



Developing an intervention program based on attachment to God and investigating its effectiveness on ineffective spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being

Mohammad. Nazari¹, Bagheri...Ghobari Bonab^{2*}, Seyed Abdul Majid. Bahrinan³, Kobra. Haji Alizadeh⁴

1. Doctoral student of general psychology, Department of Psychology, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran
2. *Corresponding Author: Professor, Department of Psychology and Education of Exceptional Children, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
3. Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
4. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Bandar Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

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Corresponding Author's Info

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ghobaribonab@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background and Aim: Inefficient spiritual patterns of our adaptation to God's laws cause problems in the society in living environments, the present study aims to formulate an intervention program based on attachment to God and examine its effectiveness on ineffective spiritual patterns and spiritual well-being. **Methods:** From a methodological point of view, the current research was a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test-post-test with a control group. The statistical population of this research was made up of all employees of Continental Plateau Oil Company in 2019. The sample of this study was 60 people who were randomly selected in two experimental and control groups (20 people in each subgroup) based on the criteria of entering and exiting the study. The research tool was the questionnaire of ineffective spiritual schemas, attachment to God and spiritual well-being, which was completed by all participants in the pre-test and post-test phases. God attachment sessions were held for experimental group participants in nine 120-minute sessions, while control group participants did not receive any intervention. Research data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of covariance and using SPSS-22 software. **Results:** The results showed that the intervention based on the quality of attachment to God has an effect on all the components of ineffective spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being ($P < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** According to the results of this study, the intervention based on the quality of attachment to God led to the improvement of all the components of ineffective spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being.



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Introduction

The idea of God is a multi-dimensional or multi-variable phenomenon that is under a wider field called religion (Zahed Bablan et al., 2012). The topic of religion has been noticed in psychology since long ago. For the first time, William James has addressed the topic of religion in his work titled "Types of Spiritual Experiences in Humans" (Straub, 2009). Freud introduced religion as a phenomenon called for by human needs and believed that its only purpose is to help people to overcome the fears they face during their life (Freud, 1907). After the statements made by Freud, psychologists had paid less attention to this field, and only in the last two decades has psychologists' attention been drawn to this field (Freud, 1907).

Kim et al. (2006) state that a person's relationship with his caregiver, whether positive or negative, affects his view of God. In a study, Bram et al. (2008) found that dissatisfaction with God is related to despair and depression in adults. In this research, negative perception of God was strongly related to feelings of guilt and having psychological symptoms, while psychological health was related to perception of a supportive God. Refahi and Makaran (2015) found in a research that there is a relationship between attachment to God and identity styles and mental health. Also, in another study, Niri et al. (2014) reported a significant relationship between attachment to God and psychological well-being. But conflicting findings also show that faulty attachment patterns or maladaptive schemas can lead to a positive perception of God through a compensatory mechanism, finding evidence for a surrogate interpretation of attachment themes or compensatory attachment in children whose parents are divorced or separated. In these cases, in families where the father was absent, compared to families where the father was present, God was considered more supportive and powerful (2008). Most researchers believe that the existence of religious beliefs towards God has a significant impact on safe or unsafe attachment to God. As a result, insecure attachment has led to the formation of incompatible spiritual schemas, so that psychological and spiritual transformation can also include personality transformation, feedback and beliefs about spirituality. Religion always changes under the influence of cognitive evolution, including psychological evolution

(2016). Dysfunctional schemas are the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral set that determine how we cope in situations where schemas are activated (Fontoulaquis et al., 2008). The specific characteristic of schemas is that: they are activated and used in stressful situations; They take control from us and act automatically, and they feel emotions, people's cognition is affected by schemas and they show behaviors. For this reason, dysfunctional schemas are called internal dictators that greatly influence our behaviors (Miller et al., 2003). A number of dysfunctional schemas are spiritual. For this reason, they are called inefficient because they create problems for us to adapt to the laws of God, society, and adaptability in our living environments and reduce our adaptability. The spiritual scheme is a complex that is based on spirituality. Dysfunctional spiritual schemas are schemas that cloud our connection with the Absolute Being and destroy clarity, in fact, they are the spiritual schemas of our beliefs. These schemas are incompatible with the law of existence; Another thing is that they are not compatible with the spiritual law and our compatibility with the laws of this world; In a person who has lost trust in existence, he attracts forces and sees himself alone and cannot trust and loses the courage to explore the environment. Against ineffective experiences to ineffective perceptions of God, including; The perception of a punishing God: when he blames God for his sins and criticizes God by committing sins. Perception of God with high expectations: a person has this ineffective perception of God that has excessive expectations and does not consider the limitations of the servants. A healthy spiritual relationship with God: means achieving self-realization and spiritual self-realization and seeing God as a supporter and comforter. Some incompatible spiritual patterns are 1- spiritual abandonment, this pattern makes people feel abandoned by God and that God does not love them. 2- Lack of trust in God prevents a person from joining his spiritual self and God, it is a lack of trust in God and his help. 3- Emotional deprivation of God, an unkind God who does not care about him and does not have a close relationship with him, 4- Feeling of spiritual deficiency and shame, a kind of feeling of incompleteness and all his sadness is to compensate for this deficiency and he seeks ambition. 5- spiritual isolation; They live in

spiritual isolation and feel separated from the spiritual group and think that they are an awkward patch that has no connection to the spiritual idea or to the spiritual groups. 6- The feeling of spiritual inadequacy refers to a lack of self-efficacy and they think that they are incompetent in understanding spiritual issues and cannot establish a sincere relationship with God. 7-Vulnerability in the field of spirituality, those who spent a fearful childhood also suffer from spiritual fear and are so afraid that they never enjoy God's love, mercy and compassion. 8- Spiritual failure and ineffectiveness, these people consider themselves lower than others and not only think that they have not reached spiritual values and have not grown spiritually, but also think that they will never have the ability to grow spiritually. 9- Entitlement and arrogance, people who think that they are spiritually superior and others should follow them. 10- Insufficient spiritual self-control, these people quickly refuse to do obligatory work and break their repentance. 11- Confirmation of spiritual seeking, instead of following the spontaneous spirituality, these people do things in order to please others. 12- Spiritual self-sacrifice, when a person sees that his good deeds are not reciprocated, he sacrifices himself spiritually, but this action is not done with a simple and pure motive. 13- Spiritual emotional inhibition, in this schema, a person does not have excitement and enthusiasm in performing worship and prayer, and they perform these actions very dryly and figuratively. 14- Stubborn spiritual standards, these people create hard and inflexible spiritual standards for themselves. 15- Spiritual punitiveness, these people treat themselves and others severely due to their faults and committing sins and severely punish small faults (Ghabari Bonab, 2017).

The existence of primary maladaptive schemas has been confirmed in adults with depression (Ahmadi, Sheikh & Sarabandi, 2012; Reiner, 2008). Flannelly et al. (2010) showed that among the belief in a loving and close God, a forgiving God, and a creative and judging God, the belief in a loving God had the least relationship with psychotic symptoms such as generalized anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, There are paranoid thoughts, social anxiety and physical complaints. Siltan et al. (2014) examined the

association of three types of God conceptions with the psychological symptoms of generalized anxiety, social anxiety, panic, and obsessive-compulsive. They concluded that belief in a punishing God was positively associated with four psychopathic symptoms, while belief in a benevolent and benevolent God was negatively associated with these symptoms. The main purpose of the current research is to develop an intervention program based on attachment to God and to examine its effectiveness on ineffective spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being.

Method

This study was conducted as an intervention and experiment with a pre-test-post-test design. The statistical population includes all employees of Continental Plateau Oil Company in Behrgan region (onshore personnel) in 2018, whose number was 1500. Using the random sampling method, 60 people were screened and randomly assigned to two groups (experimental and control). In this way, after obtaining the letter of introduction from the security of the relevant company and making the necessary arrangements with the administrative affairs management, the notice of the call for registration and the holding of treatment sessions by the researcher was given to the management for the registration of the participants. In the current research, questionnaires of incompatible spiritual schemas, spiritual well-being and attachment to God were used to collect data.

Materials

1. Attachment to God Questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by Rawat and Kirkpatrick (2002) to measure people's attachment style towards God. This questionnaire has 9 questions and three attachment styles (avoidant, anxious and secure) are measured. And each subject answers these questions on a Likert scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Except for questions that have reverse marking. In the study of Shahabizadeh (2015), Cronbach's alpha of the avoidant, ambivalent and secure factor was obtained as 0.88, 0.81 and 0.86, respectively, which indicates the reliability of the scale. Principal components analysis with Obimin rotation also showed a simple 3-factor structure.

2. Questionnaire of incompatible spiritual schemas: In this research, a structured interview was designed to create a questionnaire using the theoretical background and questionnaires of Yang (2003) dysfunctional schemas and Ghobari Banab and Nosrati (2015) spiritual dysfunctional schemas. The result was the compilation of 70 initial items using the deductive-inductive approach, which led to the design of the initial version of the questionnaire of attitude towards spiritual affairs. Then the content validity was checked by two quantitative and qualitative methods with the help of 10 experts in the field of attitude towards spiritual affairs and psychometrics. Qualitative content validity was checked by examining the content of the items, the general structure of the questionnaire and the need to add or remove items. Also, the experts provided the necessary guidelines about the appropriate position of the items, the use of appropriate words, the observance of grammar and the appropriate scoring of the items, and their opinions became the basis for the necessary changes. Quantitative content validity was evaluated by calculating two factors: Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI). According to experts' opinions, 19 items out of 70 designed items were removed and the number of questionnaire items was reduced to 51 items. The results of the qualitative content validity of the tool led to the rewriting of 6 items, and in the quantitative content validity section, the overall content validity index of the tool was 0.86 and its content validity ratio was 0.79. Exploratory factor analysis method was used to check the construct validity of the questionnaire of ineffective spiritual schemas. The final version

was 51 questions in the following 10 schemas: emotional deprivation towards God (questions 1-5); spiritual release (6-10); Defect and spiritual shame (11-15); spiritual vulnerability (16-20); the untransformed spiritual self (21-25); spiritual obedience (26-30); obstinate spiritual standards (31-35); Entitlement/spiritual secretary (36-40); negativity/pessimism (41-45); infidelity and polytheism (46-51). The way of scoring the questions is from 1 to 5 (completely disagree to completely agree).

3. Spiritual well-being questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by Ro Palutzin and Ellison in 1982. This questionnaire has 20 questions, it measures two subscales (religious well-being and existential well-being). The 6-point Likert scale is from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The way of scoring the questions is that for each positive question, a score of 6 is given for the completely agree option and 1 for the totally disagree option. Marking negative questions is the opposite. Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 16 and 18 are negative. After scoring this scale, the score of religious well-being, existential well-being and the total score of spiritual well-being is obtained. The psychometric properties of this scale were obtained by Zarnqash et al. (2016) through the retest reliability coefficients of the whole scale, religious well-being and existential well-being equal to 0.85, 0.78 and 0.80, respectively.

4. Schema therapy based on attachment to God: The content of schema therapy training sessions was adapted from the package provided by the spiritual therapy guide of Vaziri, Kashani and Akbari (2017). A brief description of the treatment sessions is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Brief description of therapy sessions

Session	Content
1	Pretest-familiarization implementation with therapist and group members, discussion about the purpose and overall structure of sessions, examination of expectations from the treatment program, initiation of discussion about attachment to God in the program, determination of homework tasks with the title of depicting a visual image of oneself and God during normal and times when an error has been made.
2	Review of previous session tasks, examination of types of human relationships with each other, evaluation of quality of individuals' attachment, their intra-personal patterns and performance, explanatory patterns determining the effect of quality of attachment on spirituality and religiosity, group discussion on the topic raised, determining the task of evaluating individuals' quality of attachment.
3	Review of previous session tasks, examination of attachment to God in the context of Islamic psychology, eternal nature of spiritual attachment, the stories of the prophets in the Quran, finding

	the roots of spiritual attachment using the stories of the prophets in the Quran, safe and unsafe bases of attachment in the Quran, group discussion.
4	Review of previous session tasks, educational component: the concept of God, Islam, and cognitive mapping, group discussion, presenting the task of choosing a mention or prayer, repeating it every morning and evening, and noting daily events from the perspective of the true God for oneself. Examination of the mental concept of God, its differences and similarities, explanation of creating a mental concept of God and giving an example for it, explaining the method of creating a mental concept of God and giving an example.
5	Review of previous session tasks, experience-based mental concept of God versus conceptual perception of God, experiential presence (in one's heart), our perception and understanding of God, (contemplation versus having an experience), the role and impact of parents on individuals' relationship with God.
6	Examination of the role of parents in creating and developing a child's concept of God, the assignment for the sixth week: how has your concept of God evolved? Review of previous session tasks, cognitive techniques, examining automatic thoughts, examining cognitive errors, fundamental beliefs, the task of registering automatic thoughts about the mental image of God.
7	Examining the assignment of the previous session, a person's mental image of God, Islam, cognitive map, to what extent is the mental image of God related to Islam?, life journey maps Assignment: Write down the events that have happened to you this week from the words of the real Lord. What would the real—loving, supportive—God want you to know about yourself? Write from his point of view. Bring your text to class next week and we can read it in class if you'd like.
8	Examining the assignment of the previous session, cognitive techniques, checking automatic thoughts, checking cognitive errors, basic beliefs, homework: recording automatic thoughts about the mental image of God.
9	Examining the assignment of the previous session, cognitive disorders (filtering, generalizing, catastrophizing) class activity *Plan with one of your friends in the group. Help each other so that you can choose another religious mention or prayer. *Write the name of the second remembrance or prayer: *Please read the story of Moses and Pharaoh and finish it by the end of the twelfth week *Complete three more automatic thoughts in the corresponding tables.
10	Examining the assignment of the previous session, basic negative thoughts, what is schema?, what is the belief and mental image of God?, week's assignment: * Read the story of Moses and Pharaoh completely in the next session. *Continue reading the zikr and prayer you have chosen. *Complete the relevant tables again.
11	Examining the assignment of the previous session, therapy using stories from the holy books, what is therapy based on Quranic stories and how does it work, therapy based on Quranic stories, weekly assignment: *Continue to complete the following tables. *Continue reading the mentions. *Bring a list of encouraging words for each group member for the coming week.
12	Welcome and prepare the group, welcome and prepare, monitor assignments, find the answer to the following questions: Ask the group members to share the encouraging words they found with the person to their left or right.

Implementation

After enrolling the applicants within the specified period, an initial interview was conducted with each of the employees who applied to participate in the meetings by the researcher. Based on the criteria for entering

and exiting the research, 60 people were selected and randomly assigned to two groups including an experimental group and a control group. After replacing the participants in the groups, for the experimental group, attachment to God intervention was conducted by the

researcher in 9 2-hour sessions in a group manner and with a sequence of two sessions every week. In the process of providing training for the experimental group, the subjects of the control group did not receive any intervention. The criteria for entering the research include: Not having a history of psychiatric disorder, not taking special medication, having informed consent to participate in the research, having avoidant and anxious attachment styles to God, lack of physical limitations interfering with individual care, completing the treatment consent form and not participating in individual counseling sessions outside of treatment sessions. Exclusion criteria from the research included history of hospitalization in psychiatric hospitals, use of psychiatric and psychoactive drugs, use of any type of sedative, alcohol, and narcotic drugs, and having a safe attachment style to God. The ethical considerations of the present study were: 1- All subjects received information about the study and participated in the study with informed consent and could leave the study at any point in time. 2- Subjects were

assured that all information will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. 3- In order to respect privacy, the details of the subjects were not recorded.

The data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially using SPSS-22 statistical software. For the descriptive analysis of the data, the mean and standard deviation indicators and in the inferential analysis after examining the underlying assumptions, the multivariate covariance analysis test was used. Considering the research design and the limited number of subjects and in order to increase the power of the test, a significance level of 0.05 was considered for alpha.

Results

Most of the subjects in the experimental group (0.40) and the control group (0.36.67) were in the age range of 20-30 years. Most subjects in the experimental group (0.60) and control (0.63.33) had a bachelor's degree in terms of education level. In the experimental (0.86.67) and control (0.90) groups, they were married.

Table 2. Mean (standard deviation) of dysfunctional spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being in the pre-test and post-test stages

Variable	Groups	Pre-test		Post-test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Emotional deprivation towards God	Exp.	25.19	04.4	68.12	94.2
	Control	65.18	85.3	24.19	13.4
Spiritual release					
Defect and spiritual shame	Exp.	46.17	22.5	32.14	02.4
	Control	86.16	02.5	76.16	98.4
Spiritual vulnerability					
Untransformed spiritual self	Exp.	02.20	41.6	28.15	81.4
	Control	92.18	65.5	21.19	32.6
Spiritual obedience					
Stubborn spiritual standards	Exp.	46.16	19.3	21.11	87.2
	Control	36.15	76.2	52.15	83.2
Eligibility.Grand-spiritual secretary					
Negativity.pessimism	Exp.	21.17	18.4	56.12	38.3
	Control	01.16	78.3	85.15	69.3
Emotional deprivation towards God					
Spiritual release	Exp.	42.18	13.5	88.11	01.4
	Control	86.17	32.4	65.17	26.4
Defect and spiritual shame					
Spiritual	Exp.	45.15	08.4	25.10	98.2
	Control	42.16	75.4	21.17	96.4

vulnerability					
Untransformed spiritual self	Exp.	12.22	25.6	28.17	26.4
	Control	65.22	27.6	05.23	41.6
Spiritual obedience					
Stubborn spiritual standards	Exp.	26.19	42.3	43.11	97.1
	Control	85.19	91.3	42.20	31.4
Eligibility.Grand-spiritual secretary					
Negativity.pessimism	Exp.	56.21	15.5	23.16	85.3
	Control	04.21	56.4	45.21	68.4
Spiritual wellbeing					
	Exp.	68.52	25.13	87.84	14.19
	Control	75.56	28.14	97.56	32.14

One of the assumptions of the analysis of covariance test is to check the homogeneity of variances, which was done with the help of Lune's test. The results showed that the dimensions of ineffective spiritual schemas and spiritual well-being are not significant in Levene's test. Therefore, it can be said that both groups were homogenous in terms of the

variables of the research before the intervention ($P < 0.05$). Another assumption of covariance analysis test is the normality of data distribution. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check this hypothesis. The results indicated that the dimensions of spiritual dysfunctional schemas and spiritual well-being follow the assumption of normality ($P < 0.05$).

Table 3. The results of covariance analysis of spiritual dysfunctional schemas in experimental and control groups

Variable	SS	DF	MS	F	Eta	p
Emotional deprivation towards God	97.64	1	97.64	29.16	512.0	001.0<
Spiritual release	66.29	1	66.29	85.6	512.0	03.0<
Defect and spiritual shame	57.45	1	57.45	83.10	512.0	001.0<
Spiritual vulnerability	88.51	1	88.51	65.12	512.0	001.0<
Untransformed spiritual self	44.32	1	44.32	31.8	512.0	02.0<
Spiritual obedience	45.57	1	45.57	8.14	512.0	001.0<
Stubborn spiritual standards	05.47	1	05.47	56.11	512.0	001.0<
Eligibility.Grand-spiritual secretary	67.48	1	67.48	96.11	512.0	001.0<
Negativity.pessimism	73.116	1	73.116	8.19	512.0	001.0<
Infidelity and polytheism	68.53	1	68.53	23.13	512.0	001.0<

According to the results of Table 3, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the two groups in the research variables: emotional deprivation towards God ($F=16.29$ and $p>0.001$); spiritual release ($F=6.85$ and $p>0.03$); Defect and spiritual shame ($F = 10.83$ and $p>0.001$); spiritual vulnerability ($F = 12.65$ and $p>0.001$); spiritual untransformed self ($F=8.31$ and $p>0.02$); spiritual obedience ($F = 14.8$ and $p>0.001$);

Stubborn spiritual measures ($F = 11.56$ and $p>0.001$); Entitlement/great-spiritual secretary ($F = 11.96$ and $p>0.001$); negativity/pessimism ($F=19.8$ and $p>0.001$); Infidelity and polytheism ($F = 13.23$ and $p>0.001$). Therefore, sub-hypotheses 1 to 10 are confirmed. That is, the intervention based on the quality of attachment to God has an effect on all the components of dysfunctional spiritual schemas.

Table 4. The results of covariance analysis of spiritual well-being in experimental and control groups

Variable	SS	DF	MS	F	Eta	p
Spiritual wellbeing	97.187	1	97.187	48.32	638.0	001.0<

According to the results of Table 4, it can be said that there is a significant difference between the two groups in the variable of spiritual well-being ($F=32.48$ and $p<0.001$). Therefore, it can be said that intervention based on the quality of attachment to God has an effect on spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

The results of the present study showed that God-based attachment styles significantly improved scores on dysfunctional schemas in the subjects of the intervention group. The findings of this study are in line with the results of Aman Elahi (2015), Kanted (2015), Glipour and Akbarnia (2014), Refahi et al. (2015) and Niri et al. (2014). On the other hand, the results showed that God-based attachment styles significantly led to the improvement of spiritual well-being in the subjects of the intervention group. The findings of this study are in line with the results of Jan Zaregi and Daemi (2016), Chirag Ali and Yazdan Bakhsh (2015), Sepah Mansour et al. (2014), Payet et al. (2017) and Sanddaj et al. (2015).

In explaining this finding, it can be said that a person's connection with God, a person's connection with the world, and well-being can lead to a sense of meaning, satisfaction, and purpose in life. Researches confirm that spiritual experiences have been effective in improving physical and mental health (2005). In further explanation of this finding, it can be said that ineffective spiritual schemas are ineffective because they create problems for us to adapt to God's laws, society and adaptability in living environments and reduce our adaptability. The spiritual scheme is a complex that is based on spirituality. In a person who has lost trust in existence, he attracts forces and sees himself alone, he cannot trust and loses the courage to explore the environment. Against ineffective experiences to ineffective perceptions of God, including; The perception of a punishing God: when he blames God for his sins and criticizes God by committing sins. Perception of God with high expectations: a person has this ineffective perception of God that has excessive expectations and does not consider the limitations of the servants. A healthy spiritual

relationship with God: it means achieving self-actualization and spiritual self-realization and considering God as a supporter and comforter (Zahedbablan et al., 2012). Flannelly et al. (2010) showed that among the belief in a loving and close God, a forgiving God, and a creative and judging God, the belief in a loving God has the least relationship with psychotic symptoms; There are general anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, paranoid thoughts, social anxiety and physical complaints. Siltan et al. (2014) examined the association of three types of God conceptions with the psychological symptoms of generalized anxiety, social anxiety, panic, and obsessive-compulsive. They concluded that belief in a punishing God had a positive relationship with four psychopathic symptoms, while belief in a benevolent and benevolent God had a negative relationship with these symptoms.

Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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