

## INTRODUCTION

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*Your sickness is within you, though you do not realize  
And your cure is within, yet you do not see  
You claim that you are nothing but a tiny entity  
Yet wrapped up inside of you is the greatest universe  
You are the clear book, through whose letters  
All that is secret is revealed and made known  
So you have no need for anything outside of you  
Your consciousness is within you, though you do not know*  
(Imam Ali <sup>(A.S)</sup>)

*I am astonished about who lose something of his own and look for, however lost him-self and do not seek. (Imam Ali <sup>(A.S)</sup>)*

The complexities of human capacity and his reflexive consciousness (the ability to take oneself as the object of one's attention and thought) make him distinguishable from other animals. In order to develop a full understanding of human behavior, we need to take into consideration his unique abilities of attending to, thinking about, and acting on himself in ways that are not possible for any other animals.

Obviously, human being is surrounded by a rapid and complex pace of life, fear of present state of the world, impending ecological destruction, and confusions in personal relationships, with a consequent stress, depression, and illness. A solution is needed through which human being can develop the ability to respond adequately to the demands life makes on him. The way to this balance is through an understanding of the centre of our own being, our consciousness, and through this, finding our place in relation to the universe and to others. Accordingly, the self is regarded as a psychological apparatus that allows human beings to think consciously about him-self (Leary & Tangney 2005). It is important to consider that the mind, the body, and the social context of human existence are reciprocally interdependent on one another through biopsychological interactions (Rejeski and Thompson, 1993).

In spite of that, modern human beings are engulfed in a great deal of problems, which are produced by themselves. Exasperating statistics and news indicate a defeat in moral foundations, mental derangement, prevalence of psychological disorders, and an increasing trend in broken homes and various social crises. Depression and anxiety are among the most common mental disorders according to international statistics. With the escalating costs of treating diseases, the need for low cost and health promotion strategies is apparent. In addition, it is important to recognize that as many as 15% of depressed persons may end their lives by committing suicide, the sixth leading cause of mortality (LaFontaine, et al., 1992). These facts further emphasize the need to identify cost-effective strategies that can be implemented by the population as a whole and have the potential to prevent or lessen the severity of mental disturbances.

The most common treatment methods have been medication and / or different forms of psychotherapy. The capacity for treatment can never meet the needs for these common disorders. The current drug treatment methods are not always effective and may have unpleasant side effects (Martinsen, Sandvik & Kolbjørnsrud, 1989).

There is therefore a great need for effective, low-cost strategies, with minimal dangerous side effects, which can be used along or as adjuncts to other methods. Physical exercise has been put forward as one such method (Martinsen, 1990). It can also act as a reliable prevention to people who do not have such diseases. Self-perceptions, which individuals hold of themselves, of their body and physical competence are important in relation to other mental health outcomes such as enhanced self-esteem, and lowered negative affect, depression and anxiety. It has been suggested that physical activity and exercise may help people who suffer from mental illnesses to gain control in one area of life,

namely, the physical self. In this context, self-esteem is suggested as a potential explanation of how exercise can alleviate depression (Ossip-Klien et al., 1989).

Through this thesis, we focus on exercise-self relationship especially physical self in clinical population. Moreover, we are interested in investigating the association between changes in psychological variables and physical fitness in depressed patients. It is an interesting and valuable issue and a rarely investigated topic and thus deserves proper attention. Although the link between self-esteem and depression is wellknown and may seem evident, the relations between the body, physical self-perceptions and depression are not, and limited studies were carried out on this topic. By doing this project, we aimed to contribute to the literature on the effects of exercise on physical self-perception and self-esteem in clinical population.

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*"We cannot love our self until we love others. We would probably have a kinder and gentler world if we focused our attention on ways to create enabling, enduring, emotional connections between people and viewed self-appreciation as merely one of a number of desirable byproducts of these healthy connections"*

*(Burr & Christensen, 1992)*