

Research Paper**Qualitative Study of Relationship With God in Old Age*****Abdolah Motamedi¹**

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ABSTRACT

Objectives The study was performed to investigate the quality of the relationship of the elderly with God. The relationship of humans with God is an ancient one and determines human relationships with self, one another, and the universe. Those who have a positive relationship with God, have less anxiety and mental disorders in the face of difficulties.

Methods & Materials We used Grounded Theory to answer the research questions. In this regard, an open-ended questionnaire was designed and administered by means of interview. The study sampling was theoretical and continued to reach the data saturation. The total sample consisted of 18 elderly people aged between 60 and 81 years.

Results The findings revealed 105 concepts, 24 subcategories, and 5 main categories. The categories were analyzed in a paradigm: causal condition; phenomena-content (context); mediator condition; strategy of action/reaction; and consequences. Finally, a model of connection of categories was presented.

Conclusion The final model suggests a wide variation in relation to the quality and quantity of relationship with God. The role of the emotional, cognitive, and social factors in the emergence of this behavior (relationship with God) was clear and in accordance with the mediator conditions and the perceived consequences of the relationship.

Key words:

Relationship with God, Aging, Religion

Extended Abstract**1. Objectives**

The relationship that people establish with God and the impact of this relationship on them is an essential element in the analysis of the people's character.

In principle, it is known that all people communicate with God in different ways, but the quantity and quality of this relationship differ from person to person. The current study was conducted with the aim of evaluating the quality of this relationship among the elderly. It is expected that the relationship

with God in old age is an indication of their affiliation to religious teachings and can be interpreted on the basis of religious concepts. Furthermore, the relationship of human being with God is very old and determines human relationships with one another, self, and the universe. People who have a positive relationship with God show less anxiety and undergo reduced psychological turmoil when faced with problems.

2. Methods & Materials

To conduct this research, we considered qualitative research methods, and used the Grounded Theory. An open-ended questionnaire was designed in a semi-

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structured form and administered through interview. The interview included a combination of pre-determined, open end, and flexible questions. The sample was a theoretical sample and were selected in accordance with the study objectives. The selection continued until data saturation. In this way, a total of 18 old people, 60-81 years were selected. The obtained information was processed in three phases of open coding, key coding, and selective coding. Open coding is a manner of examining, comparing, and processing data that leads to the conceptualization and processing issues. In this step, dozens of concepts were identified and assigned into groups. Here, the categories are identified, and processed. Thus, the units that the researcher had to deal with were reduced. This was a part of key coding. Also, in the key coding phase, the categories were organized i.e., they were connected using a paradigm. In the final step, selective coding, a category is given the most importance and the remaining categories are linked to it until the theory is formulated. Here, the obtained categories in the paradigm such as causal conditions, phenomenon-content (context), mediator conditions, action/reaction strategy, and consequences were analyzed. Then, the relationships among the categories were drawn as outlined in the pattern of interaction with God (Figure 1).

3. Results

The obtained results revealed 105 concepts, 5 main categories, and 24 subcategories. The obtained categories and subcategories were as follows: 1) content of

communication with God (including demand, praise, complaint, supplication, and self-talk); 2) importance of the relationship with God (including giving meaning to life, satisfaction of needs, personal growth, social development, and soothing); 3) causes of relationship with God (including paying attention to the consequences of a relationship with God, plight-happiness, knowing and believing in God, education, age, and time); 4) purpose of a relationship with God (including dealing with problems, immediate benefits and earning future benefits, and aimless); and 5) method of communication with God (worship, activities, exposure to situations and mediated). As mentioned earlier, the obtained categories were analyzed in a given paradigm and a model of the relationship between the categories was extracted. According to this model, three factors conditioned the relationship with God. These factors either had an accelerating or decelerating effect. Based on the findings, the factors of age, education, time, and individual experiences performed a mediating role (Figure 1).

The study showed that respondents knew different ways to communicate with God, beyond behaviors such as saying prayers, praying, etc. They also knew that performing good deeds has some kind of relationship with God. The majority of respondents focused on the role of a comforting relationship with God and believed that this relationship with God was a source of support and companionship. Achieving excellence, the feeling of being, possibility of having their heart out, and visualizing God on their side were characteristics mentioned by the elderly. The results also showed that

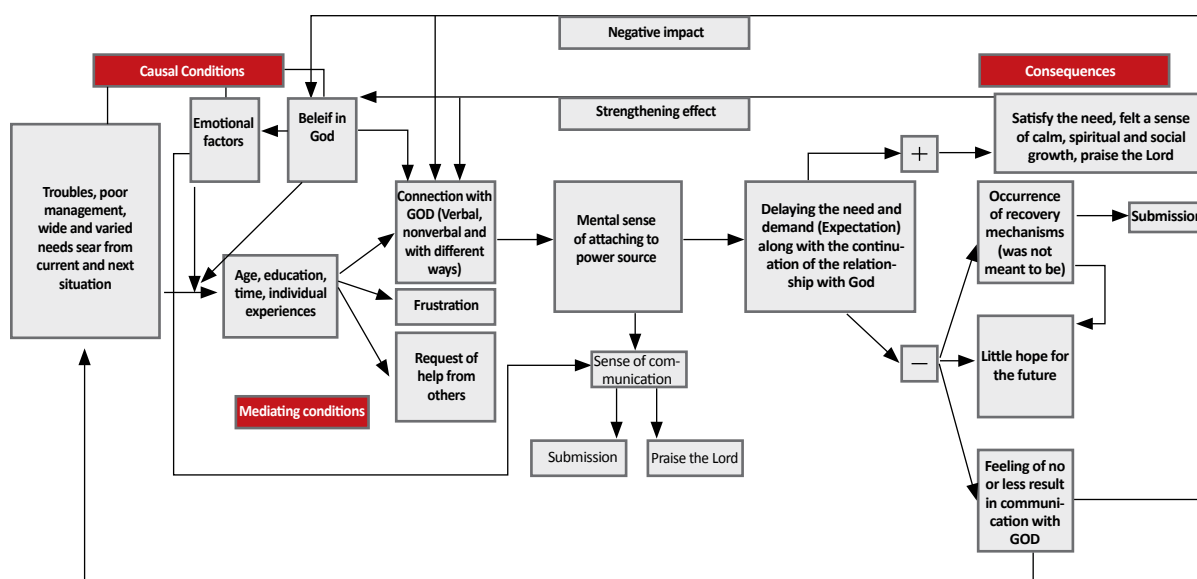


Figure 1. Interactive model of relationship with God

with old age, needs with regard to age, privacy, faith, family, social and old conditions shape their opinions and behaviors before God. As the old people pay attention to their personal issues like asking God not to be humiliated, reaching to salvation, bestow forgiveness and so on, they pray for others, including their children and the family.

Old people believed that their knowledge of God would get better over time. Although the vast majority of them said that in the period before old age they had a relationship with God, their current relationship was more informed and based on deep understanding. Some pointed to the role of time and believed that in the past, everyone was more attached to God.

4. Conclusion

Using the model of causal factors, this study could provide mediated conditions, action/reaction and the implications of the relationship with God in old people. This study also presented an appropriate model for this relationship (model of interaction with God is provided below). Based on the findings of this model, it comes to light that different people have different ways to communicate with God. Moreover, under the influence of causal and consequential conditions of communicating with God, a person may also have different feelings with regard to the relationship with God. These feelings have been presented as a graphical model, keeping in mind the categories identified as a result of the paradigm introduced. In this model, three categories (1. Believe in God, 2. Emotional factors and a collection of predicaments; and 3. Needs and fears) have been introduced as factors which condition the causal relationship with God. These factors show their role in three ways in the mediating context, where they have accelerating or decelerating effect.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.