

GOD IMAGE AND ATTACHMENT TO GOD IN WORK ADDICTION RISK

Anikó KÉZDY, Tamás MARTOS, Magda ROBU

Sapientia College of Theology
Budapest, Hungary
E-mail: kezdy.aniko@sapientia.hu

Abstract: This study aimed to investigate whether certain aspects of the God image, and characteristics of attachment to God, can be related to work addiction risk. The sample consisted of 215 Hungarian adults (mean age 37.9). Regarding the two measured aspects of the God image, the Loving God image was linked with work addiction risk through its weak negative contribution to self-esteem, whereas the Controlling God image was in a weak direct association with work addiction risk. Anxiety about abandonment by God showed a strong positive correlation with work addiction risk, and also predicted it negatively through self-esteem. The results suggest that anxious attachment to God might contribute to work addiction risk.

Key words: God image, attachment to God, work addiction risk

INTRODUCTION

Work addiction is a growing problem in many societies. It affects not only the individual's physical and mental health but also his/her relationships and effectiveness at work (Oates, 1971/2004). According to Robinson (1998), work addiction is an addiction or obsessive-compulsive disorder that is characterized by self-imposed demands concerning work, the inability to control work habits, which leads to the neglect of other life activities. The most frequent problems in the background of work addiction are low self-esteem, excessive need for control, need for approval, anxiety and other negative feelings, and perfectionism (Killinger, 1997). Although most religious rules require discipline and self-control in various fields such as eating, drinking, rest, or work, and empirical studies generally confirm the negative

relationship between religiosity and substance abuse, it is also suggested that in certain cases some aspects of religiosity might indeed enhance drinking or other forms of substance abuse (Koenig et al., 2001; Hood et al., 2009). Moreover, of the various types of addictions, excessive work might be the one addiction tolerated or even respected by religious communities, due to the value of work and achievement in most religious traditions.

God image of the individual and her/his relationship with God are central aspects of religiosity that influence behavior, attitudes, thinking and emotions. For the religious person a relationship with God is just as real as other interpersonal relationships (Rizzuto, 1970), and so theories of human relationships, such as attachment theory, can be applied to religious behavior. Kirkpatrick (1995) makes the observation that for religious people the relationship with God carries most of the

characteristics of an attachment-like relationship: they turn to God in time of distress, use Him as safe haven and secure base for exploration. It is also argued that the internal working models of early attachment-relationships affect the adult person's relationship with God (Granqvist, Hagekull, 1999). The term internal working model was introduced by Bowlby (1969), and refers to the mental representations of the self and others formed on the basis of experiences with the primary caregiver. The internal working model is supposed to endure and influence thought, feeling and behavior in close relationships in adulthood as well (Bowlby, 1979; Baldwin et al., 1996; Pietromonaco, Feldman Barrett, 2000). The internal working model of God as an attachment figure is multidimensional; one of these dimensions seems to correspond to secure attachment, and is linked with positive self-esteem (Kirkpatrick, 1995). If God as an attachment figure is perceived as available and responsive, the individual also considers himself/herself worthy of care and love. However, if the person sees God as inconsistently supportive and unpredictable, he/she is more likely to feel lonely, depressed, and less satisfied with life. Given the data on the relationship between attachment disorders and addiction (Flores, 2004), we expect insecure forms of attachment to God to be connected with work addiction risk.

Several theories link self-esteem to God image. According to Spilka (1975), high self-esteem correlates with the image of God as positive, close, personal and involving. On the basis of self-referencing theory Buri and Mueller (1993) argue that for a religious person the self might be the filter through which the relationship with God is interpreted and understood. Information about God is usually untestable empirically, and so for the in-

terpretation the individual has to rely on her/his own self-schema, receiving information in conformity with this schema. Since low self-esteem is linked with negative aspects of attachment to God and of the God image, and is also one of the characteristics in the background of work addiction, we also hypothesize that the connection between God image, attachment to God, and work addiction risk is mediated through the level of self-esteem.

METHOD

Sample and Measures

Data was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire. The sample consisted of 215 Hungarian adults; 82 men (38%) and 133 women (62%). Their age ranged from 18 to 84 years (mean age = 37.9, SD = 14.8). 83.7% of the sample was Catholic, 12.1% Protestant (Calvinists and Lutherans), and 1.9% described themselves as non-religious (data missing in five cases).

For measuring the level of work addiction risk, the Work Addiction Risk Test (WART; Robinson, 1999) was used. It consists of 25 items that are scored on a 4-point Likert scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.853), a high score meaning a higher probability that the individual is addicted to work. A sample item is "It is hard for me to relax when I'm not working".

God image was assessed with the Loving and Controlling God Scales (Benson, Spilka, 1973). The 10-item semantic differential scale measures two primary dimensions of God image, the Loving and the Controlling God image. Participants were asked to rate characteristics attributed to God on a bipolar scale ranging from 0 to 6. Both the Loving

God Scale ($M = 32.35$, $SD = 3.25$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.753$) and the Controlling God Scale ($M = 13.93$, $SD = 5.35$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .636$) consists of five pairs of adjectives (e.g., rejecting/accepting and demanding/not demanding, respectively).

To measure the attachment to God, the Attachment to God Inventory (AGI; Beck, McDonald, 2004) was used. This scale consists of 26 items and captures two dimensions of attachment to God: Avoidance of Intimacy with God (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.817$, $M = 41.30$, $SD = 13.52$; sample item: "I just don't feel a deep need to be close to God"), a high score meaning unwillingness to be emotionally close to God; and Anxiety about Abandonment (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.892$, $M = 38.16$, $SD = 16.81$; sample item: "I often worry about whether God is pleased with me"), a high score meaning high anxiety about potential abandonment by God and about one's lovability in God's eyes.

Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.899$, $M = 29.35$, $SD = 5.69$; sample item: "I feel that I have a number of good qualities").

RESULTS

Regarding the level of work addiction risk, no significant difference was found between men and women, or between Catholics and Protestants. There was no relationship between work addiction risk and age ($r = -0.037$).

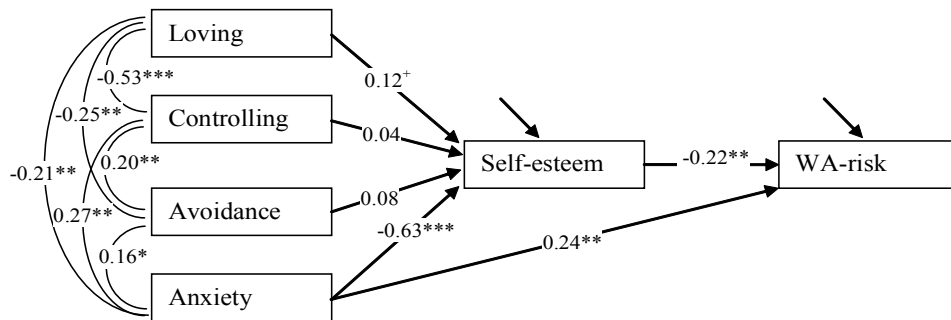
Significant correlation was found between work addiction risk and the controlling dimension of the God image ($r = 0.146$, $p < 0.05$), anxiety about abandonment ($r = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$), and self-esteem ($r = -0.364$, $p < 0.001$). Self-esteem had a significant positive correlation with the loving dimension of the God image ($p = 0.208$, $r < 0.001$) and a stronger, but negative, correlation with anxiety about abandonment ($p = -0.635$, $p < 0.001$; Table 1).

To test the proposed mediating model between the variables, path analysis (Statistica 8.0, StatSoft Inc., Tulsa, Oklahoma) was used. The model parameters were estimated with the help of the ML estimator. In the first step a full regression model was built with Loving God, Controlling God, Avoidance of Intimacy, and Anxiety about Abandonment as co-varying exogenous variables, with self-

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and zero-order Pearson correlations for variables in the study

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Loving	32.35	3.25	0.753					
2	Controlling	13.93	5.35	-0.528***	0.636				
3	Anxiety	41.30	13.52	-0.206**	0.269***	0.892			
4	Avoidance	38.16	16.81	-0.255***	0.204**	0.159*	0.817		
5	Self-esteem	29.35	5.69	0.208**	0.176*	-0.635***	-0.043	0.899	
6	WART (total)	54.98	9.84	-0.040	0.146*	0.371***	0.040	-0.364***	0.853

Note: Loving = Loving God; Controlling = Controlling God;
Anxiety = Anxiety about Abandonment; Avoidance = Avoidance of Intimacy;
WART = Work Addiction Risk Test
 $N = 215$; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; Cronbach's alphas in the diagonal



Note: + $p < 0.06$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1. Final path model

esteem as mediator, and work addiction risk as outcome variable. Error terms of the four religious measures were set to co-vary. During a stepwise procedure non-significant direct paths ($p < .05$) from the religious variables to WA-risk were removed. The final model indicated acceptable fit ($X^2(3) = 2.71$, $p = .44$, ns., $NFI = .990$, $CFI = 1.0$, $RMSEA < 0.001$, 95% CI = .000 – .111). This final model accounted for 16.5% of the variance in WA-risk (Figure 1).

Correlation was found between all four exogenous variables (Loving God was associated negatively with the rest of the variables, and correlation was positive between the other variables). Anxiety about Abandonment was in strong negative correlation with self-esteem ($\beta = -0.63$, $p < .001$), and there was also a direct positive path from Anxiety to WA-risk ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

Regarding the two measured aspects of the God image, the results only partially sup-

ported our expectations. The only way the Loving God image was linked with work addiction risk was through its weak negative contribution to self-esteem, which is in line with the observation of Koenig et al. (2001) that religion's influence on health is usually indirect, through some mediating factor like self-esteem. As opposed to that, the controlling God image was associated with work addiction risk directly, but not through self-esteem. The inconsistency behind these results might be due to the shortcomings of the God image measure: participants might tend to answer questions about God according to their conscious positive knowledge based on the teachings of the religious tradition. The low Cronbach's alpha of the scale might be the sign of this discrepancy between the conscious and unconscious images of God.

Avoidant attachment style in relation to God was not connected with work addiction risk in our study, whereas anxiety about abandonment by God showed a strong positive correlation with work addiction risk, and also

predicted it negatively through self-esteem. This means that individuals who tend to be anxious about the relationship with God (e.g., whether God loves them and accepts them), or about the possibility of losing the relationship with God, are more likely to become work addicts. One explanation of these results lies in the obsessive-compulsive, that is, anxiety-related nature of work addiction. Excessive religious activities often cover obsessive-compulsive problems (Koenig et al., 2001; Sperry, Shafranske, 2005), and occupation with one's work can serve the same anxiety-reducing purpose. Another possible explanation involves the "God demanding achievement", which according to Frielingsdorf (2004) belongs among the demonic God images. Work and achievement in this case can be regarded as tools for earning God's acceptance and love, and for securing the relationship with him. From an attachment theory point of view, this behavior corresponds to the preoccupied attachment style described by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), which is characterized by a negative working model of the self and positive expectations about the other. This could also explain why the Loving God image was linked to work addiction risk through self-esteem: individuals with preoccupied attachment style tend to have a constant need to please the other, God in this case, in order to save the relationship.

However, because of the cross-sectional design of the study, our data cannot provide us with evidence about causality. Another limitation of the study is that it considered work addiction as a uniform phenomenon, although the literature speaks about different types (e.g., Robinson, 2001). Thirdly, the sample was not suitable for testing denominational differences. Further

studies are needed to investigate these questions.

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OBRAZ BOHA A VZŤAHOVÁ VÄZBA K BOHU V SÚVISLOSTI S RIZIKOM PRACOVNEJ ZÁVISLOSTI

A. K é z d y, T. M a r t o s, M. R o b u

Súhrn: Cieľom štúdie bolo preskúmať, či niektoré aspekty obrazu Boha a charakteristiky vzťahovej väzby k Bohu súvisia s rizikom pracovnej závislosti. Výskumnú vzorku tvorilo 215 dospelých osôb z Maďarska (priemerný vek 37,9). Čo sa týka dvoch meraných aspektov obrazu Boha, obraz milujúceho Boha sa spájal s rizikom pracovnej závislosti prostredníctvom slabého negatívneho prínosu k sebaúcte, zatiaľ čo obraz ovládajúceho Boha len slabo priamo súvisel s rizikom pracovnej závislosti. Úzkosť z opustenia Bohom silno pozitívne korelovala s rizikom pracovnej závislosti a taktiež ju negatívne predikovala prostredníctvom sebaúcty. Výsledky naznačujú, že úzkostná vzťahová väzba k Bohu môže prispieť k riziku pracovnej závislosti.