

Religiosity and Emotional Stability: A Comparative Study of Gender Groups

By

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Abstract:

Present study was aimed at examining the relationship between religiosity and emotional stability in the adults of Quetta city. The study also explored differences in the level of Religiosity and Emotional Stability across gender groups. Correlational research design was adopted to compare the levels of Religiosity and Emotional Stability of men and women in the sample. It was hypothesized that there will be a significant relationship between the variables and that women will be more religious and less emotionally stable as compared to men. Religiousness measure (Fayyaz, Kamal, & Ambreen, 2010) and adapted version of Neuroticism subscale of International Personality Item Pool (Mushtaq & Ambreen, 2018) was administered to compare the differences. A sample selected through convenience sampling including 80 participants (n=43 for men & n=37 for women) from literate population of Quetta city participated in the study. Results showed a significant ($p < .05$) relationship between Religiosity and Emotional Stability. Furthermore, non-significant differences were found in the levels Religiosity and Emotional Stability among gender groups.

Keywords: Religiosity, Emotional Stability, Neuroticism, Gender Differences, International Personality Item Pool

Introduction:

Religious affiliation is one of the major cornerstones of traditional monotheistic societies where religious principles are not only followed steadfastly; the overall religious affiliation of people within a society is applauded. Monotheism appears in various versions, predominantly Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This attachment to religion has varied in intensity over many periods of time. From staunch reverence of religious

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compliance to moderate religiosity and then to vicious hostility it continues to evolve. Social and behavioral scientist throughout the world have been interested in evaluating and measuring this evolution.

Although many studies have evaluated religiosity in a broader perspective covering all monotheistic beliefs, this study is particular to Islam. From an Islamic perspective faith cannot be calculated as all actions are rooted in intentions and there is no definite way of measuring intentions. But since Islam advocates freedom in religion (Qur'an 2:265) and religious practices are completely voluntary, practicing them can signify religious affiliation to a great extent. This study has been conducted within a Muslim population using a measure particularly designed at measuring Muslim religiosity. Within this context religiosity, does not equate faith or Eman. It only measures following the commandments particular to Islam.

While there are variety of ways in which levels of religiosity may vary among individuals, gender is one of the most prominent one. Multiple studies propose the hypotheses that women tend to be more religious than men (Miller & Hoffmann, 1995). Data from Pew Research Center reveal that Christian women globally appear to be more religious than men. Research proposes many reasons for this finding. For instance, women tend to be comparatively cautious and men, risk takers (Miller & Hoffmann, 1995). Interestingly, data from Pew Research Center also reveal that there is no significant difference in the religiosity of Muslim men and women. Firstly, this finding itself is intriguing and inspires further investigation. Secondly, religiosity has been known to counter negative personality traits like psychoticism (Francis & Katz, 2006) and induce resilience against various psychiatric disorders like major depression (Kasen, Wickramaratne, Gameroff, & Weissman, 2012). Moreover, it stimulates positive personality traits like conscientiousness (McCullough, Tsang, & Brion, 2003) agreeableness (Saroglou, 2010), subjective well-being and hope (Nell, Rothmann, & Nell, 2018). A meta-analysis even went as far as suggesting that conscientiousness and agreeableness predict religiosity (Saroglou, 2010), supporting the idea that not only does religiosity bring about decency, rather a decent disposition will result in an inclination towards religiosity. Given this interesting finding, many other variables associated with religiosity should follow the same pattern. This study particularly emphasizes and investigates the relationship between religiosity and emotional stability in men and women.

Emotional stability is an individual's tendency to remain calm under challenging life circumstances (Goldberg et al., 2006). It falls under the

neuroticism category of the five factors Model of personality and is in fact the polar opposite of the same. Individuals exhibiting high neuroticism will have low emotional stability and vice versa. It has also been found that individuals who are high on both religiosity and emotional stability were more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior and this in turn resulted in lower levels of workplace deviant behavior (Ahmad, Omar, Radzali, & Saidu, 2016). It is assumed that since Islam advocates predestination and trust in the power of Divine Being individuals with high religiosity will exhibit greater emotional stability in face of stressful life events. This relationship has been both supported (see for example Agrawal, 2015) and refuted (see for example Francis & Katz, 2006) in previous researches. But since there is a difference in the religious affiliation of the above-mentioned studies (one being conducted on Muslim population and the other on a Christian population in Israel), an attempt is being made to reinvestigate this issue further and to explore whether there really is a difference among the levels of Religiosity and Emotional Stability in gender groups.

Significance of the Study:

Studies from Pew Research Center reveal that there are differences in the levels of Religiosity in Christian men and women. But as far as the Muslim population is concerned, the difference is negligible. Firstly, this study will investigate whether or not there are differences in the levels of religiosity among gender groups. Secondly, this study will explore the levels of Emotional stability in the sample attempting to reveal if there are differences within Gender groups. Although Emotional Stability has widely been studied before, to our knowledge this construct has not been investigated along with religiosity within Baluchistan. This study will serve to fill this literature gap. Lastly, Baluchistan comprise mainly of tribal communities of various ethnicities converging and cohabiting in Quetta city. This study will be a fruitful addition to social psychological literature in how demographically diverse population report on being Religious and Emotionally Stable.

Hypotheses:

H1: There will be significant relationship between Religiosity and Emotional Stability.

H2: There will be gender differences in the levels of Religiosity and Emotional Stability.

Method:

For the sake of drawing comparisons among men and women cross sectional research design was adopted followed by correlational research method so that comparisons could be established.

Participants:

The research sample comprised of 80 participants ($n=43$ for men & $n=37$ for women) with qualification ranging from intermediate to M.Phil. level. The sample was recruited from colleges and universities of Quetta city following convenience sampling method.

Procedure:

Ethical considerations were taken into account by informing the participants about the purpose and scope of the research, ensuring confidentiality of their data and stating their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Moreover, signed consent was obtained from all before commencement of the research.

Research Instruments:

Religiousness measure of Fayyaz, Ambreen, and Kamal (2014) was used in this study. The scale has 17 items with four subscales namely Religious Involvement, Religious Influence in Daily Life, Religious Faith and Optimism. The second measure used was Neuroticism subscale from International Personality Item Pool within its Urdu adaptation (Mushtaq & Ambreen, 2018). This scale has 20 items. It should be noted that the scale is named Neuroticism, but it simultaneously measures Emotional Stability as both constructs are polar opposites. Respondents were requested to fill out the questionnaire comprising of the consent form, demographic sheet, Religiousness Measure and Neuroticism subscale.

Results:

First and foremost, scales were analyzed to check Cronbach's reliabilities. Religiousness measure exhibited reliability of .74. Subscales of this measure including religious involvement, religious involvement in daily life, religious faith, and optimism exhibited alpha reliability of .64,

.74, .37 and .35 respectively. Neuroticism subscale was found to have alpha reliability of .87.

Secondly, the demographic information of the sample was explored, details of which could be found in table 1.

Table 1
Detailed Demographics of the Study (N=80)

Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	43	53.8
	Female	37	46.3
Qualification	Intermediate	37	46.3
	Graduate	20	25
	Masters	9	11.3
	MPhil	14	17.5
Religion	Islam	80	100
Socioeconomic status	Upper class	3	3.8
	Middle class	73	91.3
	Lower class	4	5.0

The next step was to test the first hypothesis of regarding the relationship between Religiosity and Emotional Stability. For this purpose, Pearson's Product moment correlation was run. Details are shown in table 2.

Table 2
Inter Scale Correlations for Participants Score on Religiousness Measure-RM and Neuroticism/ Emotional Stability Subscale-N (N=80)

Scale	1	a	b	c	d	2
RM	-	.81**	.82**	.56**	.42**	-.26*
RI		-	.57**	.35**	.22*	-.31**
RIDF			-	.29**	.02	-.16
RF				-	.90	-.18
O					-	.08
N						-

Note. RM= Religiousness Measure; RI=Religious Involvement; RIDL=Religious Influence in Daily Life; RF=Religious Faith; O=Optimism; N=Neuroticism * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

A significant correlation of .26 ($p < .05$) was found between Religiosity and Emotional Stability supporting H1. Note that the table

indicates this relationship to be in the negative direction. As discussed earlier, the subscale measure Neuroticism on the high end and Emotional Stability on the low end. So, a positive correlation will signify a relationship with trait Neuroticism and a negative correlation with trait Emotional Stability. However, the strength of this relationship will remain constant. Further, significant correlation with Religious Involvement subscale is also indicated.

To test the second hypothesis regarding gender differences in Religiosity and Emotional Stability, independent samples t-test was run to explore differences in gender groups. See table 3 for details.

Table 3

Differences in Mean and Standard Deviation of Men and Women on Religiousness Measure and Neuroticism/Emotional Stability subscale (N = 80)

Scale	No. of items	Men (n=43)		Women (n=37)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
		M	SD	M	SD			UL	LL	
RM	17	57.1	7.2	58.3	6.9	-	.46	-	1.99	.17
						.74		4.36		
N	20	51.2	12.5	54.3	17.3	-	.35	-	3.53	.20
						.93		9.83		

Note. RM = Religiousness measure; N = Neuroticism Subscale

The result reveals non-significant differences between Religiousness Measure and Emotional Stability of men and women within the sample refuting the hypothesis (H2) that there will be gender differences in the levels of Religiosity and Emotional Stability of men and women. There is a small effect size for both variables (.17 and .20) showing that there is low generalizability of the result.

Discussion:

Two forces have reduced the focus of psychology on religion. First is the abandonment of soul as a focal point of investigation and second is the advent of atheism as a prominent school of thought. Though not in vogue, the contemporary literature views religiosity from many angles. Personality Psychology for instance, investigates the issue in the contexts of it having implications on mental health (Yoon, 2006), Cognitive

Psychology as having effects on analytical thinking (Jack, Friedman, Boyatzis, & Taylor, 2016) and so on.

Within societies where religion appear to hold a significant place, it may influence not only the livelihood but the personalities of the people as well. It therefore was a primary variable of the study. Emotional stability on the other hand has been studied in context with personality from quite some time now. To our knowledge religiousness has not been studied along with it but in one instance (Agrawal, 2015) and that too in India which leaves a gap in literature.

To our knowledge this study is one of its kind in the given population. Since religion is heavily relied upon in this population it requires to further explore this construct. If there is indeed an indication of religiosity correlating or even enhancing emotional stability it could prove to be a reasonable source of developing emotional stability in people lacking it. It could easily invoke a stable emotional development in youth as well as adults who struggle with poor emotional coping skills and even be used as an interventional program in extreme case scenarios.

Limitations and Suggestions:

Like all other studies there are limitations to this one as well. The sample size of the study is too small to generate significant generalizations. Further studies should be conducted to fill this gap and give a clearer indication of prevailing cause and effect. Another limitation is the possible social desirability effect in the responses to the religiousness measure. In the future if there is a research on the topic, there should be a scale or any other measure controlling the confounding effects of social desirability.

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