Theoretical and Theological foundation of attachment to God in Islam and Christianity: Similarities and differences

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Abstract
Attachment to God is quality of emotional, behavioral and cognitive bond to God. Attachment is the basis of emotional and religious-spiritual orienting system. Most religious and spiritual virtues including Reliance on God, Patience, resilience, and spiritual coping have a strong basis on the quality of secure attachment to God. Securely attached individuals find God a secure base to explore the environment and find courage to confront and cope with stressful situations. They also find God comforting in the face of distresses and hardships. Securely, attached individuals seek proximity to God while experiencing distress, loss, and grief; and performing religious rituals. Authorities in the field of spirituality and religious psychology (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2005) believe that attachment to God is the foci of religious behaviors, attitudes, emotions. Investigators in Western countries have conceptualized and explored the theoretical foundations of attachment to God in Christianity. Moreover, they have found analogies between human spiritual attachment (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2005)
In addition to Theoretical conceptualization, these investigators have developed an inventory to measure this highly sophisticated construct. In Iran some researchers have used inventories developed by Rowatt and Kirkpatrick (2002), or Beck and McDonalds (2004). Since these measures have developed in the context of Christian Theology, their utilization with Muslims is questionable. Studies in the field of attachment to God in Muslim Countries have been criticized due to the inappropriateness of the utilized scales. Current Investigators have planned to fill the existing gap in the literature by developing a culturally and spirituality sensitive scale for Muslims. Current study has pinpointed the following questions:

a) Whether attachment Theory in the context of the Islamic culture can explain Muslim believer’s behaviors.
b) How can we study attachment process in Islamic texts?
c) What are some similarities and differences between conceptualization of attachment process in Islam and Christianity?
d) How can we measure individual difference in spiritual attachment styles among Muslims which is congruent with attachment theory among the Muslim believers?
e) How valid and reliable is the constructed scale based on the model of attachment theory in Islam?

In the current study with utilization of the content analysis of Islamic texts the foundation of attachment theory such as secure base, safe haven, of the attachment figure, as well as proximity seeking behaviors of the believers, in confronting with hardships has been established. Moreover, characteristics of the attachment figure such as being responsive, close, and available to the believers in stressful situations have been documented. We have attempted to clearly define the process of the study so that others can precipitate it very easily. Finally, based on the conceptualization of the attachment theory in Islam which is developed utilizing Islamic texts, an instrument has been developed to measure spiritual attachment in Muslim believers. Theoretical implication and practical application of the current study have been delineated in the original paper.

Key words: attachment to God, secure base, safe haven, proximity seeking Religious behaviors