

THE CONCEPT OF LOVE IN ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY, AS A POSITIVE EMOTION TO REDUCE ANXIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

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Abstract

Considering the importance of mental health, which plays a key role in every aspect of our social life, it is very essential for man to avoid unnecessary stress and anxiety. Mental health is severely affected by environmental traumas, economic imbalances, and social pressures.

Psychology has been exploring the causes and solutions of mental stress and anxiety for long. In this context, John Bowlby (1969) proposed 'attachment theory' to address fear and other traumas in childhood and adolescence. They concluded that it is much easier to deal with these issues if there is a caregiver or a protector in one's life.

When researchers turned to spirituality to find solutions to mental disorders in humans, the 'Attachment to God' (ATG) theory was propounded by Christian scholars. They claimed that this theory could provide a framework to solve anxiety and stress problems. Islamic spiritual scholars also have been addressing psychological problems and emotional instabilities in the context of love and attachment to Allah Almighty. Time demands that new dimensions of this knowledge should be developed on a scientific basis in the light of Islamic spirituality, and more threads related to mental health and closeness to Allah should be explored.

This paper will discuss only, how attachment to Allah al- mighty, His prophets, and spiritual mentors can help a Muslim to remain calm, relaxed, and contented in times of calamities and traumas. It will also present different degrees or stages of love with Allah, by achieving these levels one can attain greater inner and spiritual peace. To find this we will review some Islamic and spiritual texts; Quranic verses, sayings of Rasool- ul-Allah s.a.w, and some spiritual work of Islamic scholars and Sufis. Qualitative and historical research methods will be adopted in this research.

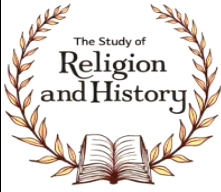
Keywords: Mental health, stress, anxiety, Islamic spirituality, attachment theory.

Introduction

Mental disorders are the leading cause of the global health burden, among other factors, anxiety and stress are considered to be major causes of mental disorders. This can be witnessed from the following data which shows stress ratio in different countries around the globe.

An estimated 275 million people suffer from anxiety disorders, which is about 4% of the global population, with a prevalence between 2.5% and 6.5% of the population per country. About 62 percent of people with anxiety disorders (170 million) are women, while 105 million men are affected.¹

The number of stressed people out of 143 countries globally is 35% – 20% lower than the percentage of Americans who have stress. Stress, anxiety, and depression cost the global economy around \$1 trillion in lost productivity. Stress affects people's physical and mental health by 77%. The coronavirus pandemic became a significant source of stress in their lives, as 78% of adults report it playing a big role in their day-to-day stress. Stress is also impacting people's physical and mental health, with 49% of adults reporting their behavior being negatively affected by stress. Specifically, 21% of respondents say they've seen increased



tension in their bodies, 20% report “snapping” or getting angry quickly, 20% report unexpected mood swings, and 17% report yelling or screaming at a loved one.²

Various treatments are continuously being introduced by medical, psychological, and spiritual experts to deal with stress and anxiety, but the increasing rate of stress has raised questions about the success of these treatments. Although the root causes of these stresses vary according to different cultures and their needs and desires, constant counseling (cognitive behavioral therapy, CBT) has proved a better therapy in reducing stress and anxiety throughout.³

1. <https://www.crossrivertherapy.com/stress-statistics-and-facts>

2. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/this-is-the-worlds-biggest-mental-health-problem>.

3. Nakao, Mutsuhiro, Kentaro Shiotsuki, and Nagisa Sugaya. "Cognitive-behavioral therapy for the management of mental health and stress-related disorders: Recent advances in techniques and technologies." *BioPsychoSocial medicine* 15, no. 1 (2021).

Stressed people always gravitate towards listening from the positive, loving, caring, and problem-solving characters, and feel comforted in their presence, as the mother-child relationship is founded on love and attachment, care, and emotional support.

The attraction between worldly objects is a scientifically proven phenomenon according to Newton's and Einstein's theory of gravitation (the universal force of attraction between all matter). Similarly, attachment theory (John Bowlby 1970-1988 and Ainsworth) in psychology posits that attraction, emotional bonds, and relationships exist in humans too.³ These emotional bonds help us to achieve goals in daily life with the trust of security and care. The confidence in the presence of our loved ones helps to reduce stress and anxiety in case of any threat or fear of any loss. This type of attachment shows an emotional connection between the caregivers and those who need support as we observe in a 'mother-child relation'.⁴

Attachment to others is because of the Love emotion that is inscribed in our nature by Allah s.w.t. As Quran describes the marital relations in Chapter AL- Room verse 21 " And one of his signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put among you love and compassion, indeed there are signs in this for people who think."⁵

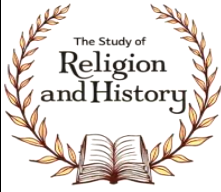
Attachment theory in psychology

As claimed by John Bowlby; the father of attachment theory, (1980) attachment is a biologically based Behavioral system designed to promote the seeking of proximity to a protective or an attachment figure, at times of environmental threat. Intimacy seekers need a positive response from the person they are attached to.⁶

4. (Fitton, Victoria A. "Attachment theory: History, research, and practice." *Psychoanalytic social work* 19, no. 1-2 (2012): 121-143.)

5. Chapter Al-Rum, 21:30

6. Simpson, Jeffrey A., W. Steven Rholes, Jami Eller, and R. L. Paetzold. "Major principles of attachment theory." In *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles*, pp. 222-239. Guildford Press, 2020.



Psychology relates Emotions and behaviours with anxiety, according to them it persists until the proximity and attachment of the required figure have been attained. This system is activated throughout the lifespan in humans, not only in infancy but in adulthood as well.⁷

The attachment figure plays an important role in the attachment relationship. Accessibility, potential presence, and willingness to respond appropriately are the key characteristics of this figure. He is characterized as a comforter or protector.⁸

A loving and caring human attachment figure can provide physical protection in childhood and psychological care, comfort, support, and assistance throughout the lifespan.⁸

Attachment Theory in Adults

Although Bowlby was primarily focused on understanding the nature of the infant-caregiver relationship, he believed that attachment characterized the human experience from "the cradle to the grave." Hazan and Shaver in 1987 noted that the theory of attachment works the same in adults as between infants and caregivers. Both feel safe when the other is nearby and responsive and both feel insecure when the other is inaccessible.⁹

6. Mikulincer, Mario, Omri Gillath, and Phillip R. Shaver. "Activation of the attachment system in adulthood: threat-related primes increase the accessibility of mental representations of attachment figures." *Journal of Personality and social psychology* 83, no. 4 (2002): 881.

7. Spilka, Bernard, Ralph W. Hood, Bruce Hunsberger, and Richard Gorsuch. *The psychology of religion: An empirical approach*. Guilford Press, 2003.

8. Bowlby, J. "Susceptibility to fear and the availability of attachment figures." *Attachment and loss* 11 (1973).

9. Hazan, Cindy, and Phillip R. Shaver. "Broken attachments: Relationship loss from the perspective of attachment theory." *Close relationship loss: Theoretical approaches* (1992): 90-108.

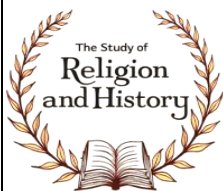
According to some writers, the most important proposition of this theory is that the attachment system, a system originally adapted for the ecology of infancy, continues to influence behaviour, thought, and feeling in adulthood.¹⁰

As Avivi added that emotional attachment helps us to survive. She says that Especially when we are young if we are scared, hungry, or hurt, it is important that we engage with others who can keep us safe. Just like children, adults also feel safer when they are with someone they trust. Adults too might feel distressed and discomfort if they are separated from the people they are attached to. "¹¹ says Avivi.¹²

Secure and unsecured Attachments in adults

As above mentioned notions of Psychologists, we can divide attachments into two types; secure attachment and insecure attachment in the context of a human's relation to others from infancy till adulthood. From a psychological standpoint, secure proximity or attachment reduces fear, anxiety, and related forms of distress, allowing individuals to engage in other life tasks. Individuals with an insecure attachment, as compared with securely attached individuals, endorsed experiences that were congruent with hyper-activating tendencies, such as higher negative affect, stress, and perceived social rejection.¹³

Despite the controversy over, whether love is an emotion or not, psychology persists to declare that attachment with a caregiver or protector is a natural desire of humans. Because of love, someone goes through the experience of feeling happy, relaxed, and feeling him/herself safe in the presence of their much-loved caregiver.¹⁴



10. Crowell, J.A., Fraley, R.C. and Shaver, P.R., 2008. Measurement of individual differences in adolescent and adult attachment.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-emotional-attachment-and-is-it-healthy-5194925>

11. Adi Avivi, PsyD, CGP, a psychologist at Columbia University Medical Center.

12. Sheinbaum, Tamara, Thomas R. Kwapił, Sergi Ballespí, Mercè Mitjavila, Charlotte A.

13. Chun, Paul J. Silvia, and Neus Barrantes-Vidal. "Attachment style predicts affect, cognitive appraisals, and social functioning in daily life." *Frontiers in psychology* 6 (2015): 296.

14. Brown, Jason W. *Love and other emotions: On the process of feeling*. Routledge, 2018.

Love or attachment to spirituality

Spirituality claims a connection between God and man based on love, trust, care, and protection. A number of studies since the 1970s have explored the association between the relationship with God and mental health. In 1979 Rabkin and Deutsch stated in a survey, that "the comfort that individuals obtained from connection with the Divine Being" and "feeling one's close and intimate relationship with the Divine Being, both were stringed strongly with the emotional wellbeing."¹⁵

Kirkpatrick (2005) pioneered the use of attachment theory to understand the relational aspects of religion. ATG has now become a trending topic for psychologists in the context of Christian spirituality. According to Kirkpatrick believers' perceived relationships with God meet the most important criteria for defining attachment relationships. These include seeking closeness to God in prayer and rituals, using God as a safe haven during distress, and using God as a secure base for exploring the environment.¹⁶

Islamic perspective of love and attachment

According to the Islamic perspective, Love is an emotional state or feelings whose reality cannot be expressed in words. However, the ability to love is present in all human beings, since our souls were born in heaven. Allah s.w.t has given us love; a beautiful emotion and feeling, it is manifested in the form of positive emotions like love for the Creator, love for humanity, love in the relation of mother and her child, love between husband and wife, etc but sometimes it appears negatively like the love for worldly objects, even sometimes a person falls into idolatry because of this emotion.

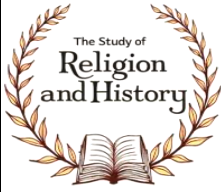
15. Galanter, Marc, Richard Rabkin, Judith Rabkin, and Alexander Deutsch. "The "Moonies": A psychological study of conversion and membership in a contemporary religious sect." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 136, no. 2 (1979): 165-170.

16-Granqvist, Pehr, Tord Ivarsson, Anders G. Broberg, and Berit Hagekull. "Examining relations among attachment, religiosity, and new age spirituality using the Adult Attachment Interview." *Developmental Psychology* 43, no. 3 (2007): 590.

The Polymath Ibn e Hazm (452 AH/ 1064 AD) wrote an essay on love and its different aspects entitled *The Dove's Neck-Ring*. Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzi (749 AH/1350 AD) wrote a book, named *Rawdat al-Muhhibbin* (*The Garden of Lovers*) in which he went into great detail in defining love and its subtypes, as well as terms and states that associated with love.

The Stages of Love

Al-Jawzi mentions in another book *Dhamm- Al- Hawa* the levels and stages of love that lead one to the highest rank of love, which is called "ishq". He stated that Firstly, a person sees the



other person in a good light, which leads him to want to be close to the other person, who then develops a type of love mawaddah where he wishes that he possessed that thing or person. Then this level strengthens and becomes mahabbah, and then "Khullah". Khullah then turns into Hawa, then "Ishq" and at the end, it becomes "tatayyum" which is the stage where a person becomes worshipful of his beloved.¹⁷

Prophet of Islam Hazrat Muhammad S.A.W declared this stage of love "the blind Love". The Prophet s.a.w said: "Your love of a thing makes you blind and deaf."¹⁸

No doubt, obsessive love can drive anyone to hurt others or himself. Although obsessive love is not classified under a specific mental diagnosis, but some believe it should be considered a mental illness due to its disruptive nature. From a Psychological perspective, obsessive love disorder has occurred due to other mental disabilities like attachment disorder and OCD, etc.

This stage of intense or obsessive love for worldly objects is also not appreciated in Islam. It is reported that a young man whose body became alarmingly thin and slender was brought before Ibn Abbas whilst on the plain of Arafat, so he enquired, what is the matter with him? They responded: He suffers from infatuation. Thereafter, Ibn Abbas would seek refuge in Allah from being afflicted with infatuation for periods of the day.¹⁹

17- Dhamm al-Hawa, Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, <https://www.noor-book.com/en/ebook-531-pdf>.

18- Chapter 115/16 Regarding Desires, Sunan Abī Dawud, Hadith: 5130.

19- Al-jwab al- kafi, Ibn Qayyim p.470.

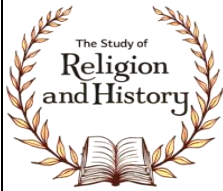
Intense or obsessive love can make the one mentally sick (blind and deaf as Rasool ullah s.a.w said) and this sickness compels him to possess his beloved thing, either it is a person or any other worldly object at any cost.

But, at the same time, Islam posits if this intense love is for Allah s.w.t, it encourages his lover to get more closeness to his Lord, by obeying him even on the price of sacrificing his life. That's why, the immense satisfaction and contentment, confidence and courage of Hazrat Ibrahim A.S, shows his complete trust in Allah al-mighty while he was thrown into the fire of Nimrud, and assuredly, this was not possible without the intense love of Hazrat Ibrahim for Allah s.w.t. The divine scripts were evident that at this hard time, Ibrahim (A.S) refused to accept the help of anyone, but only sought refuge in Allah. So in response to his love and trust, Allah protected him and saved him from the fire of Nimrud.

Love for ALLAH' The Lord' in Islam

According to Islam, love emotion is created in the human's souls for inclination towards Allah s.w.t right after the creation of Adam 'the father of the human race', as it is described in Quranic verse 172 of chapter Al-Araf "And (remember) when your Lord took out the descendants, from the loins of the children of Adam, and made them bear witness against their own selves: Am I, not your Lord? They said, yes, we bear witness, so, you should not say at the day of resurrection: we were unaware of this"²⁰

The purpose of this oath might be, the humans could see their unrevealed Lord. Surely this revelation created the love and Ma'rifah(gnosis) of Allah in them. Many spiritual scholars go to man must have had awarded by some special kind of love Tajalli(Light) of Allah s.w.t, due to which, the love of Allah s.w.t has been instilled in our hearts and souls, and indeed this love



couldn't be born without seeing Him. So, everyone can feel this love through the inclination of their hearts to Allah, especially the time of depression and anxiety. If someone claims that

20- Al- Araf: 07:172

we don't remember this covenant, it's not proof that this incident did not happen, because we see its signs that are love, belief, and trust in the existence and oneness of Allah s.w.t in our hearts.²¹

This spiritual and rational drive (love and gnosis of Allah) is the strongest factor that prompts man to believe in Allah because it is usually stronger than any other impulses that may lead man to fall into love or attachment with other creative beings. Often this natural instinct overwhelms a person and makes him realize the belief in the Oneness of Allah and trust Him deep in his heart at times of crisis and calamity, even if he is claiming to be a nonbeliever still. Abu Dawood narrated in As- Sunan, he said: "al Hasan ibn Ali told us al Hajjaaj ibn al Minhaal said: "I heard Hammaad ibn Salāmah, while he was explaining the tradition, "Every child is born in a state of fitrah(instinct)", He said: "In our opinion, this refers to when Allah took the oath from them when they were in their 'father's loins; when He said: "Am I, not your Lord"? "They said: Yes".²²

Quran mentions love emotion as an essential part of a believer's heart by saying in verse 165 chapter al- Baqrah " And those who are believers., they are stronger in love for Allah".²³ In Chapter Al- Taubah verse 24, Allah S.W.T mentions that the love of Allah must prevail over all kinds of love.²³

Allah's Attachment to Humans

Love no doubt is mutual, one-sided love always creates emotional imbalances, that can be the cause of more stress and depression (Hostinar,2015).²⁴ Allah s.w.t loves His all creations generally and especially with those who love him. As he says in verse 54 of chapter Al-Maidah " He will love them and they shall love Him"²⁵

21- <https://archive.org/details/Al-yawaqitWalJawahirByAbdulWahabAl-sherani>.

22-Sunan- Abu- Dawud vol.5, book As-Sunnah, hadith 4716. <https://archive.org/details/sunan-abu-dawud-arabic-english-full>.

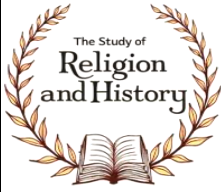
23-Chapter Al-Baqrah,2:165.

24-Chapter At-Taubah,9:24

25- Hostinar, Camelia E. "Recent developments in the study of social relationships, stress responses, and physical health." *Current opinion in psychology* 5 (2015): 90-95.

26- Al-Maidah, 5:54.

Islam recognizes God's transcendent love in ninety-nine names as well, like Al-Wadood (The Loving), Ar-Rauf (The Merciful), Al-Walī (The Supportive), and Al-Hafiz (safe haven). Above all, His name Al-Wadood is a manifestation and mirror image of His love to all His creation and the compassionate quality of His love allows for mercy and adaptation. A review of the 99 divine names or attributes reveals that some of these are especially salient with respect to attributes that characterize the functions of an attachment figure of John Bowlby.²⁷



Inverse the love with the Lord is a definite source to attain His love, closeness, and proximity with Him. As Rasool ul Allah s.a.w said that Allah s.w.t says " My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with Nafl (supererogatory) deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to seek refuge with Me, I would surely grant him refuge."²⁸

There is no doubt that there are countless blessings of Allah on His creatures that show His love and mercy upon them and compel Muslims to bow down in front of Him, pray to Him, and make to cry in times of stress and depression. The various stories in the Holy Qur'an describe the availability, accessibility, care, and protection of Allah when it is needed. According to a psychological standpoint, attachment behaviors are activated in times of intense need, and threat, that's why, when the Prophets and others, confront with threats, they seek out Allah, and draw upon His blessings, which enable them to confront the threat, so they find all that is needed and sufficient for the predicaments and fixes. As a result, trust and faith are increased and create a desire for more intimacy, attachment, and love for their Lord. Muslims feel more confident and emotionally strong at the time of doing good deeds because they have a strong belief that these virtues are the source to attain more attention, mercy, love, and blessings of Allah al- mighty.

27- Ghobary Bonab, Bagher, Maureen Miner, and Marie-Therese Proctor. "Attachment to God in Islamic spirituality." *Journal of muslim mental health* 7, no. 2 (2013).

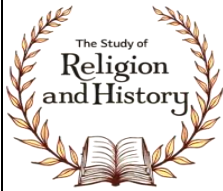
28- hadith 38, Sahih Al- Bukhari.

The concept of contentment Self in Islam

There are three stages of Fana (Annihilation of a person in the God or Union) in Islamic spirituality; Fana fil-sheikh (the denial of self in the obedience and love of shaykh), Fana fil-Rasool (the denial of self in the love and complete submission of Prophet S.A.W) and Fana fil-llah (the complete denial of self in the intense love of Allah S.W.T). In the stage of Fana fi-llah a Muslim attains the level of Nafs-e-Mutmainnah (the contentment self) the closest rank to Allah Al- mighty, as He stated in Quran " O' satisfied soul. Return to your Lord, well pleased with Him, well pleasing Him." Al- Fajr, 27-28.²⁹

The 'Contentment self', is the stage of intense love and attachment with Allah al-mighty. It is the stage of internal and external peace and contentment and satisfaction, the stage where a Muslim is agreed and is pleased with Allah's all decisions, whether these decisions are not in his favour apparently. This level of trust in Allah s.w.t is called 'Riḍā' in spiritual texts. This rank of attachment grants one the confidence and courage to deal with big threats and push to take courageous and bold steps. No doubt it is the stage when a Muslim feels more secure and protected than the attached person feels in the presence of the attachment figure as described by John Bowlby.

Indeed, without a theological and theoretical analysis of Muslims' understanding and experience of being attached to Allah, psychologists will not be able to assess and support Muslim clients in resolving and/or managing psychological and psychiatric issues, especially those relating to the state of their attachment to Allah.³⁰



Prophet Muhammad s.a.w in Islam as an attachment figure

Muslims are connected to their Lord through the Universal Man, (divinely appointed mediators between humans and God). According to Ibn e Arabī, the first instance of Universal Man was

29- Al- Fajr: 27-28-

30- Ghobary Bonab, Bagher, Maureen Miner, and Marie-Therese Proctor. "Attachment to God in Islamic spirituality." *Journal of muslim mental health* 7, no. 2 (2013).

Adam and subsequent Universal Men included Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Mohammad s.a.w, and later spiritual leader.³¹ According to the Muslim faith, prophets are associated with one or more of the divine attributes. These attributes of prophets show their love and intimacy for their people as figures of attachment. They are caregivers, problem solvers, and emotional supporters. From a psychological perspective, we view prophets as divine human figures on earth who empathize with the predicaments and plights of their people.

Particularly, the life history of the prophet of Islam; Muhammad s.a.w. evident in his love and mercy for his people. Rasool ullah mentioned this love and care for his companions by saying, "I am like a father to you"³² but no doubt, more than a father, he was merciful, kind, compassionate, ready to listen and solve the problems as he is described with the appellation of 'mercy to the worlds' in chapter 21 verse 107.³³

Allah s.w.t gives the reason, (mentioning the attributes of his prophet s.a.w. in chapter 3 verse 59) why people attract to him because he is not hard-hearted, and rough to people, but he is very gentle and kind not only to the believers but non-believers as well.³⁴ In chapter 9 verse 128 Allah al-mighty says that "surely a messenger come to you from among yourselves, grievous to him is your distress, excessively concerned about you, to the believers he is very kind and compassionate".³⁵

In chapter 8 verse 6 the Quran testifies his attachment for the non-believers in these words" then maybe you will kill yourself for their sake with grief, if they do not believe in this message."³⁵

As an attachment figure, Rasool ul Allah s.a.w. played a significant role as a counselor, responsive, supportive, and caregiver like a safe haven for all, that's why people were attracted towards him, loved him, respected him, and embraced Islam considering him as truthful and trustworthy.

31-Miner, Maureen, Bagher Ghobary, Martin Dowson, and Marie-Therese Proctor. "Spiritual attachment in Islam and Christianity: Similarities and differences." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 17, no. 1 (2014): 79-93.

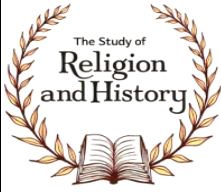
32-Sunan Abī Dawood, hadith 8.

33- 21:107

34- 3:59

35- Al- Anfal,6.

It is true that Islam recommends that the love with Muhammad (peace be upon him) is one of the foundations of the faith and it is actually the love of Allah. Furthermore, intense love and attachment are the only sources of obedience and submission of the Prophet, as He s.a.w said: "None of you, true believes until I am more beloved to him than his father, his children, and all



of the people."³⁶ Moreover, when Allah says (chapter Al-Imran verse 31) that if you love Allah, then follow Rasool ullah, Allah will love you and forgive your sins.³⁷ So, the companions loved the Prophet s.a.w, and his holy words and actions became an outward sign of this love in them. As a result, they sacrificed their lives and wealth wholeheartedly in the way of Allah for the love of the Prophet s.a.w and to gain proximity to Allah al-mighty.

The relation of mutual love and attachment gave such inner and spiritual peace and emotional support to the early Muslims that there was no fear of losing any worldly thing or breaking any relationship except the relationship of Allah and His Messenger. Hazrat Zaid bin Haritha preferred the company of Rasoolullah s.a.w when his relatives came to take him back to their family by saying I will not choose anyone over you.³⁸ If we analyze the 'principle H' of attachment theory 'reactions on the separation from attachment figure'.³⁹ we can judge easily that the companions of prophet s.a.w. had only one fear and grief, that is their separation and parting from their beloved prophet s.a.w.

Ibn e Kathir describes in the Tafseer of chapter 4 verse 69, that a man came to prophet s.a.w. and he was sad, when asked, he said O Prophet of God, something I thought about, we go to you in the morning and in the evening, we look at your face and sit with you, and you will rise at the day of judgment in heaven with the prophets, so we will not come to you. The Prophet did not say

36- Sahih al- Bukhari, voll, hadith:15

37- Al- Imran, 31.

38- Jami at- Tirmidhī, voll, Hadith 3815

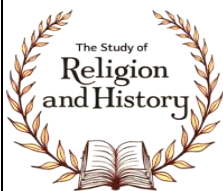
39- Simpson, Jeffry A., W. Steven Rholes, Jami Eller, and R. L. Paetzold. "Major principles of attachment theory." In *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles*, pp. 222-239. Guildford Press, 2020.

anything, then Allah al-mighty revealed that whoever obeys Allah and the prophet s.a.w. these are with those whom Allah has blessed, the prophets, the men of the truth, the martyrs, and the righteous.⁴⁰

Spiritual leaders and mentors as the Attachment figures in Islam

After the death of Rasool ullah s.a.w. religious or spiritual guides of Muslims (having the traits of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.) held the status of attachment figures in every era and address the emotional and spiritual problems of Muslims. They made Muslims realize that stress and anxiety are the results of two main reasons; one is committing sins and the other is related to the unfulfillment of worldly desires. They proposed one solution for both reasons of stress, that is proximity or closeness to Allah Al-mighty. They established the spiritual systems of purifying the hearts and souls from sins and attaining proximity to their Lord.

The role of spiritual leaders and mentors as attachment figures for the seekers just like the prophet s.a.w. and his companions. Love, attachment, mercy, and trust are the essential parts of this relationship. A hadith of Tirmidhī in the book of Supplications, indicates this relation of attachment among the spiritual guides and their followers, As the Messenger of Allah s.a.w asked: " O Allah, I ask You for Your Love, the love of those who love You, and deeds which will cause me to attain Your Love."⁴¹ Another hadith of Bukhari gives a view of mutual love among them, in which the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "He who has the three qualities will find the sweetness (internal pleasure, joy, and peace) of faith. One whom Allah and His



Messenger love more than anything else. He who loves a person and he loves him only for the sake of Allah. He who hates to return to atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be cast into the Fire."⁴⁰ So this mutual love helps the seeker for giving his total submission to their mentors for cleaning their hearts from all negative impurities and purifying their souls.

40- Abdul-Rahman, Muhammad Saed. Tafsir Ibn Kathir Juz'3 (Part 3): Al-Baqrah 253 to Al-I-Imran 92. Vol. 3. MSA Publication Limited, 2009.

41- Jami Al-Tirmidhī, vol6, Hadith :3490

The history of different spiritual chains shows how spiritual leaders guide seekers to cut off the burdens of worldly stresses and attain the inner peace of Allah's closeness under their constant supervision. They played not only the role of spiritual leaders but the psychological healers at the same time. They dealt with the emotional instability of their followers, as they believe that emotional instability occurs when the heart is involved in the love of wealth, fame, worldly desires, and inclination to commit sins.

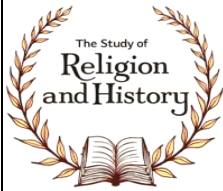
They treat their negative emotions like anger, fear, sadness, hate and jealousy etc. through many therapies like Dhikr, meditation, Supplications, and through different exercises of fasting, remaining silent and living in loneliness as Ghazali mentioned in his glorious book Ihya ul Uloom vol3.

Conclusion

This earth is full of destruction, traumas, and anxiety because of feelings of emptiness in relations and feelings of not being loved. No doubt love and secure attachment make us relaxed and happy and give us the confidence to move forward in our daily routine. It is sad to say that to date there has been neither any scientific analysis of Islamic spiritual texts nor any empirical study has done in which attachment theory has been directly used to understand mental health issues and their relation with the attachment of Muslims to Allah.

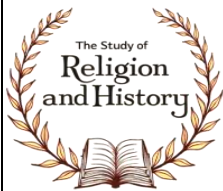
However, the prophet Muhammad s.a.w. and his religious and spiritual followers have been addressing the Muslim's emotional instabilities. Firstly, they encourage Muslims to seek forgiveness and approach Allah Ta'ala with pure intentions, then they create love and attachment for Allah s.w.t in their hearts by telling them about Allah's mercy and love for His creation, they appreciate them to make a constant relation of attachment and proximity with Allah al- mighty by doing good deeds. They teach them how to call their Lord and trust his help at the time of traumas and stress, whether this stress is the result of doing sins or passing through the worldly troubles and plights of man's life. This is the way that should be adopted today by psychologists to deal with their Muslim patients for treating their mental health issues. It is the need of time to less the burden of mental health issues, by tempting the researchers towards Islamic theory of attachment and applying it empirically on a scientific basis to solve the increasing mental health issues in the Muslim world. The integration of attachment theory (John Bowlby, Ainsworth) and Islamic attachment theory as described in this article shows an attachment bond with divine and religious figures, that can become a research point in the field of mental health. The already done work of legendary spiritual Muslim Sufis like Ghazali, Rumi, Abu Zaid Balkhi, Shah walī ullah and others can be a good source to explore the new dimensions of mental health and spirituality in the context of love and attachment theories.

Furthermore, it is needed to study analytically the Muslim's attachment to Allah and the variation of this attachment that surly can be different in the Muslim population because of their demographical, social, and cultural differences.



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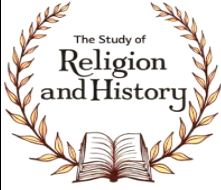
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