

Formulation of the Divine Attachment Model as a Foundation for Tawhid Based Character Education: A Literature Analysis of the Hadith “*Ihfazhillaha Yahfazka*”

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to formulate a Divine Attachment model as a foundation for tawhid-based character education through a literature analysis of the Prophet’s hadith, “*Ihfazhillaha yahfazhka*” Guard Allah, and Allah will guard you. This research employs a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review method of scholarly articles published discussing character education, attachment theory, the psychology of religiosity, and the internalization of tawhid in Islamic education. The findings indicate that the hadith contains theological psychological principles concerning the affective and cognitive relationship between human beings and Allah, which cultivate God consciousness as the foundation of character. The Divine Attachment model is formulated through three primary dimensions: the dimension of tawhid awareness, the dimension of transcendental emotional attachment and the dimension of behavioral. This model integrates Bowlby’s attachment theory with the Islamic concepts of, *tawakkal*, and *taqwa*. The implications of this study emphasize that tawhid based character education cannot merely take the form of transmitting normative values; rather, it must construct a secure attachment secure divine attachment that nurtures moral integrity, psychological resilience, and consistency in moral conduct.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary discourse on character education increasingly acknowledges that the moral crisis observed in many societies cannot be reduced to a mere deficit of ethical knowledge. Rather, it reflects the fragility of the affective and spiritual foundations that sustain moral consistency when individuals encounter pressure, temptation, and uncertainty. The expanding body of literature on character education emphasizes that the cultivation of virtue is not confined to the cognitive capacity of knowing what is right but is more profoundly concerned with the enduring capacity to continue choosing what is right amid value conflicts, anxiety, and complex social dynamics. In this regard, character education demands a robust psychological foundation capable of explaining how moral

values are internalized into stable habits and ultimately integrated into personal identity (Metcalf & Moulin, 2022).

Without such a foundation, moral instruction risks remaining at the level of normative transmission, failing to transform the deeper structures of the self that regulate intention, emotion, and action. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, character *akhlaq* is not conceived as an autonomous ethical construct detached from faith rather, it is understood as the embodied manifestation of tawhid across the domains of cognition, affection, and behavior. In pedagogical terms, tawhid transcends abstract theological affirmation and operates as a comprehensive worldview that shapes one's understanding of the self, the purpose of existence, and the standards by which moral judgments are made.

Consequently, tawhid based character education necessitates an internal mechanism that brings awareness of Allah into daily consciousness *muraqabah*, fosters a sense of existential security capable of restraining destructive impulses, and cultivates consistent ethical obedience rooted in spiritual conviction (Agbaria & Succarie, 2024). Such an approach positions character not merely as behavioral compliance, but as a coherent integration of belief, emotion, and action grounded in Divine orientation. A Prophetic statement of central relevance in this context is the advice delivered to Ibn 'Abbas: "*Ihfazhillāha yahfazhka, ihfazhillāha tajidhu tujahaka*" ("Guard Allah, and Allah will guard you; guard Allah, and you will find Him before you").

At the normative level, this hadith articulates a reciprocal relational principle: safeguarding Divine commands and boundaries results in Divine protection and guidance. At a psychological level, however, this reciprocal structure may be interpreted through the lens of relational attachment, wherein the Divine is experienced as a transcendent source of security and moral orientation. Here, attachment theory formulated by John Bowlby offers an important epistemic framework for understanding how secure attachment shapes emotional regulation, resilience in the face of threat, and the development of prosocial behavior.

Secure attachment, in this sense, does not merely describe early childhood bonds, but provides a broader explanatory model for how relational security undergirds adaptive functioning across the lifespan. Contemporary findings demonstrate significant associations between attachment to God and mental health outcomes, adaptive coping strategies, and overall psychological well-being (Callender, 2022). Moreover, within Muslim populations, religious constructs such as *tawakkul* operate as cognitive affective mechanisms mediating the relationship between personality traits and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Gondal et al., 2024). Ritual practices such as *dhikr* and *istighfar*, when conceptualized as Islamic ritual-based interventions, have likewise shown measurable effects in alleviating depression and anxiety symptoms.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the internalization of religious belief can function not only as theological commitment but also as a psychologically protective system that enhances resilience and moral stability (Saged et al., 2022). Against this backdrop, the present study proposes that the hadith *Ihfazhillaha yahfazhka* may serve as a normative and theological foundation for formulating a Divine Attachment model within tawhid based character education.

Specifically, this research pursues three objectives, to synthesize scholarly findings concerning attachment to God, religious coping, and psychological resilience, to map the pedagogical relevance of character and religious education to the formation of virtue, to formulate an operational conceptual model of Divine Attachment applicable to tawhid-based character education. Through this integrative approach, the study seeks to bridge theological insight and contemporary psychological theory, thereby contributing a conceptually grounded and pedagogically relevant framework for strengthening the affective and spiritual foundations of moral development.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a thematic systematic literature review (SLR) design. The literature search focused on reputable international journal articles, using the keywords: attachment to God, religious coping, religiosity and resilience, prayer and mental health, Islamic intervention, character education, and religious education. The selection process was conducted in stages, identification of relevant articles, screening based on topic relevance, review of abstracts and key findings, and thematic synthesis to construct the model (Thohir, 2021). The synthesis was carried out in three stages, Thematic coding of article findings secure base safe haven coping self regulation resilience, virtue literacy teacher identity. Grouping themes into stable conceptual dimensions. Developing a conceptual model linked to the meaning structure of the hadith *Ihfazhillaha yahfazhka* as the primary normative source. Methodological note. The hadith is positioned as a primary religious source not an object of empirical verification, while journal literature serves as the basis for psychological pedagogical explanations that may be empirically tested in future research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Religion as an Attachment System: From Interpersonal to Transcendental Relations

Attachment theory originally explained the child caregiver bond as a biological psychological system for maintaining security. Contemporary developments suggest that this framework can also be applied to religiosity, as God is often perceived as a figure who provides protection, acceptance, and guidance (Cherniak et al 2021). In attachment language, a figure who guards and is present in times of threat functions as a safe haven, while a figure who provides security for growth functions as a secure base. Neuroscientific findings examining brain activity during Christian prayer and activation of attachment systems in interpersonal relationships suggest a potential convergence of neuropsychological mechanisms between praying and accessing attachment (Haverkamp et al., 2025).

Although situated in a Christian context, the theoretical implications are broader prayer may be understood as proximity seeking behavior toward a transcendent figure. Thus, *Ihfazhillaha* guard your relationship with Allah signifies not only normative obedience but also the maintenance of divine closeness and presence that supports self-regulation. The literature indicates that mindful religious practices are associated with psychological well being. A study among Muslim immigrant and refugee women in the United States found that mindful prayer functions as a vital coping strategy during social pressure, discrimination, and acculturative stress (Callender et al., 2022).

Theoretically, this reinforces the understanding that spiritual attachment does not arise automatically it must be cultivated through practices that bring Allah into conscious awareness. Furthermore, quantitative evidence demonstrates associations between belief salience, participation in religious activities, prayer frequency, and mental health among university students (Saleem et al., 2021). Belief salience the degree to which belief is present in daily consciousness resonates directly with the phrase *tajidhu tujahaka* you will find Him before you. In character education, this implies that making Allah present in consciousness is not supplementary but a mechanistic component that keeps moral values alive under pressure.

3.2. From Guarded by Allah to Existential Security Attachment Coping and Resilience

Many character education approaches remain at the cognitive level: recognizing values, understanding consequences, and practicing virtue. However, moral failure often arises not from ignorance of right and wrong, but from weak emotional resilience and low stress tolerance

in the face of fear and uncertainty. Here, the concept of being guarded by Allah may be interpreted as existential security a sense of safety that enables individuals to choose virtue without succumbing to destructive reactions. Research on religiosity and resilience shows that religious coping enhances well-being through emotional regulation mechanisms such as cognitive reappraisal and coping self-efficacy (Dolcos et al., 2021).

Individuals capable of constructively reinterpreting life events and believing in their coping capacity are more resistant to depression and anxiety. In tawhidic terminology, this may be understood as belief in divine wisdom *hikmah*, destiny *qadar*, and orientation toward Allah that stabilizes life interpretation. Within Muslim contexts, tawakkul receives empirical support as a mediator between personality traits and depression anxiety symptoms. (Gondal et al., 2024) show that tawakkul is not passive resignation, but trust in Allah's sufficiency that cultivates calmness and acceptance of outcomes.

This is highly relevant: tawhid-based character education does not eliminate effort *ikhthiar*, but reorganizes affect reducing moral neuroticism such as anxiety, envy, anger, and despair. Religious coping literature also highlights the distinction between positive and negative religious coping. A study among Palestinians during the pandemic found that positive religious coping was associated with better mental health indicators under heightened stress (Mahamid & Bdier, 2021). Conversely, certain coping strategies particularly negative aspects such as spiritual discontent or demonic attribution can worsen psychological dynamics.

Pedagogically, this warns that tawhid education must cultivate secure attachment, rather than intensifying divine struggles through pathologically fear-based concepts of God (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022). Cross group research found that insecure attachment to God is associated with spiritual conflict divine struggles and negative affect, ultimately relating to happiness and depression symptoms through complex pathways (Shoshan et al., 2024). This finding is crucial for character education design: an unintegrated concept of God emphasizing punishment without mercy and wisdom may foster insecure attachment and weaken moral stability.

3.3. Self Regulation as the Bridge From Spiritual Attachment to Character

From a moral psychology perspective, character cannot develop without self-regulation; the ability to manage impulses, delay gratification, regulate affect, and remain committed to values. A study among young Muslims in Lahore found that self-regulation mediates the relationship between religious coping and distress: positive coping strengthens self-regulation and reduces distress, whereas negative coping weakens self-regulation and increases distress (Fatima et al., 2022). Conceptually, this confirms that "guarding Allah" is not ritualism but a psycho-religious process shaping self-control.

Islamic tradition also provides a rich conceptual language for understanding character formation (Subandi et al., 2024). examined Al-Ghazali's concept of diseases of the spiritual heart and its relevance to modern mental disorder frameworks, showing that Islamic tradition offers reflective tools for diagnosing destructive character roots (envy, arrogance, ostentation, anger) as spiritual problems with psychological consequences. This opens integrative possibilities: tawhid-based character education can incorporate systematic moral-spiritual diagnostics rather than merely listing virtues.

Research among cancer patients in Pakistan further shows that Muslim religiosity correlates with reduced death anxiety through mediation by optimism and depression (Abbas et al., 2022). Religiosity thus functions not merely as social identity, but as a meaning-making system reshaping affective orientation. In character education, this is significant because many moral deviations stem from existential anxieties; fear of failure, poverty, or rejection. Secure

divine attachment can reduce existential anxiety and strengthen virtues requiring moral courage.

3.4. Character and Religious Education From Virtue Literacy to Relational Spirituality

Research in religious and character education emphasizes that religion's contribution to character is not automatic; it depends on whether religion is presented as relational experience rather than mere information or doctrine. (Metcalf, 2021) found that religious education teachers recognize its potential for character formation, yet institutional and school culture factors determine how effectively that potential is realized. Divine Attachment therefore requires a pedagogical ecosystem teachers, culture, and curriculum aligned to cultivate stable spiritual attachment experiences.

Fraser Pearce (2022) critiques vague definitions of spirituality and proposes a more accountable framework rooted in practices shaping relational orientation and life purpose. Divine Attachment may thus be understood as a tawhid-based form of spiritual education: positioning Allah as the central axis of value orientation shaping inner relationality, not merely identity. Here, Divine Attachment can be understood as a form of spiritual education rooted in tawhid: presenting Allah as the central orientation of values that shapes the inner relationship, rather than merely serving as an identity marker.

Virtue education scholarship also emphasizes the need to teach tolerance and virtues related to diversity of conscience (Van Fossen et al., 2022). In tawhid-based character education, tawhid should not justify exclusivism but serve as a source of moral wisdom fostering adab, justice, and respect for humanity as Allah's creation. Within Islamic education discourse, professional teacher identity and Islamic pedagogy are equally important. Research indicates that Islamic teacher education can enlighten and empower teachers toward faith-centered practice, providing teaching purpose beyond technical certification. Conceptual foundations of Islamic teacher education emphasize heart formation, purpose, and epistemology (Memon et al., 2024).

This aligns closely with the Divine Attachment model, which centers inner relationship with Allah in character formation. Agbaria, (2024) proposes an Islamic perspective on religious education emphasizing non dogmatic approaches that cultivate awareness of quality, intention, and divine presence in learning. This closely resonates with *tajidhu tujuhaka* and provides international academic legitimacy for positioning God-consciousness as an educational objective

DISCUSSION

Religion as an attachment system: from interpersonal relations to transcendental relations in developmental psychology, John Bowlby proposed that attachment constitutes a biopsychological system designed to maintain proximity between individuals and their caregivers as a primary source of security (Hidayah, 2020). This system enables individuals to obtain two fundamental functions: safe haven, which provides protection in times of threat or distress, and secure base, which offers a stable foundation from which individuals can confidently explore their environment. Within contemporary scholarship on religiosity, this theoretical framework has been expanded to explain how the relationship between humans and God can be conceptualized as a form of transcendental attachment that mirrors patterns found in interpersonal attachment.

This perspective aligns with the work of Lee A. Kirkpatrick, who developed the concept of attachment to God. According to this approach, religious individuals frequently perceive God as a figure who provides protection, unconditional acceptance, and moral guidance. Consequently, religiosity is not merely understood as a cognitive system of beliefs but also as an emotional

relationship that offers existential security (Khoirudin, 2020). Empirical findings by Michael Cherniak and colleagues indicate that perceiving God as a protective figure strengthens the functions of safe haven and secure base within a spiritual context. Empirical evidence from neuroscience further supports this approach. Studies examining brain activity during prayer reveal a convergence between neural networks involved in prayer and those activated in interpersonal attachment relationships.

These findings suggest that prayer may function as a form of proximity-seeking behavior, a psychological effort to approach and maintain closeness with an attachment figure. Within this theoretical framework, prayer in Islam can therefore be understood as a psychoreligious mechanism that sustains an individual's closeness to Allah, thereby reinforcing emotional regulation and moral stability (Kusmanto, 2021). Moreover, the psychology of religion literature demonstrates that the quality of religious practice carries important implications for psychological well being. Research on mindful prayer among Muslim immigrant women in the United States indicates that prayer practiced with reflective awareness functions as an effective coping strategy when confronting social discrimination and acculturative stress.

Reflective spiritual practices enable individuals to consciously experience the presence of God within their everyday psychological lives. In this context, the concept of belief salience the extent to which religious belief remains present in everyday consciousness emerges as an important variable in explaining the relationship between religiosity and mental health. Quantitative studies among university students demonstrate that belief salience, participation in religious activities, and frequency of prayer are positively correlated with indicators of mental well being (Mahzumi, 2025). These findings carry important pedagogical implications religion based character education should not be limited to the transmission of doctrinal knowledge but must also cultivate sustained spiritual awareness, ensuring that moral values remain active even under conditions of social and emotional pressure.

Being protected by god to existential security: attachment, coping, and resilience most approaches to character education emphasize cognitive dimensions, such as the understanding of moral values and the ethical consequences of human actions (Qodir, 2024). However, literature in moral psychology indicates that moral failure is often not caused by a lack of moral knowledge but rather by deficiencies in emotional regulation and low psychological resilience when individuals face life stressors. In this context, the religious notion of being protected by god may be interpreted as a form of existential security, a fundamental sense of safety that enables individuals to sustain their moral orientation amid uncertainty.

Research on religiosity and resilience demonstrates that religious coping contributes to psychological well being through emotional regulation mechanisms such as cognitive reappraisal and coping self efficacy. Individuals who interpret life events through a religious framework tend to reframe difficulties more constructively, thereby showing greater resistance to symptoms of depression and anxiety (Rahmaniah, 2025). In Islamic theology, this mechanism resonates with the concept of *tawakkul*, which refers to trusting in God after exerting maximal effort. Empirical findings also indicate that *tawakkul* can function as a mediator between personality characteristics and levels of depression and anxiety.

This suggests that *tawakkul* is not merely a passive attitude but rather a form of existential trust that fosters inner tranquility and acceptance of life outcomes. Within the framework of character education, this concept helps organize the affective dimension of individuals, thereby reducing destructive emotions such as excessive anxiety, envy, anger, and despair. Nevertheless, the psychology of religion literature also emphasizes the distinction between positive religious coping and negative religious coping (Rusli, 2025). Positive forms such as trust in divine mercy and the search for spiritual meaning are associated with better mental health outcomes.

In contrast, negative forms such as spiritual discontent or perceiving God primarily as a source of punishment, can exacerbate psychological distress. These findings highlight the importance of pedagogical approaches that emphasize a balanced understanding of divine mercy, wisdom, and justice within faith-based education. Cross-religious studies further reveal that patterns of insecure attachment to God are associated with divine struggles that may negatively affect psychological well-being. Consequently, theological perspectives that overemphasize divine punishment without integrating dimensions of compassion may inadvertently foster insecure forms of religious attachment. In designing tauhid-based character education, it is therefore essential to cultivate an integrative representation of God so that religiosity becomes a source of both moral and psychological stability.

Self regulation as a bridge from spiritual attachment to character formation in moral psychology and character education, the cultivation of virtue cannot be separated from self-regulation, defined as the capacity to control impulses, delay gratification, and maintain commitment to moral values. In the theory of self-control developed by Roy F. Baumeister, self regulation represents a central psychological mechanism that enables individuals to act consistently with moral standards. Empirical studies among young Muslim populations indicate that the relationship between religious coping and psychological distress is mediated by self-regulation. Positive religious coping strengthens self-regulatory capacity and reduces psychological distress, whereas negative religious coping tends to weaken self regulation.

These findings suggest that spiritual attachment to God can function as a psychological resource that strengthens self control. The Islamic intellectual tradition also offers a rich conceptual framework for understanding this dynamic. The thought of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali regarding *amrāḍ al-qalb* (diseases of the heart) explains that destructive tendencies such as envy (*ḥasad*), ostentation (*riya*), self-admiration (*ujb*), and uncontrolled anger originate from unhealthy spiritual conditions. This perspective indicates that moral problems are not merely behavioral but are deeply connected to inner spiritual states that require processes of *tazkiyat al nafs* (purification of the soul). Empirical studies on religiosity among cancer patients in Pakistan further demonstrate that religiosity can reduce death anxiety through the mediating roles of optimism and reduced depression. This suggests that religiosity functions as an existential meaning system that enables individuals to interpret life experiences in more constructive ways.

character education and religious education from virtue literacy to relational spirituality the literature on character education emphasizes that the contribution of religious education to character formation does not occur automatically. Its impact largely depends on how religion is presented within the learning process. When religion is treated merely as a collection of doctrines or normative information, its influence on character formation tends to remain limited. Contemporary approaches to spiritual education highlight the importance of relational spirituality, defined as religious experience that cultivates an inner relationship with God. Within this framework, religious education should incorporate reflective practices, spiritual experiences, and moral dialogue that enable students to internalize values on a personal level.

An important implication of this approach is the need for a pedagogical ecosystem that supports the development of spiritual attachment. Teachers, curricula, and school culture should function as environments that facilitate authentic religious experiences. Research on Islamic teacher education also indicates that the formation of faith-centered professional identity among teachers can provide deeper meaning to teaching practice. Furthermore, tauhid-based character education must also address the dimension of moral pluralism in contemporary societies. Modern virtue education emphasizes the importance of teaching tolerance and respect for differences in belief systems.

From an Islamic perspective, tawhīd is not only a theological foundation but also a source of moral wisdom that promotes justice, human dignity, and the cultivation of adab in social life. In conclusion, the Divine Attachment model may be understood as an integrative framework in character education that connects three primary dimensions spiritual attachment to God, self-regulation as a psychological mechanism of character formation, and pedagogical practices that present religious experience in a relational manner (Saputra, 2024). This approach opens opportunities for integrating modern psychology, Islamic spiritual traditions, and character education theory in developing a more holistic educational paradigm.

4. CONCLUSION

This discussion indicates that religiosity may be understood as a transcendental attachment system that functions psychologically in a manner analogous to interpersonal attachment relationships, as originally conceptualized in attachment theory by John Bowlby and further developed through the concept of attachment to God by Lee A. Kirkpatrick. Within this framework, the relationship between humans and God provides the functions of safe haven and secure base, offering a sense of existential security, strengthening emotional regulation, and supporting individuals' moral stability. Religious practices such as prayer, spiritual awareness, and the continual presence of belief in everyday life function as forms of proximity seeking behavior that maintain spiritual attachment while simultaneously serving as coping strategies that promote psychological well-being and resilience. Furthermore, healthy spiritual attachment contributes to character formation through the strengthening of self regulation, namely the individual's capacity to control impulses, regulate affect, and sustain commitment to moral values, as emphasized in the theory of self control developed by Roy F. Baumeister. This perspective also resonates with the Islamic ethical tradition that highlights the purification of the soul and the regulation of spiritual maladies of the heart, as extensively discussed by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. From this standpoint, religiosity should not be viewed merely as a normative identity but rather as a system of meaning and self regulation that shapes moral resilience and psychological well-being. Accordingly, tauhid based character education must move beyond purely cognitive approaches toward a model of relational spirituality that cultivates a secure spiritual attachment to God. Through such a mechanism, moral values can be internalized more deeply and maintained with greater stability, enabling individuals to uphold ethical commitments even when confronted with social pressure, uncertainty, and the complex challenges of life.

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