

Article

ATTACHMENT TO GOD AND GRATITUDE AMONG ADULTS FROM DIFFERENT RELIGIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Keywords: Attachment to God, gratitude, comparative religion, psychological basis of religion

Abstract: Attachment to God and gratitude are very important factors in the lives of every human being irrespective of the genders. This study aimed to analyze attachment to God and gratitude among adults from different religions and to look for gender differences in this regard. Purposive sampling method was used in this study. A total of 180 respondents were selected from different religions. To measure the extent of attachment to God and gratitude, two scales named after these variables as developed by Richard Beck and Michael McCullough were used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data through SPSS. Results revealed that attachment to God and gratitude were statistically significantly and positively correlated ($p < .05$). Hindus and Christians had more fidelity to God as compared to Muslims. Whereas gratitude was higher among Christians and Muslims as compared to Hindus. The independent sampled t-test showed that there was no gender difference in attachment to God and gratitude scales scores. Findings of this study may help readers and researchers to understand how gratitude performs an eminent part in simplifying cost serving behavior which is discrete as a simple awareness of prosocial norms.

Received: 21st February, 2022

Accepted: 19th March, 2022

Published: 31st March, 2022



INTRODUCTION

Attachment to God leads a person on a path in which a his/her belief in God can fulfill the criteria of an attachment figure which in return helps him/her to examine how individual differences in attachment may lead to remuneration or correspondence. Muslims believe in a monotheistic God who is a powerful creator, merciful and compassionate in contrast to Christians, who believe in the concept of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Hinduism proclaimed about existence of many Gods. In Islamic culture, inner peace is cultivated from real happiness that originates from commitment to God (Joshi & Weijers, 2014; Newman & Graham, 2018). The desire of forming close relation with God is attained through expressively accustomed statement which is often practiced by prayer, reading or quoting religious texts, and joining in religious rituals or amenities amongst others. In difficult times, a person suffers with different and complexed issues which cause distress and frustration to him/her. At that time,

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God is only a protective personality who is always there for them by serving hope, security and relief from misery (Counted, 2019). This understanding of belief is further explained by Bowlby's scholarly work based on secure relationship. Through secure attachment, a person enhances his/her self-esteem and confidence to explore his/her surroundings. In attachment relationship, a sense of personal security is a central theme (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008). According to Counted (2019) who elaborated attachment theory, religious violence does not believe that whenever, relationship between believer and God is threatened, followers use violent means to secure their relationship and defend their source via separation anxiety in terms of hopelessness, frustration and detachment. Moreover, monotheists believe in the eschatological life with God, which may also cause a separation anxiety. Furthermore, security and confidence are core expressive qualities of faith as dissimilar to despair and fear.

Gratitude is a feeling of being thankful and to return kindness in a way that shows appreciation. Contemporary society has a significant emotion gratitude. A judgment of numerous faiths focuses to teach gratitude as an important element. Gratitude is considered expressive state of life which is a source to capacitate human. It also capacitates and enhance interpersonal and intrapersonal wellbeing. Though it must be considered as a subjective essential feature for quality of life (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Hill & Allemand, 2011). Another form of gratitude is prayer. It is immensely practical form of gratitude which is followed and practiced by majority. It is worth noting that therefore, people enhance frequency of prayer and marks it as a thanks tool to clear perception of gratitude and wellbeing (Miller, 2008). Naturally, gratitude has both aspects and possible reactions to gain benefit and persons may as a substitute counter negatively to favoritisms with spirits of thankfulness (McCullough, Tsang, & Emmons, 2004). The thought of comparison regarding attachment to God and gratitude among religions originated from the real setting. The attachment to God (AG) has also been existing as a feature of adult attachment mystical growth and evocative theological construct for religions (Miner, Dowson, & Malone, 2014). Empirical studies in monotheistic religions have reported important attachment experience to define believer and God relation (Counted, 2016; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990) Kirkpatrick, 1999) or care-generous faith (Counted & Miller, 2018) which is also confirmed by the attachment in parent-child relationship and also applied to the relationship with God. Gratitude is defined as state of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness. Among them one is pleasant emotion but it is different from simple happiness, which further described gratitude by the perception that everyone gains benefit by another person's generosity. Because thankfulness is based upon getting an advantage from alternative communal agent (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). It was proposed that gratitude has three psychological features that are applicable to administering and responding to prosocial behavior: It is advanced indicator, reinforcer and motivator of prosocial behavior. Moreover, when we receive gift and be thankful in terms of gratitude which is emotional response. So, it is the gratitude felt after one became beneficiary of a humane act. Therefore, Gratitude has many important functions in human multi-dimensional social and emotive lives.

The current study is aimed to check the correlation between (AG) attachment to God and Gratitude among different religions. It is also aimed to check who have high Gratitude. Religion is human life important aspect as it play eminent role for human life and considered chief source for spiritual wellbeing by providing inner satisfaction (Hussain, Awan, & Ameen, 2017). Although attachment to God has been an important element in the lives of everyone. This surely includes both genders, regardless of their ages, professions, education status etc. Gender differences also find out among these variables. While correlation apparently existed between both but researchers gauge the empirical evidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion is a fundamental portion of the lives of numerous people. An estimated 68% of people said religion was an important part of their lives (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011). Numerous studies had found a link between religiosity and gratitude. McCullough and colleagues suggested three possible reasoned for linking religion or spirituality to gratitude (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000; Fagley, 2012; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). First of all, most of the world's religions gave thanks as a desirable attribute (Krause, Emmons, Ironson, & Hill, 2017).

In this way, many religious people could try to give active thanksgiving. Second, when individuals encountered positive phenomena such as beautiful sunsets, those who accepted more religious or spiritual attitudes might attribute the cause of these phenomena to God or some higher power, which could promote a growing identity. Third the spiritually inclined tend to attribute positive, but not negative, experiences to God's intervention. This pattern of attribution might also foster increased in gratitude. For example, pleasant weather might be attributed to God, whereas a long winter might be marked up to natural explanations. In addition, it was logical assumption that the common religious practiced of thanking God in prayer was a likely explanation for this relationship. According to

Emmons and McCullough (2004) gratitude had two aspects recognition and acknowledgement, first was the recognition of goodness such higher existence (God) and former was the recognition that the source of goodness was outside of self. People who were more religious tended to focus on positive aspects of life and showed more gratitude by overcoming negative outcomes in life and showed strong relation with religion such as focusing on God (Tadie, 2011). Whereas, people who were less religious tended to focus on negative aspects of life and attributed everything to coincidence and lacked good intentions to moral agents such as God or higher powers (Emmons & McCollough, 2004). Gratitude was a strong predictor of resilience and spirituality acts as mediator between gratitude and stress (Kumar, Verma, & Dube, 2019).

Although gratitude was a key prosocial emotion reinforcing joint humanity. Researchers examined the importance of trade in gratitude and homosexuality. The results showed that gratitude levels and wage expectations were high. Transcendental feelings such as gratitude, compassion and fear were closely related to human societies. In addition, the potential for emotional gratitude to shape costly professional behavior had been examined in three studies from emotional interaction and requests for help found that thanking God minimize toxic effects of stress about health at the end of life (Kirkpatrick, 1997).

Furthermore, an effort was made to test for gender differences in this process. An analysis of data provided by a nationwide sample of older adults had yielded three key findings. First, statistics showed that older women were more thankful to God than older men. Second, result showed that the effects of stress (living in a bad neighborhood) on health were reduced for older people who were thankful to God. Finally, analysts pointed out that the potentially important stress-relieving properties of thanking God emerged primarily in older women but not in older men.

In view of the review of literature, this study was conducted having three key objectives:

1. To explore level of attachment to God and gratitude among Muslims, Christians and Hindu;
2. To investigate the correlation between attachment to God and gratitude;
3. To examine the gender differences on gratitude and attachment to God

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional research design was conducted during 1st September 2019 to 30th December 2019 in Multan. Total 180 respondents were purposively selected from different religions i.e., Hindu, Muslims, and Christens. The purpose was to record responses of at least 60 respondents from each selected religion.

Data Collection Tool

Data was collected through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had three parts. First part of the questionnaire asked the questions about the respondents' demographic information i.e., age, education, religion, profession, gender, and marital status. Second and third parts of the questionnaire based on attachment to God Scale and Gratitude Scale. The detail of both scale was given below.

Attachment to God Scale (AG)

AG scale developed by Beck and McDonald. AG scale was consisted 28 items that measured attachment with God. AG items were tried to sought religious views, or share personal experiences or knowledge with individuals. Every item dealt about how you felt about your relationships with God. Some items had reverse course (4, 8, 13, 18, 22, 26, and 28). There were two subscales i.e., avoidance and anxiety. Avoidance subscale had even item numbers. Anxiety subscale had odd item numbers. Each item was rated at 7-point Likert Scale as 1 = Disagree strongly to 7 = Agree strongly.

Gratitude Scale

Gratitude scale developed by McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002). Scale consisted of 6 items scale that measured gratitude among different religious groups (Hindu Muslims and Christens). Items tried to sought religious and thank full views, or share personal experience or knowledge with individuals. Every item concerned how you thank full for everything that you have in your life. Some items had reversed score (3 & 6). Each item was rated at 7-point Likert Scale as 1 = Disagree strongly to 7 = Agree strongly.

Procedure

In order to complete the particulars of research informed consent was designed in compliance of ethics. Data collection included the respondents who were assured that information was confidential and anonymous and they

would have right to disengage themselves from the study at any time. All the respondents written inform consent were taken to participate in the study. Data was analyzed through SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics i.e., frequencies, percentages and inferential statistics i.e., Independent Sample *t*-test, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation tests were used to find the level of attachment to God and gratitude among Muslims, Hindus, and Christens, Gender difference in level of Attachment to God and Gratitude, and correlation between Attachment to God scale score and Gratitude Scale score. The level of significance in the study was P less than .05.

RESULTS

Among 180 respondents, the majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of 18-30 years, males, had higher secondary education, students and were unmarried (Table 1).

Demographics	Frequency	%
Age (Years)		
18-30	165	63.9
31-45	15	36.1
Gender		
Male	97	53.9
Female	83	46.1
Education		
Illiterate	17	9.4
Higher Secondary	86	47.8
BA/BSc	60	33.3
MA/MSc	17	9.4
Nature of Job		
House Wife	27	15.0
Teaching Staff	4	2.2
Office Job	33	18.3
Sweeper	10	5.6
Student	91	50.6
Laborer	6	3.3
Others	9	5.0
Religion		
Muslim	60	33.3
Christian	60	33.3
Hindu	60	33.3
Marital Status		
Widow	2	1.1
Married	66	36.7
Unmarried	112	62.2

Table 1: Frequencies of Demographics of Participants (N=180)

The results of the Table 2 indicated that there was a positive correlation between AG score and gratitude score ($r = .341$; $p < .01$).

Variable	Attachment to God	Gratitude
Attachment to God	1	.341**
Gratitude	.341**	1

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 2: Correlation analysis between Attachment to God and Gratitude

Pearson’s correlation analysis showed that there was a statistically significant difference between AG scale score and gratitude scale score among different religious groups (Table 3).

Variable	Muslims N = 60	Christians N = 60	Hindu N = 60	F (2,176)
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	
Attachment to God	2.46 (0.52)	3.42 (0.77)	3.45 (0.74)	29.98*
Gratitude	3.45 (1.19)	3.76 (1.03)	4.00 (0.87)	4.165*

**p < .01, *p < .05

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA comparing AG and Gratitude Scores among Different Religious Groups

The comparison of different religious groups in relation of AG and gratitude was analyzed. Christians has high level of attachment to God as compared to Muslims as mean difference was -.77440. Hindus had strong attachment to God as compared to Muslims as mean difference was 0.80926, Hindus and Christians had no difference. Hindus had different level of Gratitude (mean difference=0.54722) while Muslims and Christians had no difference (mean difference=0.30716) (Table 4).

Variables	(I) Religion	(J) Religion	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Attachment to God	Muslim	Christian	-0.77440*	0.11779	0.000
		Hindu	-0.80926*	0.11880	0.000
	Christian	Muslim	0.77440*	0.11779	0.000
		Hindu	-0.03485	0.11880	0.954
	Hindu	Muslim	0.80926*	0.11880	0.000
		Christian	0.03485	0.11880	0.954
Gratitude	Muslim	Christian	-0.30716	0.19088	0.244
		Hindu	-0.54722*	0.19007	0.012
	Christian	Muslim	0.30716	0.19088	0.244
		Hindu	-0.24007	0.19088	0.421
	Hindu	Muslim	0.54722*	0.19007	0.012
		Christian	0.24007	0.19088	0.421

Table 4: Multiple Comparison Tukey LSD

The Independent Sample *t*-test showed that there was no significance difference among the mean score of males and females in AG scale score and gratitude scale score ($p > .05$) (Table 5).

Scales Score	Gender	N	M	S.D.	t-Value	p-Value
AG Scale Score	Male	97	3.13	.7500	-.771	0.87
	Female	83	3.21	.7374		
Gratitude Scale Score	Male	97	3.67	1.05	-.939	0.83
	Female	82	3.82	1.06		

S.D. = Standard Deviation

Table 5: Gender wise Comparison of AG Scale Score and Gratitude Scale Score

CONCLUSION

The current study objective was to discover the correlation of attachment to God and gratitude among different religious groups. The first hypothesis of this research was that attachment to God is significantly correlated with gratitude. It indicates by analysis that there exist positive correlation among Attachment to God and gratitude among religious groups Hindu, Muslims and Christens. The value of correlation coefficient showed that the results are significant. Many researchers did primary work investigative the correlation amid middle age and parental attachment styles with religiosity variables (Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992). In contrast numerous scholars have inspected how attachment styles relay to spirituality (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000). It is observed that attachment bring gratefulness and such feelings bring satisfaction. Different people use different attachment styles but outcome is more or less same and that is gratitude, thankfulness and contented.

The second hypothesis of this research was significant difference of attachment to God among religious groups. Christians has high level of attachment to God as compared to Muslims. Hindu has strong attachment to God as compared to Muslims. Meanwhile, Hindu and Christians have no difference. Its mean results supported our hypothesis and these results are in the line of previous investigation which explore difference in attachment to God among Muslims, Hindu and Christians (Monteiro, 2005). This particular study only measure attachment to god in one particular dimension but it is important to measure different styles of attachments. It is also important to develop indigenous measuring tool for indigenous population. Existing tools are mostly develop in western countries and they use their definitions of construct. It is not justified to generalize their definitions of construct of other nations or religious groups.

The third hypothesis of this research was significant difference level of gratitude among religious Hindu, Muslims and Christens. Christens and Muslims have no difference on level of gratitude. Hindu has different level of gratitude while Muslims and Christians have no difference. Existing literature does not provide sufficient evidences. Every religion bring connectivity, support and thankfulness. Such constructs cannot be measured more accurately with quantitative tools. Gratitude is more qualitative in nature; it is recommended to measure it through qualitative investigation. Cultural differences are quite obvious between west and east and people from different religion get influenced from their surroundings. Researchers need to understand that development of indigenous tools are the demand of time.

The fourth hypothesis of this research was attachment to God is high among female as compared to male, but the findings did not support hypothesis. The fifth hypothesis of this research was gratitude is high among males as compared to female. There was not any significant difference so hypothesis was rejected. Attachment to God and gratitude are very important constructs and play very important role in one's life.

The study has some limitations. First, a sample size of the present study was 60 Hindus, 60 Muslims, and 60 Christens divided into males and females, with attachment to God and gratitude. Accuracy level of study can be enhanced by increasing the number of participants. Second, apart from adults, other age ranges should be included in the study. Third, the study was cross-sectional. Therefore, longitudinal research design will be conducted to better understand the correlation between attachment to God and gratitude in future. Fourth, indigenous tools need to be developed with considerations of cultural and other influential factors. It is highly recommended that qualitative measure should be appreciated to be used for further investigations.

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