

The Relationship between Attachment to God, Attachment to Adults, Resilience, Self-compassion and Mindfulness in Undergraduate Students in Tehran University

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Abstract

Background and Objective: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment to God, attachment to adults, resilience, self-compassion and mindfulness in undergraduate students at Tehran University.

Methods: 200 students (100 males and 100 females) were selected by cluster sampling method and completed the attachment to God, attachment to adults, resilience, and self-compassion and mindfulness questionnaires. The research design was correlational. Pearson correlation and path analysis were used to analyze the data. In this study, all the ethical considerations have been observed and no conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Results: The results showed that there was a positive and meaningful relationship between secure attachment to God and resilience, mindfulness and compassion but a negative relationship between avoidant attachment and resilience, mindfulness and compassion. Also, the results showed that attachment to adults had a positive and significant correlation with resiliency, but there was no significant relationship between anxiety attachment to adults and mindfulness and resilience. Also, based on the results, resilience and secure attachment to God could positively predict mindfulness.

Conclusion: Those with secure attachment to God value themselves and know that God loves and helps them and responds to their desires and prayers. On the contrary, people with avoidant attachment regard God as out of reach.

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Summary

Background and Objective

Resilience is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that needs to be examined in a social and psycho-social framework (1). One of the most important definitions of mindfulness in Western literature is “the awareness that focuses on the goal at the moment without judgment” (2). In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of a research orientation called self-compassion meaning a method of communicating with oneself with such properties as

intimacy, kindness and self-acceptance (3). Both mindfulness and self-compassion date back to Buddhism almost 2500 years ago (4). Mindfulness and self-compassion require a sense of security. An attachment relationship provides emotional support via creating a safe base and a secure refuge or source of peace (5).

Research shows that individuals with a secure attachment are more effective in helping others and getting help from others compared to those with an insecure attachment (6). Secure individuals express their request for help and support directly. They also show their desires and interests clearly and precisely.

Insecure attachment manifests itself in a variety of forms including ambivalent and avoidant and anxious styles (7).

There is limited but useful research evidence related to attachment to God and the relationship between attachment styles to God and psychological variables in religious psychology. The results of two studies showed that there was a significant relationship between attachment styles and religious variables such as religious belief, commitment, and close relationships, perception of God, and the experience of speaking in another language (8).

The results of another study showed that self-compassion could predict readiness to feel shameful and sinful and unpleasant emotions (9). They also found that awareness, self-regulation, and balance recovery also improved by increasing mindfulness (10). In addition, mindfulness reduces the impact of our experience on interpretation of occurrences in the present time (11). This confirms that mindfulness is correlated with the five major factors of personality paradigm, especially neuroticism, negative emotion, and conscientiousness (12). On the other hand, research results show that family function, self-differentiation and resilience have a significant role in stress, anxiety and depression (13). In addition, the relationship between resiliency and introversion and extroversion of adolescents suggests that resilience has a very important mediating role in preventing or causing many psychiatric disorders (14).

Although several studies have studied attachment in the field of positive psychology and abnormal psychology, such studies in Iran, which is culturally and religiously different from other countries, are necessary and this gap is deeply felt in this area. The relationship between self-compassion and mindfulness, which has been studied in positive psychology, has not been studied in Iranian Islamic culture. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between attachment to God, attachment to adults, psychological resilience, and mindfulness in students.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment to God, attachment to adults, and resilience with self-compassion and mindfulness in undergraduate students in Tehran University.

Methods

Compliance with ethical guidelines: During the study, the researchers attempted to adhere to all ethical considerations of the subjects including the freedom to participate in the research. The participants were also ensured that their personal information would be kept confidential and that participants could be excluded from the study at any time.

The present study was a correlational study and the population included all undergraduate students at the University of Tehran in the first semester of the academic year 1995-96. For this purpose, 200 students from the faculty of psychology and education were selected by available sampling method. For data

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collection, the scales of attachment to God, attachment to adult, resiliency; self-compassion and mindfulness were analyzed. Pearson correlation and path analysis were used to analyze the data.

Results

The results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between secure attachment to God, resiliency, mindfulness and self-compassion, but there was a negative relationship between avoidant attachment and resiliency, mindfulness and self-compassion. In addition, the results showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between attachment to adults and resiliency, but there was not a meaningful relationship between anxious attachment to adults and mindfulness and resiliency. Moreover, based on the results, resiliency and secure attachment to God could positively predict mindfulness.

Conclusion

The results of this study were consistent with previous studies (e.g., Cantazaro & Wei (15)) and with the results of Shaver et al. (16). Mindfulness can strengthen cognitive coping processes such as positive reassessment and reinforcement of emotional adjustment skills such as resilience and distress, problem-solving training, and the training of ignoring techniques at the onset of stress-induced attacks and protect individuals against abnormal mood-induced stress and rumination. Therefore, individuals with high resiliency in stressful situations maintain their psychological health and help develop coping strategies and better defense mechanisms in maintaining mental health and safety, and vice versa. Based on the results, secure attachment to God had a positive and avoidance attachment to God had a negative relationship with the self-compassion. The results of the present study were consistent with the findings of Caldwell and Shaver (17).

Those with secure attachment to God were high in self-respect and know that God loves them, helps them, and responds to their wishes and prayers. On the contrary, the people with avoidant attachment regard God as out of reach and avoid approaching Him.

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Ethical considerations

The Ethics Committee in Biomedical Research of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences has confirmed this research.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Authors' contributions

Design Supervision, Treatment Planning, Drafting: First and Third Authors; Implementation of Intervention: Second Author; Data Collection and Analysis: Fourth Author.

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