نیز دارند. تفاوت عمده این است که در منابع دینی تأکید می‌شود که باید به‌طور کامل به خداوند حُسن ظن داشت؛ درحالی‌که چنین نگاهی در روان‌شناسی درباره خوش‌بینی علمی نیست. در مجموع، با عنایت به تفاوت‌هایی که بین این دو مفهوم وجود دارد، می‌توان گفت مفهوم حُسن ظن گستره و عمق فزون‌تری در مقایسه با خوش‌بینی دارد.

استناد مقاله به این صورت است:

Imanieh MH, Raeisian KhR, Pirouzfard S, Abdkhodaei MS. A Comparison of Favorable Opinion in Religious Texts with Optimism in Psychology with an Emphasis on Sahifah Sajjadih. Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat. 2021;7(4):149-162. <https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v7i4.28327>