

## Predicting Obsessive-compulsive behavior and Phobic Anxiety among Students of Medical Sciences: The role of the Concept of God

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** The concept of God which is conveyed to individuals by means of oral and cultural media is a conceptual understanding of people about attributes of God and is closely associated with psychological health of individuals. Having said that, the aim of the current research was predicting obsessive-compulsive behavior and phobic anxiety in students of Medical Sciences in 2014, examining the role of the concept of God in this regard.

**Method:** In this descriptive-correlational study, whose statistical population was the students at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, 367 students were selected by proportional stratified sampling. God Concept Scale and Scales of Obsessive-Compulsive and Phobic Anxiety of Symptoms Checklist-90R were administered on them. All ethical issues were observed in this study and the researchers declared no conflict of interests.

**Results:** Multiple regression analysis of the data indicated that obsessive-compulsive behavior and phobic anxiety of university students can be predicted by the way they frame the concept of God. Moreover, the findings revealed that the male students who had a positive concept of God were lower in phobic anxiety ( $r=24$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). However, the female university students who had a positive concept of God were lower in obsessive-compulsive behavior ( $r=28$ ;  $p<0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** According to the findings, it can be concluded that obsessive-compulsive behavior and phobic anxiety of university students are subject to their concept of God.

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### Summary

**Background and Objective:** The conceptualization of a person from God is an abstract theosophical and rational one which has been discussed in theological discourses while individual's representation of God based on experience of divine being is combined with feeling, internal experience of God individuals encounter through life experiences. This concept (representation of God) has been discussed predominantly in the area of religious psychology and spirituality. The concept of God and representation of God both are different components of the same process in that both shape individuals' comprehension of a

transcendental being. What individuals know about divine being is very important in shaping their experience (1). Gorsuch believed that conceptualization of God was very complicated, and from a psychological point of view it is related to different forms of prayers, rituals, personal variables, and mental health (1).

Conceptualization of God and its attributes is a religious belief conveyed by language in the community. For example, a clergy teaches attributes of God to people and individuals obtain religious conviction and beliefs through this verbal community, without having an experience (2,3). Several researchers have studied the concept of God and some other variables in religious psychology (2- 4). Others have

examined the relation between the concept of God as well as mental and physical health (5). Studies show that having a positive concept of God is related to emotional well-being, mental health and being closer to God. (6-10).

Aryan Dell and Atmae have shown the relation between a negative concept of God (attributing God's revengefulness, and anger) and symptom checklist. In this study, students who described God using negative attributes such as vengeance and anger showed obsession and phobic disorders (11). Moreover, Schaefer and Gorsuch reported that the determinants of mental health and psychological compatibility of adults showed levels of anxiety in individuals inversely related to the perception of benevolence of God, the presence of God, guidance of God, omnipotence of God. Therefore, students who believed God is benevolent, they were less anxious, but individuals who believed that God is not accessible; they were more anxious (12).

The main purpose of the current study was to predict obsessive-compulsive and phobias from the concept of God among college students, who were studying in Tehran Medical Sciences University in 2014.

**Method:** To this end, a descriptive-correlational study was utilized, and 367 students from Tehran Medical Sciences University were selected by means of proportional stratified sampling. God Concept Scale and Scales of Obsessive-Compulsive and Phobic Anxiety of Symptoms Checklist-90R were administered on them.

**Results:** Regression analysis indicated that obsessive-compulsive and phobic anxiety of college students can be predicted by the way they framed the concept of God. In addition, the data revealed that female students who had a positive concept of God were lower in phobic anxiety ( $r=0.24$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). However, male college students who had a positive concept of God were lower in obsessive-compulsive behavior ( $r=0.28$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

**Discussion and Conclusion:** The results of the current study indicated that the quality of a person's conception of God is related to their obsessive compulsive behavior and phobias among university students. Furthermore, the results of the study showed that student's obsessive-compulsive disorders and phobias can be predicted through their quality of the concept of God. Moreover, the results demonstrated that individuals who had a positive concept of God, their obsessive behaviors are less than other students. They also had lower level of phobia compared to other students. These findings were consistent with the results of the previous studies (11, 12). Considering the findings of the present and previous studies, one can conclude that the conceptualization of an individual from God is related to the obsessive-compulsive disorder and phobia. In addition, it is worth noting that through intervention to increase positive conceptualization of God, we can prevent obsession and phobia among college students. The current study shows the importance of the concept of God

(conceptualization) as for the medical students' health status. It also shows that by modifying students' conceptualization of God, their psychological problems (including obsession and phobia) will be lowered.

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