

## *Original Paper*

# Spiritual Pathology Theory of the Sound Heart Model: Socio-Cultural Factors of Spiritual Distress

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** *Spiritual Pathology is the study of disturbing factors in the relationship between man and God, the process of disruption in secure attachment to God, which causes spiritual distress in relation to self, people, and the world of creation.* **Areas covered:** *Balbi defines attachment as deep emotional bond with special people in life, whose interaction brings security, joy and happiness, and their presence brings peace in times of stress. Kirkpatrick generalized the style of attachment to parents to attachment to God.* **Expert opinion:** *In the Sound Heart Model, worship is natural need. The basis of religion is secure attachment to God. Secure attachment to God is belief in the presence and sufficiency of God, as a responsive safe haven. The basis of attachment to God is positive image of God and “recognizing the truth of religion” by the Prophet. The Prophet, as interpreter of Qur’an and spiritual role-model, has healthy spiritual personality. Acceptance of religion, at the time of intellectual maturity, should be done without imitation and coercion, based on knowing the truth of religion, with a free and informed choice. Spiritual pathology is the study of socio-cultural factors that cause misunderstanding of religion, negative image of God and insecure attachment to God.*

### **Keywords**

*attachment, Islam, image of God, religion, role-models, social customs*

## 1. Introduction

Asadzandi is the theorist of the Sound Heart Model (SHM) (Asadzandi, 2023). In two decades of her professional life, she conducted interdisciplinary research on health and religion. She was able to obtain the approval of the Sound Heart Model in spiritual health in 2023. After the fourth stage of exact and strict judgments, the model was approved by the “Council of Support for Theorizing, Criticism and Scientific Debate Chairs” of the “Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution of Iran”. The content of the theory was first judged in the “Specialized Chair of Behavioral Sciences”. After that the theory was judged in the “Specialized Chair of transformative Science”. In the “Pre-Summit” and “Final Summit Session” in 2022 and 2023, model was subjected to strict judging by judges, critics, and observers nominated by the “Support Committee of Theorizing Chairs, Criticism and Scientific Debate”. It was approved by the highest scientific authority of Iran (Asadzandi, 2023). The following content is part of the topics discussed in this theory.

According to the philosophical view of Abrahamic religions and Islamic evidences, religiosity is love and affection for God and the world created by God (Asadzandi, 2022). God has created the world with his love and affection. God has made the goal of human creation to reach divine mercy (Asadzandi et al., 2023). In religious evidences of Islam, the value of human actions depends on their intention of that action (Tabatabai, 2013). Islam emphasizes on doing things with the intention of getting closer to God who said to Abraham, peace be upon him “*Say, Indeed my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds*” (verse 162/ Surah An’am) (Makarem, 2018). So the Sound Heart Model as a hermeneutic model emphasizes on the intention of doing action. In explaining the causes of spiritual health disorder and spiritual pathology, it pays attention to people’s intentions (Asadzandi, 2023, 2022).

## 2. Method

In combined study, based on the Creswell et al. model (2003) with discovery-explanatory approach (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2003), qualitative data from:—non-systematic review and contractual content analysis of different types of spirituality, religious spirituality, spiritual training, spiritual mentoring, the theory of personality and spiritual pathology theory of Sound Heart Model,—Quantitative data from the clinical applications of model were integrated. The validity of meta-inferences of research was measured: - in the quantitative data section through internal-external validity, -in the qualitative data section with “reliability” or “capability index” (Mohammadpour et al., 2012).

### 3. Result

In spiritual pathology theory of the Sound Heart Model, spiritual distress considers as signs of spiritual health disorder. The model considers insecure attachment to God as the cause of spiritual distress. It explains the socio-cultural factors of spiritual distress as the causes of insecure attachment to God as follows:

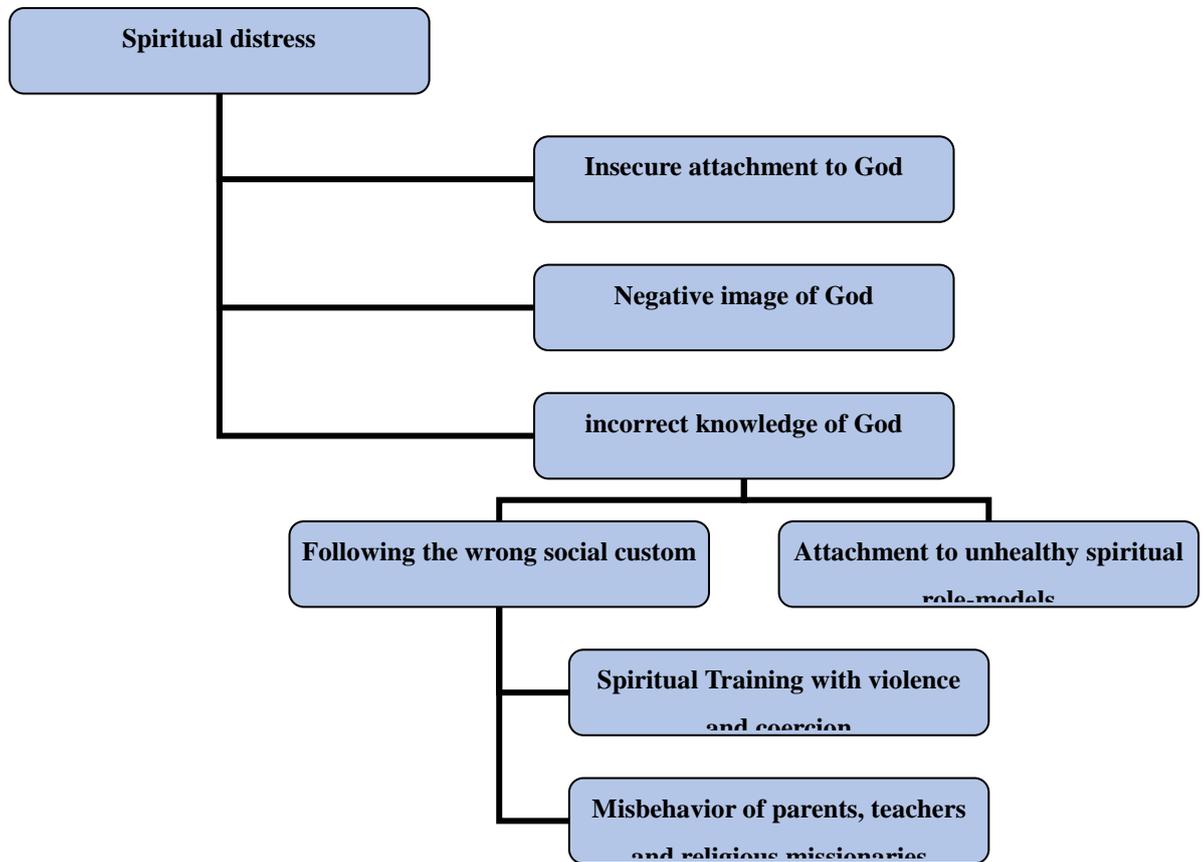
- ❖ Misbehavior and failure to follow religious recommendations by parents, educators, teachers, professors, religious missionaries and at the same time giving advice to others. Contrary to the explicit command of the Qur'an (*O you, who have faith! Why do you say what you do not do?*) (Verse 2/Surah Saf)
- ❖ Spiritual training combined with anger and immorality in family, school and society. Contrary to the explicit command of the Qur'an (*It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So excuse them and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs...*) (Verse 59/Surah Al-Imran)
- ❖ Emphasis on religiosity with violence, reluctance and coercion. Contrary to the explicit command of the Qur'an. (*There is no compulsion in religion*) (verse 256/Surah Baqarah)
- ❖ Strengthening attachment to unhealthy spiritual role-models instead of prophets as mediators of communication between man and God. (*When his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust'*) ( verse 124/Surah Baqarah)
- ❖ Strengthening trans-religious spirituality in complementary and alternative therapies (Asadzandi &Seyed Kalal, 2022).
- ❖ Following wrong social customs and superstitious beliefs in society (disrespecting women, Misunderstanding of the Quran) (*Men are the managers of women, because of the advantage Allah has granted some of them over others, and by virtue of their spending out of their wealth. Righteous women are obedient and watchful in the absence [of their husbands] in guarding what Allah has enjoined [them] to guard.*) (Verse 34/Surah Nisa) (Asadzandi &Seyed Kalal, 2022).
- ❖ Misrecognition of religion based on personal interpretation of Quranic verses (violence against women, men's violence against family members...) (*As for those [wives] whose misconduct you fear, [first] advise them, and [if ineffective] keep away from them in the bed, and [as the last resort] beat them. Then if they obey you, do not seek any course [of action] against them. Indeed Allah is all-exalted, all-great.*) (Verse 34/Surah Nisa ) (Asadzandi & Seyed Kalal, 2023a).
- ❖ Creating and strengthening a negative image of God (an unkind and distant God who does not care about his servants)
- ❖ Creating insecure attachment to God (Figure 1).

#### 4. Discussion

Throughout the life, God tests mankind with life's problems and events, just as God tested His prophets (Tabatabai, 2013). Some people do not experience any spiritual distress during hardships because of their secure attachment to God. They are true followers of religious spirituality because the religious spirituality means paying attention to the inner aspects of life events and the goodness hidden in hardships (Ghalyanee et al., 2021). Religious spirituality is paying attention to the "kingdom of the world of creation" and "the Lordship of God, whose Lordship is accompanied by love" (Zoheiri et al. 2022). These people have spiritual health and healthy spiritual personality. In these people, secure attachment to God directs the way of communication with self, people and the world of creation (Asadzandi et al. 2022b). Achieving this type of spirituality requires secure attachment to God and relationship with God based on love and belonging (Asadzandi & Seyed Kalal, 2023b).

In explaining the process of forming a healthy spiritual personality, Asadzandi considers "the type of knowledge of God" as the cause of creating "the type of image of God" that shapes the style of attachment to God (Asadzandi, 2023b). She believes that following the prophets as a spiritual mentor is a guarantee of correct knowledge of God, a positive image of God, and secure attachment to God (Asadzandi & Seyed Kalal, 2023c). Following the prophets requires love and secure attachment to them. In other words, going through the stages of love makes it possible to go through the stages of faith. So going through the stages of spirituality requires spiritual training based on the Prophets' life (Asadzandi et al., 2020).

Unlike this group, a group of people experience spiritual distress when they faced with the hardships of life's events (Asadzandi, 2017). Their spiritual distress such as despair of God's mercy, turning away from God, dissatisfaction with fate, anger, grudge, revenge, jealousy, regret for losses, fear of the future, anxiety of death, etc. are caused by insecure attachment to God (Asadzandi et al., 2022c). Therefore, spiritual pathology is focused on the study of the socio-cultural factors that cause the interruption of "secure attachment to God" and disruption of communication with God due to the misunderstanding of religion, negative image of God (Asadzandi, & Seyed Kalal, 2022b) which is consistent with Ellison's definition of spiritual pathology as "troubled relationships with God" (Ellison et al., 2013). And attachment theory perspective, about troubled relating that is further defined by experiences of insecure Divine-human interaction (Granqvist, & Kirkpatrick, 2008).



**Figure 1. Socio-cultural Factors in Spiritual Pathology**

It seems that due to the influence of spirituality and spiritual health from cultural and religious contexts in every society, spiritual pathology among the followers of different religions and also in different societies with cultural differences should be investigated based on the conditions of that society. Although the lack of secure attachment to God due to the negative image of God can cause spiritual distress for anyone in any society and culture. Lack of secure attachment to God is the most important cause of spiritual distress (Asadzandi & Seyed Kalal, 2022c).

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