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## Research Paper

# The Relationship between God Attachment Styles with Tendency to Drugs among Students



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## ABSTRACT

**Objective** The present research was designed to investigate the relationship between God Attachment Styles with Tendency to Drugs among Students.

**Methods** This study is descriptive and correlational. The population of this research includes all the high school boy students in Karaj city in the academic year of 2016-2017, which included 15000 students. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table, the number of the sample was determined as 375 individuals, which were selected through a multistage cluster sampling. The data collection was performed through the addiction potential scale of Weed et al., (APS) (1992) and the god attachment questionnaire. For analyzing the data, Pearson correlation and multiple regression methods were used, and the data were analyzed by using SPSS v. 17.

**Results** Findings showed that in families of 14.4% of the individuals, there is an addiction background, and in 85/6% there is no addiction background in the family. The correlation results showed that the components of God attachment have a negative and significant relationship with the tendency to addiction, and affection multiple regression explain components of God attachment have predicted the tendency to addiction in students.

**Conclusion** Regarding the importance of the role of God attachment in drug tendency among students, the results of the present study can be useful in planning and making appropriate policies for the purpose of promoting educational programs to families and their wards.

## 1. Introduction

The increasing number of addicts has turned the issue of drug addiction into a national crisis. Addiction, drug abuse or dependence on drugs is one of the greatest problems leading to the collapse of

and society all over the world and is a threat to many people in society, especially the youth (Azizi,2003). According to the statistics from international organizations such as World Health Organization and the United Nations Drug Control Program, the

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production and consumption of these substances are growing worldwide. This has made addiction or drug abuse a serious issue for the countries (Mirzaei, Ravary, Hanifi & et al, 2010).

Iran, due to its geographical location neighboring the largest producer of opium (Afghanistan), as well as the strategic position of Iran as the best route for drug trafficking, is subject to the greatest risk of drugs and addiction. The importance of establishing effective prevention and treatment strategies has undoubtedly long been apparent to everyone. Despite increasing efforts in the prevention and treatment of drug abuse we continue to see more statistics from the World Health Organization and the Psychiatric Association of America in terms of the prevalence of substance abuse and the related problems (Mehrabizadeh, Shahni & Fathi, 2008).

It should be noted in this regard that the average age of drug addiction among youths and adolescents is increasing. The fact that half of each country's population is made up of young people and the increment in the use of new drugs shows that there is need to address this problem before it becomes apparent. Statistics and information from United Nations Office for Drug Control show that all over the world the age of people with substance abuse and psychotropic substances among adolescents and young adults is increasing in a way that this issue is considered as the third global crisis (Moshki, Khajavi, Hashemizadeh & et al, 2016).

Several variables affect the emergence, continuation, and treatment of substance use disorders. After the literature review, it can be concluded that biological, psychological, social, and family factors are associated with substance abuse. In clinical trials, a set of variables were studied as predictor variables in the context of substance use disorders that among these variables attachment style to God can be noted (Kezdy, Martos & Robu 2013).

The first person who spoke of attachment style was John Bowlby. In developmental psychology, the emotional bond between mother and infant is called attachment. This attachment begins in infancy and is stable over time (Bowlby, 1996). Bowlby described the attachment formation process (emotional bond) between the infant and mother and showed that such a bond and experience of security within the framework of this bond is the base for development and activity in individuals. On the other hand, the experience of insecurity in attachment relationships is correlated with

features such as mistrust, vulnerability, sensitivity, and communication problems.

Since about the 1990s, Kirkpatrick has considered attachment as a powerful framework for understanding and integrating many aspects of religious beliefs (Taqipareh, 2006). Kirkpatrick believed that the faithful individual has a deep interpersonal relationship with beloved, wise and powerful God and called this relationship an attachment relationship (Okazi, 2010). He also offered two hypotheses for people's attachment to God: first, God as the attachment figure, in the form of compensatory behaviors acts as an alternative to those individuals that weren't optimal attachment figure and called it the compensation hypothesis. Moreover, attachment to God is the result of compliance with internal models related to the parent which is called correspondence hypothesis. In this regard, some supporting evidence shows that there are certain consistencies between attachment styles and indicators of attachment to God (Miner, 2009). In this context, a research result (Khrashadizadeh, Shahabizade & Dastjerdi, 2012) show that there is a significant relationship between the perception of avoidant and ambivalent attachment to God with the perception of avoidant and ambivalent attachment to mother and father (Miner, 2009) also concluded that there is a positive correlation between attachment to parents and attachment to God. Based on the above findings and theories it can be inferred that God is the absolute attachment figure and as one who protects and leads His followers, and is viewed as parents (Hernandez, 2010; King, McCullough & Larson., 2001; Sperry & Shafranske, 2005). The results showed a significant positive relationship between image of God and general health in student (Porzoor, Mikaeili, Moazedi & Ebrahimi, 2015).

Therefore, God as an attachment figure is considered as a secure base for exploration behaviors and a safe haven in times of distress or risk behavior for the believers, and when the believers of God are far away or separated from Him, they feel anxious. Believers seek to be close to God and this contact for them in relation to God is desirable in the forms of prayer and participation in religious activities. Also, when believers receive news about the death and the loss of their dear relatives they tend to approach God as a safe haven to regain the sense of security and peace (Okazi, 2010).

Moreover, individuals with the belief that God is the basis of safety feel a sense of power, and their confidence increases in the face of anxiety and fear. This sense of security leads to inner peace in them and prepares them to deal with the problems and challenges of life. Thus, the feeling of safety is the antidote to the abnormalities (Khrashadizadeh, Shahabizade & Dastjerdi, 2012).

Studies show that there is a significant relationship between God attachment styles and substance abuse (Kezdy, Marrtos & Robu 2013). Schoephoerster (2017) indicated that low (passive) God locus of control was associated with increased drinking and that anxious attachment to God was associated with negative consequences of drinking. Williams and Kelly's research showed that teenagers who have more secure attachment with their mothers and have less interaction with their fathers and have insecure attachment behavioral problems (Williams & Kelly, 2005). Bahr et al. in a study entitled "The family, religion and the risk of substance abuse in adolescents showed that the attachment to father, attachment to mother, parental control, family aggression, family drug problems, and religion have a significant relationship with substance abuse and depression (Bahr, Suzanne, Anastasios & Bingdao, 1998). Several studies have focused on attachment to God and psychological health. For example, (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 2002) have found that people who have a secure attachment to God, in contrast to those who have an ambivalent attachment to God, have greater life satisfaction, and less anxiety, depression, and disease. In another study by (Bradshaw & Christopher, 2010) it has been shown that there is a significant negative relationship between secure attachment to God and psychological distress. Also, the results of a study (Ellison, Burdette & Hill, 2009) showed that attention to religion and prayers reduce the harmful effects of diseases and anxiety.

The overall goal of this study is to examine whether the type of styles of attachment to God in individuals has any relationship with their tendency to substance abuse, and whether the type of attachment style to God can predict the risk of substance abuse in people.

Minor research objectives include examining the intended variables separately as predictors of the tendency addiction.

With respect to the objectives of the research, the research hypotheses include:

1. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with proximity maintenance attachment style.
2. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with safe haven attachment style.
3. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with secure base attachment style.
4. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with separation distress attachment style.
5. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with positive self-perception attachment style.
6. Tendency to addiction among students has a significant relationship with a positive perception of God attachment style.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methodology of this study is descriptive - correlational. The population of the study comprised of all high school male students in Karaj studying in 2016-2017. According to statistics announced by the Education Office of Karaj, the number of students was about 15,000 as of the 2016-2017 Academic session. Using Morgan's table, 379 students were selected for sampling. The samples were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. The two following questionnaires were used to collect information:

**A. Attachment to God Inventory (AGI):** This questionnaire was developed by Ghobari Bonab and Haddadi Koohsar (2011), and measures 6 domains of attachment to God: 1. Proximity maintenance (how close the person is to God) 2. Safe haven (referring to God in order to obtain peace) 3. Secure base (gaining confidence and courage to face problems by returning to God) 4. Separation distress (discomfort and worries if God turns away) 5. A positive self-perception (having merit and ability to be under the protection of God), and 6. A positive perception of God (God is compassionate, available and omnipotent). The test has 46 questions and based on the Likert scale and has 7 options (totally agree to totally disagree) set.

The In a study, Ghobari Bonab et al (2012) have tested the internal validity of structure using factor analysis and external validation of scale, and the results showed that the scores of the questionnaire have a high negative correlation with scores of stress, anxiety, and depression. The reliability coefficient of the test in the study of Hassanpour et al. was 0.78 which is good reliability for the test. (as cited in Ghobari Bonab, Haddadi Koohsar, Rashidi, & Javadi, 2012).

**B. Addiction Potential Scale APS (drug tendency):** This scale made by Weed, Butcher, Mckenna, et al (1992) has 39 questions that have become standardized in Iran by Minooi and Salehi (2003). Questions that come with the option “yes” mean that if the subject’s answer to that question is yes for each yes receives one point, also questions that come with the option “no” mean that if the subject’s answer to that question is no for each no receives one

point. In the questionnaire, if the cut-off point score of men and women is higher than (women: 23/13, men: 23/37) confirms a person's potential for addiction. The reliability coefficient of scale in normal subjects (in one week) in men and women are 0/69 and 0/77 respectively. The reliability of standardized version of this scale in research done by Salehi and Minooi using Cronbach's alpha was 0/53 and using split-half was also 0/53. In a study by Rostami et al. discrimination index of APS is 0/62 (Alizadeh Goredel, Beyrami, Hashemi Nosrat Abad, et al, 2012).

For data analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient test and multiple regression were used with SPSS v17 software.

### 3. Results

Table 1 shows the frequency of the sample subjects in terms of the history of drug abuse by their family members.

**Table 1. Frequency and percentage (relative, valid and cumulative) of the sample subjects based on a history of substance abuse in the family**

| Background | Frequency | Valid percentage |
|------------|-----------|------------------|
| Yes        | 54        | 14.4             |
| No         | 321       | 85.6             |
| Total      | 375       | 100              |

According to Table 1 people who have no family history of substance abuse have a 321 frequency which equals 85.6 percent and people who have a family

history of substance abuse have a frequency of 54 people which equals 14.4 percent.

**Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients of attachment to God, with a tendency to addiction**

| Dimensions of attachment to God | Tendency to addiction |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Proximity maintenance           | **-.0.325             |
| Safe haven                      | **-.0.317             |
| Secure base                     | **-.0.633             |
| Separation distress             | **-.0.224             |
| Positive self-perception        | **-.0.358             |
| Positive perception of God      | **-.0.560             |
| Total attachment to God         | **-.0.820             |

\*\* Significant correlation at 1% level

Table 2 shows the correlation between the variables of attachment to God with the tendency to addiction. As can be seen above all components of attachment to God are negatively correlated with the tendency to

addiction, all of which are meaningful at (0.01) level. This means that the higher the quality of the attachment to God, the less their tendency to addiction.

**Table 3. Report of multiple regression analysis to explain the tendency to addiction among students**

| Model             | SS    | df  | MS    | F     | P    | R     | R <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|------|-------|----------------|
| <b>Regression</b> | 422.6 | 6   | 70.43 |       |      |       |                |
| <b>Remnant</b>    | 202.6 | 118 | 1/71  | 41.05 | 0/00 | -0.69 | -0.83          |
| <b>Total</b>      | 625   | 124 |       |       |      |       |                |

Also, to obtain multiple relationships between the dimensions of attachment to God with the tendency to addiction, multiple regression analyses were used. The results are reported in Tables 3 and 4 in analyzing the relationship between attachment to God and tendency

to addiction Frequency obtained is significant at (0.000) level. and R-value is (0/83) and R<sup>2</sup> is (0/69), respectively. Therefore, 0/69 percent of changes related to the tendency to addiction of students can be explained with attachment to God variables.

**Table 4. Prediction of tendency to addiction based on the dimensions of attachment to God**

| Model                             | Standardized |        |       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
|                                   | Beta         | t      | Sig   |
| <b>Constant value</b>             | 15.43        | 3.28   | 0.001 |
| <b>Proximity maintenance</b>      | -0.275       | -5.13  | 0.001 |
| <b>Safe haven</b>                 | -0.224       | -4.15  | 0.001 |
| <b>Secure base</b>                | -0.398       | - 3.51 | 0.000 |
| <b>Separation distress</b>        | -0.188       | -5.54  | 0.000 |
| <b>Positive self-perception</b>   | -0.349       | -6.6   | 0.001 |
| <b>Positive perception of God</b> | -0.177       | -1.53  | 0.001 |

In the first hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis showed that Beta= - 0/275 and P=0.001 which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between proximity maintenance attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of proximity maintenance to God in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the second hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis showed that Beta=-0/224 and P=0.001 which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between proximity maintenance attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of proximity maintenance attachment in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the first hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis showed that Beta= - 0/275 and P=0.001 which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between safe haven attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of safe-haven attachment in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the third hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis show that Beta= -0/398 and P=0.001 which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between secure base attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of secure base attachment in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the fourth hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis show that  $Beta = -0/188$  and  $P=0.001$  which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between separation distress attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of separation distress attachment in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the fifth hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis showed that  $Beta = -0/349$  and  $P=0.001$  which is significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Accordingly, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between positive self-perception attachment style and tendency to drugs. This means that the higher the quality of the level of positive self-perception attachment in people, the lower their tendency to addiction.

In the sixth hypothesis of the research, the results of regression analysis showed that  $Beta = -0/275$  and  $P=0/131$  which is not significant with regard to the 1% significant level. Although Pearson correlation coefficients in Table 2 shows that there is a meaningful correlation of  $-0.560$  between the tendency to addiction and positive perception of God attachment style.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study are consistent with many types of research. [Jazayeri and Dehghan, \(2014\)](#). The study shows that there is a significant relationship between attachment style and substance abuse and also there is a relationship between attachment and addiction and the psychological profile of the individual. [Tikir, et al \(2015\)](#) opined in a study entitled "Relations between attachment to people, attachment to God, perception of God and addiction severity in an Islamic population in Turkey". Their study showed Negative attachments to religion were more linked to severity of alcohol/drug addictions than positive attachments. The attachment starts with the mother-baby relation and probably influences the relationship with God and determines our beliefs. According to their study, the addiction pathology was related to religious perceptions. [\(Bahr, Suzanne, Anastasios & Bingdao, 1998\)](#) conducted a study entitled: family, religion and the risk of substance use in adolescents. They examined 13,250 teenagers and the results of their research suggest that a child's attachment to

parents (attachment to father and mother), parental control, and the level of religiosity of the individual, family aggression, have a significant relationship with substance abuse and depression. [\(Williams and Kelly, 2005\)](#) also, the research found that teens who have insecure attachment and less interaction with their fathers show more behavioral problems.

Roles of the human relationship with God in preventing addiction is such that many of the world's great theoreticians such as Freud, Jung, William James, etc. considered as a strong factor against social pathologies such as addiction. The most important role of religion is the primary prevention of drug addiction in the sense that the more people have desirable religious beliefs, the less likely they are to have a tendency towards addiction because many religious instructions are effective in controlling addiction. Studies show that having a religious faith plays an important role in reducing substance abuse. The people who have accepted religious principles and connected to them use drug less than non-religious persons. [\(Mohammadi & Dadkhah, 2000\)](#)

Regarding the explanation of the findings, it can be said that inattention and lack of care from parents in childhood and adolescence and subsequent loosening of the spiritual connection with God leads to the experienced deficiencies, loneliness, and sadness, feelings of hostility, and inability to communicate which can lead people to drug abuse. It is not surprising if some young people risk substance abuse, essentially it can be said that drug abuse is the result of being distressed and one of the roots of that is neglecting God [\(Kezdy, Martos & Robu, 2013\)](#). According to the verses of the Holy Quran, only remembering of (God) Allah and His names brings peace to the hearts and save people from their distressed states. Therefore, those who have more religious faith and stronger relationship with God are more resistant to drug addiction, and in other words, lack of religious values makes people more vulnerable to drugs addiction [\(Mohammadi & Dadkhah, 2000\)](#).

The effect of drugs makes people recognize that drugs can affect/change their pain and sadness which have resulted from a failure in having a safe connection in order to change their emotional states. . In many cases of everyday life, people may be experiencing unpleasant emotions, and dealing with these cases is not easy for most people.

However, to get rid of these unpleasant feelings, some people use alcohol and drugs to avoid confronting their problems, and this act delay finding the ultimate solution to their problems as this will cause further issues. It can be said that those who don't have strong faith turn to addiction and do not have a specific purpose in life. While experts believe that lack of purpose in humans is a major cause of addiction and the human relationship with God plays an important role in making human life purposeful (Farkhak, 2002). Thus, the better the quality of the level of attachment to God, and the meaning that it gives to the world around has more sense of value and purpose. Therefore, it is less likely for people to use drugs which harm their feeling of being valuable and hinder their goals. In other words, due to the role it has in tolerating stress, human relationships with God can prevent drug dependency or substance abuse. Cognitive beliefs of religious people, including the belief that God is always with humans in hardship, or a sense of confidence and peace through prayer to God that is always available to His followers, help the religious people tolerate psychological stress (Sperry & Shafranske 2005). The present study has limitations like other researches that require a cautious possible generalization of the results. The present research was a cross-sectional study and further investigations on the relationship between attachment styles to God with the tendency to use drugs requires more exact longitudinal studies to confirm the aforementioned relationship. This study has used questionnaires to evaluate the relationship between attachment styles to God and tendency to addiction.

Thus, considering that the questionnaires have aspects of subjective assessment having biased answers to the questions is possible. The results of the study can be generalized to the studied population (male students of Karaj) but should be applied to other communities with necessary cautions. It is recommended that the research be repeated on female students as well. Considering that the objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between styles of attachment to God and the tendency to addiction among students, the study of the influence of attachment styles to God on other social deviations such as high-risk behavior, delinquency, and theft are recommended.

## 5. Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished, and if desired, the research results would be available to them.

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### Authors' contributions

The author himself has been present in designing, executing and writing all parts of the research.

### Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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