

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN
WHO REPORT PREVIOUS-LIFE MEMORIES: AN EXTENDED STUDY
AND REPLICATION IN LEBANON**

*Erlendur Haraldsson**

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Abstract

Children who claim to remember fragments of a past life are found in many countries. Various explanations have been put forward why the alleged memories develop, ranging from reincarnation to 'therapeutic resource'. This project tested the role of some psychological characteristics of the children and the circumstances in which they live, such as fantasy, suggestibility, social isolation, dissociation, and attention-seeking. Thirty children in Lebanon who had persistently spoken of past-life memories, and 30 comparison children of same age, sex and environment, were administered relevant tests (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Coloured Progressive Matrices and Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale) and questionnaires were administered to their parents (Child Behaviour Checklist, Child Dissociation Checklist, and a Dream Questionnaire). Children claiming past-life memories obtained moderately higher scores for dissociation, daydreaming and attention-seeking, but not for social isolation and suggestibility. The level of dissociation was much lower than in cases of multiple personality, but similar to children suffering from child abuse, of which no evidence was found. There was considerable evidence of post-traumatic stress disorder. Eighty percent of the children speak of past-life memories of circumstances leading to a violent death (mostly accidents, also war-related deaths and murder). This imagery - when repeatedly re-experienced - may serve as a stressor causing the post-traumatic stress disorder.

* University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland.