

# The Role of Prayer in Providing Community Health Initiatives

Siamak Mohebi<sup>a</sup>, Marzieh Shahsiah<sup>b</sup>, Aziz Kamran<sup>c</sup>, mohammad javad Ghasemzadeh<sup>d</sup>, Parham Khoshdani Farahani<sup>d</sup>, Mahmoud Parham<sup>e</sup>, Gholamreza Sharifirad<sup>a\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Health Policy and Promotion Research Center, Qom University of Medical Sciences, Qom, Iran

<sup>b</sup> PhD student in women studies, University of Religion and Denominations, Qom, Iran

<sup>c</sup> Public Health Department, Ardabil University of Medical Sciences, Ardabil, Iran

<sup>d</sup> Department of Medical Sciences, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran

<sup>e</sup> Clinical Research Development Center, Department of Internal Medicine, Qom University of Medical Sciences, Qom, Iran

\*Correspondence should be addressed to Dr. Gholamreza Sharifirad, Email: [dr.sharifirad@gmail.com](mailto:dr.sharifirad@gmail.com)

## A-R-T-I-C-L-E I-N-F-O

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## A-B-S-T-R-A-C-T

**Background & Aims of the Study:** Prayer is an integral part of all divine laws and it exists in every religion, specifically. Prayer has special status in Islam and Quran, so that its effect and blessing of this great divine duty expressed in all parts of this scripture with concise, mot and subtle expressions. Philosophy, benefits, effects and description of prayer expressed in many verses and narratives that it is impossible to address them all here. On the other hand, social health issues and realizing of it in human societies is inevitable. Mankind attempts in order to achieve peace, security, health and social life in many centuries with minor and major investment and use the most modern facilities. However, social events and statistics in this regard suggest that mankind hadn't any significant success in this context and societal health is still one of the most basic human concerns. However, the study of social health, its dimensions and its predictors and promoting factors, because of its importance, always attract the attention of sociologists and social health experts. Although, much attention has been given to the aspects of physical and psychological health of prayer in the past and also many studies conducted in this field but the aspect of social health has been neglected and requires review and further investigation. The authors of this article have tried to evaluate social health structure of prayer in according to the verses, narratives and traditions and identified and classified each of them separately.

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## Background

Human is multi dimensional social creature that its nature leads it into collectivism and social life. Human society is trying to achieve social life and health, because the existence of social life and health plays an important role in the health of individuals and society. Social health is a part of individual's health that is emerging in the field of society. We know someone have social health when he/she can manifest his/her activities and social roles in conventional levels

and had a sense of connection to the society and social norms. Achievement of this issue is an important concern throughout the centuries. Despite significant progressions in all fields of science, man of the third millennium still needs to it. Because social health come off in the context of wider range of relationships that is not considered easily (1).

In the other hand, Prayer is the most essential degree of affection and the upmost factors of kindness between God and God's servants. Prayer is the light of heart, love, psychological health and the life of society. Prayer is a

powerful mediator that connects the existence of human to the God. No action as long as praying cannot connect the humans to the truth and trueness. Existence elixir, minus the prayer is infertile. And those who are unfamiliar with the culture of prayer expend their life in the spiritual and psychological poverty. Prayer is remembered as the main column and pillars of religion, the most precious, most beautiful, deepest and simplest means of communication with God, the most diverse, the most virtuous and most public worship, the eye light of the Prophet, the boundary between blasphemy and faith, the way of perfection and salvation, as a result of righteous people government, human inhibitor of prostitution and vice and religious symbols. At a superficial glance, prayer is an individual's duty and task but by thinking and attention to the truth of prayer, we found that this divine light apart from personal effects has a considerable social philosophy that by attention to it, it can ensure public health. In fact, the prayer is not only worship among the godliness duties. Even, it is the main symbol of religiosity and in addition to the individual effects; it has a lot of social effects and in some cases its social impact is much more abundant. Recognition of obvious and latent functions of prayer in the social aspects and evaluation of its effects and its results in the formation of behaviours, procedure's adoption, determination of strategies and social common goals can open another curtain of prayer's secrets. (2, 3).

**Aims of the study:** This study was performed by the aim of explanation of main structures of social life and health in the fields of health sciences according to the obvious and latent structures of prayer.

## Materials & Methods

This study is done by the method of review-Library (Anecdotal Review) and for this purpose, with an extensive search and review directly and indirectly in this regard, issues that

related to the social health of prayer is extracted from valid sources and Islamic verses and narratives and after deep investigation, it is presented classified.

## Results

Several studies have been conducted on the effects of prayer and enthusiasts were examined prayer from various angles and directions. This precious gift of God is interminable mine that it has benefits for all God servants. As noted above, several studies have been done about prayer and its effects that each one has novelty. It has offered new insight about prayer and provides new secrets of prayer and its blessings. Below it is classified some social health structures of prayer from the aspect of Islam and an explanation of each category is provided.

### Empathy, unity and convergence:

Prayer is the element of unity and convergence that all of humans from each of ethnicity, tribal and race and with every skin colour and sex and with all degrees of scientific authority and social status are brought to the god. In this valley, yellow, red and black, king and beggar, Iranian and non-Iranian, Arab and non-Arab, large and small, men and women are the same. All of them should pray in the unit line, with specific terminology and program to the one Kiblah. Holy law says "anyone doesn't read prayer in the desired direction. Everybody stand up to a certain point to realize that there must be in the same way." Congregational prayer in Islam is highly recommended and emphasized and according to it, one of the effects of congregational prayers is convergence of believer's hearts, they are met, friendship, intimacy, love and affection between them arise. The spirit of brotherhood and fraternity among them emerges. When worshippers worship in tight ranks and they are placed side by side and shoulder to shoulder regardless of

their class and caste and performed coordinate actions and follow a common purpose, all of them had a common Kiblah and speak about the same words, fraternity hands together and pray for each other and they are assure that God sainttheir community and are associated to them and it is provided unity and solidarity, empathy, honest and brotherhood and equality among them. Holy God knows one of the conditions of being bother of faith as prayer and says in Surah of AL-TAWBA(REPENTANCE) verse 11 “if they repent and establish the prayer and pay the obligatory charity, they shall become your brothers in the religion” (4, 5, 6).

### **Reduction of a lot of guilt and social problems:**

In the effects of prayer, it can point out to the Deter people from sin and ugliness. Amir of believers, Ali (AS) says “prayer is a stronghold that keeping worshippers from devil attacks.” The Holy Quran says “Prayer deters humans from obscene acts. Acceding to the God, away from sin and disobedience is so mixed with prayer that this issue is an indicator of prayer acceptance.” Imam Sadiq (AS) says “each one like to know prayers are accepted or not, should look to see whether the prayer stopped his/her indecent acts or not. At any rate, that prevented him/her from vice, and ugliness, his/her prayers were accepted.” The prayer that didn’t individuals and society far from indecent and immorality acts, corruption, injustice, oppression, atheism and indifference, racism and exploitation and all of the bad actions and animal temperament, are not prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) says “anyone who his/her prayer does not prevent him/her from obscene, distance grows between him/her and God.” In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi says “I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is undeniable means to wipe heart from carnal desires, but it must be combined with the utmost humility.”(7, 8, 9).

### **Peace and security:**

Prayer causes self-purification and spirit clearing and prayer that performed with humility, wisdom and devotion can inspire confidence and self-esteem to the worshipper. Faithful person because of his/her faith has not any dependence or affiliation, accept bitter and sweat events and has logical analysis for all of them. When people remember God does not bow down in front of non-God, just trust in God and anything other than God is very little and has low value. His/her soul is pure, smooth and clear and because away from evil actions, is very comfortable and safe. Memory of God causes his/her soul beenrelaxed and is not concern for accounting and punishment. God says in Surah of Raad verse 28 “those who believe, and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Isit not with the remembrance of Allah that hearts are satisfied.” And also in Al-MarijSurah verses 19 to 23 says “indeed, the human was created grudging and impatient. When evil comes upon him he is impatient;but when good comes upon him, he is grudging, except those that pray, who are constant in prayer”. Imam Ali (AS) also says in this regard “Remembrance of God is the light of heart and peace of heart” and also says “God remembrance is the treatment of all kinds of mental illnesses”(10, 11).

### **Discipline:**

One of the pillars of social health of any society is discipline. In the light of discipline, continuity of social life becomes possible. Prerequisite of improvement and success in any works is discipline. Implementation of Islamic rules and laws govern a strict and accurate discipline in the life. Praying create the spirit of discipline and stability in this action; establish this discipline in the spirit. Every Muslim must pray for five times and in a certain times in a day. Praying is implemented by ordain regular sequences. In congregational prayer, formation of regular queue and coordination of prayers at various stages have certain regularity and

disciple. Every Muslim should know the prayer times, pray at a certain time and repeat this action every day. Amir of believers, Ali (AS) says “faithful mans must divide his/her day into three parts, a time for prayer and worship, a time for providing life cost and a time for getting soul for enjoying from lawful pleasures.” This issue not only remind a value of time, even it is a practice of punctuality and discipline. Praying train the peoples the lesson of discipline. A person who is fetter to pray for three or five times and in certain and limited time and believe that praying in the first time has greater virtue, he will be a regular person that discipline becomes a habit in him/her. This issue forced him/her to be regular in other things.

#### **Restoration and preservation of the values and good traditions:**

One results of praying is revival, preservation and extension of God traditions in the earth. Worshippers with a lot of immaculate intentions every day reads “guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom you have favoured, not those upon whom is the anger, nor the astray.” (Amen please answer) Worshipper requests the best values, costumes, and way of life only from God. Worshipper in his/her prayer wishes the best for other persons and God servants and at the last part of prayer send greeting to the righteous God servants. The worshipper brings hygiene, cleanliness and health with him/her and consumes the most lawful and cleanest foods and drinks. With the best, cleanest and most lawful and beautiful clothes meet his/her God. To be proudin the presence of God does not act prohibition actions. And tries to do good deeds and achieve greater virtues. All of these tips cause vivification, development and preservation of the values and traditions of transcendentalhuman (15, 16, 17).

#### **People-orientation:**

In prayer not only knows the God greatly, even we respect to Gods servant according to his statement on Asra Surah verse of 70 that says “we have honoured the children of Adam”. Imam Sadiq (AS) says “everyone who respect to the God’s religion, respect to the rights of religious brothers and everyone who despise the religion, vilipend his/her brothers.”

Respect to the humans lies in all parts of prayer. We praise the God in Surah of Al-FATEHEH that he is the lord of world. “Praisebe to Allah, lord of the worlds”.

While the person who prays but many of the verbs used in prayer are in the plural form. In the part of Qonoot of Prayer, we pray other peoples and in the part of salam of prayer, it is used from pleural pronouns. In Islam, congregational prayer means praying with other peoples that have a lot of virtue, reward and value and emphasized it and some like of prayer such as Friday prayer can only be performed by the congregation. When we admit to praying with other peoples, it means that we respect to other peoples. God in the Surah of Al-FATH verses of 28 and 29 about the characteristics of believers says “it is he who has sent his messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, so that he exalts it above all other religions. Allah is the sufficient witness. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Those who are with him are harsh against the unbelievers but merciful to one another. You see them bow and prostrate themselves seeking the bounty and pleasure of Allah. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the torah and their likeness in the gospel, as the seed which puts forth its shoot and strengthens it, so that it grows stout and rises straight upon its stalk, delighting the sowers, and through them he enrages the unbelievers. Allah has promised those of them who believe and do good deeds, forgiveness and a great wage.” In this regard, Imam Ali (AS) says “examine our Shias with two characteristics, keep up the time of prayer and they have sympathy with other religious



brothers.” and also says in AL-BAQARA Surah verse 84 says “and when we made a covenant with you, that you shall not shed your blood or turn yourselves out of your dwellings, to this you consented and bore witness.” It is stated in tradition and narratives, if a dispute arises between two Muslims and miff with other and discontinued their emotional relationship, their prayers are wrong. In these verses and narratives, having a good relationship with the people is the sign of believers and Shias. And prayer, people orientation, compassion and sympathy with other peoples presented complementary of each other (18, 19).

### **Social control:**

Every society has levers and mechanisms for peoples to follow the community’s rule and norms that is named social control. There are mechanisms in religious society and between religion owners that protect peoples from norm-breaking, illegality, deviance and debauchery. One of these mechanisms is prayer and prayer is the remembrance of God and who remember God does not perform any sin and guilt. Worshipper knows the world as presence of God and believes that God always is overseer and observer of his/her actions and he/she is assured that after death must answer to all of good and bad deeds (even as small as a mustard seed). Such human do not mistake because his/her believes prevent him/her from sin and guilt. Quran in Surah of AL-ANKABOOT verse 45 says “prayer forbids indecency and dishonour.” Indeed the prayer prevents man from sin and evil deeds. Imam Reza (AS) in the wisdom of public prayers says “the God has ordained the prayer for inhibiting from many of sins. The dress of person who prays must prepare from lawful or licit property or wealth and his/her meals must be clean and lawful. It is stated in narratives that if a person use from alcoholic drinks, his/her prayer will not accepted from forty days. Therefore, tendency to pray caused the worshipper avoiding from doing prohibited conducts and respect the rights

of others. The Prophet of Allah (Allah bless him and his family) says “Someone who eats a mouthful of forbidden meals, his/her prayer will not accepted for forty days and his/her prayer will not answered. The Holy Quran Surah of HUD verse 114 about the role of prayer in destroying the evils says “and establish your prayer at the two edges of the day and in part of the night. Good deeds will repel evil deeds. That is a remembrance for those who remember”. Prayer not only has a preventing role, even in Surah of Maryam verse 59 knows the leaving of prayer as the field of tendency to all of corruption and says “but the generation that succeeded them wasted their prayers and followed their desires, so they shall encounter error” (20, 21).

### **Optimism and hope to the future:**

One of the results and blessings of prayer is finding of hoping to the future and optimism to the future. Worshipper certain that the prayer eliminate devil deeds and that is a good action that has God’s rewards. Prayer is the remembrance of God and who remembers God, the God will remember him/her. The God says about those who pray “those who recite the book of Allah and pray and giving up charity from their fund, they hope to the business that it will not be wasted.” (The Surah of AL-FATER, verse 59) In Surah of AL-NAML verse 40 also express “everyone who thanks the God for his blessings, in fact he give thanks for his/her benefit”(22).

### **Development and evolution of man and society:**

Prayer is one of the factors contributing to the growth and development of the individual and society. Properly praying and it’s acceptance from the God require consideration of some matters such as cleaning and body wash, legality of foods and drinks, legality of the prayer’s clothes and the place of praying and avoiding from many of forbidden things and actions and try to do good things. Attention and

consideration of these matters, not only leads to the growth and development but also helps the development of the society. The messenger of Allah says “prayer is the ascension of the believers” The prophet of Allah knows three actions and adjectives as a cause of increase of degree of spirituality and growth of virtues and popularity in the presence of God and says “complete and good ablution and waiting with enthusiasm for time arrival of prayer and move toward congregational prayers and attend the congregational prayers in the night or day and worship of God causewideness of God’s mercy.” The God says in the Surah of Ibrahim verse of 7 “you give thanks, i will increase you, but, if you are unthankful my punishment is indeed stern.” Imam Ali says “someone who is high in appreciation of God, the beneficitation and bliss will be high through thanksgivings.

And also the Prophet of Allah says “God’s bless does not reach to the peoples except that they love each other, gift each other, not betray, avoid from illegal wealth, be hospitable, establish praying and pay their Zakat. And also says “Prayer is extensive table of God on earth.”

In prayer, it is used from the term of mercy for many times. Prayer is rich in mercy that reminds the mercy and forgiveness of Allah to the servants. Those who are doing good actions will used from God’s mercy. As mentioned previously, Prayer promotes health, hygiene, safety, discipline, hope and security to individuals and society which is considered to be the main factors and indices for development. The community reach to the development and prosperity if its peoples have health, well-being, safety, peace, hope to the future, discipline and security because, these factors provides the needed backgrounds for development. The society that its people tend to the science and research and have scientific thinking and spirit will conquer the peaks of perfection and development with the ease. And the prayer compels the Muslims to study and research to pray better (23, 24).

### **Family formation and strengthening it:**

Marriage in Islam is very important and marriage is mentioned the most popular structure in the presence of God and Prophet’s tradition. The prophet of Allah knows the unwillingness to get married as take away from his tradition. Islam has some criteria for mate selection such as piety, abstemiousness and praying. In Islam is ordered that if someone does not go to the mosque and actually giving back foot to the worship and praying; do not select him/her as a mate and if a religious and virtuous person came to matchmaking, marry him/her. Islam placed more value and virtue for the prayer of married peoples. In Islam, it is believed that the religion will complete with marriage and married peoples can do good and admirable actions, better and keep themselves from sin and vice. Imam Sadiq (AS) says “two prayers of the married person are better than seventy prayers of a single person.”

Therefore, the worshippers marry for achievement of more virtue and reward, following of Prophet Traditions, eliminating of sin and vice from themselves, avoiding from prohibited actions and achievement of more believes. On the other hand, if a person looking for virtue and piety and accustomed to pray, avoid from evil deeds, obliquity and illegal actions. In addition, prayer avoids humans from prostitution and vice and because it is the greatest remembrance of Allah induce feeling of trust and peace to the humans. These matters help to the strengthening of family, insure the family and bring comfort for the family. The researches shows promiscuity, non-adherence to ethical norms, unsafe and non-religious communication, unchastity and immorality are factors that undermine the foundation of the family and it helps to the separation and divorce. Another factor that can survive the family is well behaving and loving wife and children. It comes in one Hadith “If turbidity is between husband and wife or teases each other and use bad language with each other, the prayer of

both of them is not accepted. Survey of Holy verses of Quran, Hadiths and Islamic texts show that the prayer is popular and soothing monument and clear light in Islamic culture and leave it will cause involvement in the fire of hell (25, 26).

#### **Prevent the degradation of the individual and the community:**

Prayer can prevent from downfall and decadence of individuals and community. The Surah of Hood verse 114 says “Surely good deeds eliminates sins and blurs. The Prophet of Islam says “Sins through two prayers will be pardoned.” And also Imam Ali says “If after a sin, pray and request the blessing from God, the effect of that sin fades. Imam JafarSadeq also says “If a faithful person decide to do sin and disobedience from God, it would be deprived from livelihood. Leave of prayer caused deprivation of Allah mercy, shortness of livelihood, poverty and hardship. Prayer is the boundary between heresy and faith. And leave of prayer is as the sign in the heresy and finally, the outcome of heresy is downfall, decadence and fire of hell. The God in the Surah of Al-Hajj verse of 18 says “have you not seen that to Allah prostrate all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many people? and many deserve the punishment. He who is abased by Allah has none to honour him. Allah does what he will.” Prayer is like a fort that avoids humans from prostitution and vice and block the entry of devils and protect the peoples. Emir of believers says “Prayer will waste the devil” (27, 28).

#### **Deal with the difficulties and problems:**

The God knows one of the ways to cope with difficulties and hardships as resort to prayer and patience and says “Seek assistance through patience and prayer.” (Surah of AL-BAQARA verse 45)

Prayer focused the human’s attention to the God and his eternal power and there is no authority higher than his power. Worshipper thinks about the God that providence of all things is on the hand of him and is the creator of all creatures and is aware of the needs and desires of all creatures and is blessed to everyone. Worshipper is relax in the face of adversities and has logical explanation for all of bitter and sweat life’s events and says “whatever the God gave us looks good”and when a disaster falls to him/her, says “we belong to Allah and to him we shall return” (29).

#### **Commitment to respect the social rights:**

Another social effect of prayer is forcing the humans to respect the rights of other peoples. Islamic culture warns the Muslims and worshippers to create such a culture (sensitivity against the social rights of other) lest any of the things that belong to others, without the consent of their owners used in any stage of prayer. The martyr professor, Morteza Motahhri (Allah have mercy on him) in this regard says “In Islam, the place where you pray, the water that you ablutions with, even the place where your ablution’s water is poured, the dress which pray with it and all those associated with this action must be permissible; it means that it must not be illegal. Even if anillegalstringbein your clothing, the prayer is not accepted. It is also implementing a training program related to civil rights in the corpus of worship” (30).

#### **Asking justice and fairness:**

When a worshipper says “you (alone) we worship; and you (alone) we rely for help” he not knows himself/herself as indebted of anybody and when says “there is no God in the presence of Allah” it means that he/she is rejected non-God and only knows the God, better and bigger. He/she knows no one and no things as his partner. Human learns to always seek trust and justice. For him/her, respect to the rights and dignity of others is essential and

sometimes is prior to his/her rights and if he/she do not perform such actions, his/her prayer is not accepted by God. In the congregational prayer, one of the items of being Imam is being righteous and if an Imam not being righteous, that prayer has problems. The worshippers learn justice in prayer and they learn that justice is a worthy goal in Islamic community that even it has been noted in the pillars and column of religion; therefore it should realize in the society. Even the prophets were sent to bringing justice (31).

#### **Avoiding from duplicity:**

The society that accustomed to the duplicity, not only keep out from god, moral behaviours and utopia, even all of social programs will deplete from content and is summarized in the handful of appearances without any basis. Prophet of Allah says "Prayer is not a simple standup and sitdown. Prayer is sincerity. The God says in holy Quran "Woe to the worshippers who are constantly doing duplicity." (Al-MAUN Surah verse 6) (32).

#### **Economic growth and eliminating of social class differences:**

Imam Reza says "The God has commanded three things along with three other things; he commanded to the prayer with charity, therefore who pray and does not pay charity, his/her prayer will not be accepted. Imam Ali says "Indeed, Prayer with charity is cause the proximity with God." The Prophet of Allah says "Prayer is not complete unless with charity." On the other hand, prayer and alms are come together both in the Holy Quran and Hadiths. And this implies that there is a strong relationship between two communication ways of prayer (communication with God) and charity (communication with the God's servants). Therefore, pay attention and act on these commands can help to the growth and dynamism of economy in Islamic community and it is prevented from the concentration of incomes and finances in special persons and

division of society into rich and poor. It is a struggle with poverty and deprivation in the light of prayer. In other words, it will deal with poverty and deprivation and if the issue of waste in the water for ablution and cleanliness added to this topic, the blessings will be multiplied (33, 34).

#### **Conclusion**

According to the WHO's definition, health is complete well-being in the physical, mental and social aspects and not merely the absence of disease or weakness. In the aspect of biological, psychological and social model, the health is what the person earned from attention to the biological, psychological and social needs. Nowadays, everyone knows that providing the social and psychological needs depends on spirituality and religion. Implementation of religious actions and practices such as prayer beside the stimulation of social feelings can reduce the daily hardship and discomfort. Nowadays, with a dare, we can introduce the prayer as one of the main wealth of human life. In light of this critical investment, it would provide trust, confidence, solidarity, cohesion. And any reduction in this social wealth leads to the distrust, despair and reduction in the political, social, cultural and economic participation. The most important social consequence of prayer is maintaining social cohesion and solidarity, the primacy of collective interests over individual interests, protest to the existent status and invitation to desired status and control of society members, people-orientation, peace and security and maintaining values, traditions and discipline. These functions are effective in freedom and social justice. The most important effect of prayer in the aspect of holy Quran is prohibition from prostitution and vices. Prayer reminds the presence of God; therefore it is the best inhibitor of devil deeds. Actually, prayer is a personal action with a lot of social functions.



**Conflict of Interest:**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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