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An Exploratory Study of the Trait "Friendliness and Gregariousness" In the Religious Domain and their Relation to Human Well-being

Abstract

This research investigates the characteristics of "Friendliness and Gregariousness "in the context of religion and their complex relationships to the welfare of people. The study emphasizes how crucial friendliness and gregariousness are to promoting healthy social dynamics. The intricate ways in which these characteristics are expressed within religious frameworks are revealed by the qualitative content analysis. By analyzing how the religious emphasis on friendliness and gregariousness coincides with scientific evidence on the positive effects of social connectivity on mental and emotional health, the research bridges the gap between religious beliefs and contemporary psychology theories. The study aims to contribute significant new data to the growing corpus of knowledge regarding the connection between friendliness and well-being by employing an interdisciplinary approach. The purpose of the study is to identify timeless principles that may lead people in many cultural and religious contexts toward a more satisfying and harmonious existence by investigating the universality of these features across different religious traditions.

Keywords: Friendliness, Gregariousness, Religious Domain, Well-Being, Psychology.

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Abstract

This research investigates the characteristics of "Friendliness and Gregariousness "in the context of religion and their complex relationships to the welfare of people. The study emphasizes how crucial friendliness and gregariousness are to promoting healthy social dynamics. The intricate ways in which these characteristics are expressed within religious frameworks are revealed by the qualitative content analysis. By analyzing how the religious emphasis on friendliness and gregariousness coincides with scientific evidence on the positive effects of social connectivity on mental and emotional health, the research bridges the gap between religious beliefs and contemporary psychology theories. The study aims to contribute significant new data to the growing corpus of knowledge regarding the connection between friendliness and well-being by employing an interdisciplinary approach. The purpose of the study is to identify timeless principles that may lead people in many cultural and religious contexts toward a more satisfying and harmonious existence by investigating the universality of these features across different religious traditions.

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Introduction

A well-known personality attribute included in the commonly recognized "Five Factor model of personality" is extraversion. It has a lot to do with being happy with life. The term "extraversion" is a broad psychological characteristic that includes a number of more specialized attributes, such as assertiveness and friendliness. (R.E. Lucas, E. Diener, 2001).

Human social interaction naturally involves friendly and gregarious behaviours, which extroverts usually exhibit conspicuously. The tendency toward sociability, assertiveness, and positive emotionality is known as extraversion. (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 112). Gregariousness and friendliness stand out as being particularly important in determining how extroverted people interact with others. The degree to which people actively seek out and value social interactions is reflected in their friendliness, which is described as a warm and pleasant disposition toward others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extraverts are more likely to be friendly and enthusiastic participants in social activities. They also establish and sustain connections more easily (McCrae & Costa, 1987, p. 76). This inclination toward friendliness helps to build social networks that support one another and promote emotional health and a sense of belonging (Watson & Clark, 1997, p. 102).

Another aspect of extraversion is gregariousness, which is the propensity to seek out and relish other people's company dynamically and socially (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p. 56). Extraverts are frequently characterized as gregarious, socially conscious people who do well in social situations (McCrae & Costa, 1987, p. 89). Their inclination towards gregariousness contributes to their capacity to negotiate intricate social environments and form a variety of relationship networks, in addition to enriching their social experiences (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 128).

Most personality taxonomies regard extraversion to be a fundamental higher-order characteristic (Depue and Collins, 1999) that is reliably linked to subjective well-being, especially life satisfaction and good affect. A person's total quality of life is reflected in their state of well-being, which is dynamic and multifaceted. It includes social ties, a feeling of purpose, mental and emotional fortitude, and bodily well-being. A healthy lifestyle, wholesome relationships, and fulfilling activities are just a few of the components of life that must be balanced to achieve well-being.

The adjective "Extraversion" refers to positive emotions (Richard E Lucas, Le Kimdy, and S. Dyrenforth Portia, 2008, 388) and has a strong

relationship with a religious perspective (Malgortaza Szczecin, Blanka Sopi´nska and Zdzisław Kroplewski, 2019).

Fundamental religious beliefs and extraversion—the fun-loving, social, chatty, and Joiner traits- have a positive correlation (Gholamreza Khoynezhad, Ali Reza Rajaei, and Ahmad Sarvarazemy, 2012).

Literature Review

In an effort to comprehend religion more thoroughly, personality psychologists have examined the connection between personality traits and religion (Ashton & Lee, 2021). A person's feeling of inclusion within a religious community has a significant impact on their commitment to and convictions regarding their beliefs.

Action-oriented people are also more likely to be extroverted. One of the shortcomings of extroverts is their propensity to become excessively dependent on their surroundings. Extraverts discover that, like a kind of magnet, mental energy is drawn to them from their environment (Jung, 2017). If people do this too much, they could get lost in the surroundings. As a result, people are more easily convinced by others and lack the strength to stand by their own beliefs. This could result in weak faith that rapidly gives up in the face of adversity.

In light of the aforementioned study, 'Friendliness and Gregariousness' will be looked at passages from the Quran;

Friendliness and Gregariousness

Extraverts form friendships quickly. They seek for and foster intimate bonds. Friendliness and gregariousness usually go hand in hand. *A person who is "friendly" will typically be pleasant, helpful, kind, and unlikely to be aggressive or unfriendly toward others (Webster's Dictionary, s.v. "Friendly).* It indicates that the person is outgoing, cheerful, and friendly; they are also courteous, open, vulnerable, and sensitive.

Aristotle distinguished three kinds of friendships: those based on utility, pleasure, and virtue (Cooper, J. M, 1977). It is preferable to consider utility friendships as essentially facilitating people's ability to exchange beneficial outcomes with one another to accomplish

desired personal goals. Utility friendships help each friend to accomplish their objectives is of primary advantage. A friend could be physically strong, have very useful skills, or be relatively more popular. Since the relationship is based on mutual benefit from the past, it will likewise fail if that advantage is no longer provided. Utility-based friendships reflect the widespread belief that the purpose of friendship is to benefit the friends, which is supported by theories of relationships such as social exchange and interdependence (Huston, T. L., & Burgess, R. L., 1979).

The primary objective of the second type of friendship, referred to as pleasure friendships, is to provide happiness or joy (Cooper, 1977). For as long as the friends can appreciate one another, their friendship will endure. The psychological study focuses on how friendship increases happiness and pleasurable emotions (Wrzus, C., Wagner, J., & Neyer, F. J., 2012). Higher well-being is correlated with the interconnectedness of horizontal family relationships and friendships. For example, a study found that friends are important to older people since they are associated with transient joys from socializing and engaging in sports, hobbies, or cultural activities (Larson, Mannell, & Zuzanek, 1986).

Aristotle believed that the best sort of friendship was virtue friendship, which has three distinct qualities in addition to its members being content and supportive of one another. The reason they are friends is that they value each other's virtuous qualities (Aristotle, 1999). Positive characteristics (virtues like honesty, sympathy, generosity, fairness, and courage) are what pull friends together and keep them together. Virtuous friends prioritize shared goals and interests over utility and pleasure, valuing each other's well-being. Aristotle suggests that virtue friends wish each other the best, valuing mutual benefits over individual advantages. They willingly enhance their well-being, highlighting the importance of friendship in virtuous relations (Walker, Curren, & Jones, 2016).

Friendly or Mawadda in the Quran

"Friendly" designates a person who possesses this quality. The Quranic phrase "mawadda" denotes a loving and trustworthy connection, just as the English word "friendship" does today (The Encyclopedia of Quran, s.v., "Friends and Friendship").

Kindness, affection, and compassion

Kindness, Affection, and compassion are the attributes that draw an adversary to the friendship circle. *"...Do not take My enemies - who are your enemies as well as your friends, showing them affection..."* (Al-Mumtahanah:1)

Aristotle did acknowledge that disparities may lead to friendships. "But there is also another kind of friendship, which is friendship between unequal parties; examples of these are friendships between father and son and between older and younger individuals, friendships between husband and wife, and friendships between rulers and subjects in general." (http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.8.viii.html). Such friendships are uncommon because, as Aristotle says, unequal cannot give and receive the same thing from one another.

Being able to cultivate a pleasant attitude that makes you affable, approachable, and hostile-free is what it means to be a friend. The warmth and affection that exists between spouses, or the spirit of friendship, are mentioned in the Quran. *"...He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy..."* (Ar-Rûm: 21)

In addition to being kind and free from hostility, a friendly person values other people highly. He respects other people's thoughts, opinions, and beliefs without being condescending. To exist, humans must cooperate. Humans can form relationships at birth and maintain them throughout their lifetimes. One of these interactions that individuals value is friendship. Human nature does not support seclusion and strained connections.

Friends have a big influence on what a person does in his life, which makes them an essential part of

life. Friendship is considered a basic human need and one of the most important relationships in the human experience (R. F Baumeister and M. R. Leary, 1995).

Helping each other

Everyone feels happy when they are around someone they enjoy being with, but when they are by themselves, despair sets in. Warm, dependable, and positive sentiments toward one another characterize a relationship between two or more people. Friends help one another out when things go tough and value their relationship.

God promised to defend Muslims and assist the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) against his foe in the battle being a friend of the prophet. The creation of a societal framework based on Islamic values and precepts would be guaranteed, as Allah fostered harmony among Believers. (https://islamicstudies.info/literature/Interpersonal_Relations.htm).

"And if they intend to deceive you, then verily, Allah is All-Sufficient for you. He is the One Who has supported you with His Help and with the believers" (Al-Anfâl:62).

A vital aspect of life is serving others; it improves your happiness and feeling of purpose while having a positive impact on the environment. Friendships relieve pain and adverse situations and help one regain confidence in oneself (Greco 2012). Some people can "get ahead" thanks to their friendship networks, but others may be kept in violent or hazardous places or find life tough if they don't have the "correct" connections. However, friendships can increase a person's feeling of stability in their identity and provide emotional intimacy within mutually trusted and supportive relationships, which can lead to happy outcomes for each person. Positive self-development as well as improved interpersonal recognition may result from this (Greco, Silvana & Holmes, Mary & McKenzie, Jordan, 2015).

Convergent Thinking

Being approachable or friendly entails being there for everyone and in any circumstance, no matter how challenging. Extraverted folks don't choose friends at random. Allah is the giver of all of our friends, family, and coworkers. Relationships possess a higher degree of wisdom. Extroverted friendships are characterized by a stronger bond, greater self-disclosure, less insecurity, and more effective problem-solving (Robert E. Wilson, Kelci Harris, and Simine Vazire, 2015).

One of life's greatest pleasures is friendship, which offers emotional security, intellectual stimulation, fulfilment, and pleasure. In the following senses, friendship is an all-encompassing relationship. At first, a person can have friendships with several different people at the same time. It is therefore conceivable to have a large social circle. Additionally, friendships and other social bonds—like those between parents and children, employers and employees, and students and teachers—can exist between two people at the same time (Uri D. Leibowitz, 2018).

Friendship is a sign of collective unity;

"The believers, men, and women are Auliya' (helpers, supporters, friends, protectors) of one another..." (At-Taubah:71) As people who hold similar ideas are inherently amicable to one another, the Quran states that friendships should be founded on love and piety.

Because the sole purpose of their friendship is Allah. It never changes and remains the same whether it is open or private. They return their affection and friendship. Quran affirms at another place "*The Most Gracious endow with love*" (Maryam:96) . It states that people who have faith and constantly act morally are granted fellowship that becomes firmly implanted in their hearts by Allah. (Uri D. Leibowitz,2018).

It is evident from the above ayah that those who believe and follow their word are on the straight path and are shielded from Allah's wrath. Muslims form friendships with righteous individuals who uphold all Islamic law and obey the commandments of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

In the same vein, oppressors are close friends; *"... for, verily, such evildoers are but friends and protectors of one another..."* (Al-Jâthiyah:19)

The friendliest person on earth, the Prophet (S.A.W.) greeted everyone with a grin and a firm handshake, especially his friends and acquaintances. It

was his habit to greet every person he came across on the road with a greeting. In actuality, the ability to accomplish is a gift from Allah that enhances the beauty and grace of life. It makes spending time with someone more enjoyable and joyful. Therefore, make friends and be friends in return. *(Encyclopedia of Seerah*, s.v. "The friendly. ")

Prophet (S.A.W) said; "A believer is friendly (and intimate). And, no good in him is not friendly and is not loved (as a friend by others)" (Baihaqi, Sh'ab-ul-Iman, vol.6, 271. Hadith 8121). People naturally desire to spend time with each other and relish one other's companionship. A sociable person feels like they belong. (https://dictionary.apa.org/gregariousness)

The significance of sociability and friendship is emphasized throughout the Quran. In every relationship, companionship is essential. "Primarily, man is a social animal by nature," according to Aristotle. He is either a beast or a god as he could not survive without society. For human survival and well-being, he must reside in society. In nearly every facet of his existence, he perceives the demands of society. He feels physically and mentally obligated to be a part of society (Anayet Hossain and Md. Korban Ali, 2014).

Social stability—achieved through marriage, family, and friendships—improves health and reduces early mortality, suicide, and depressive symptoms. People have an inbuilt need to feel linked to others and a sense of belonging, which drives them to want social relationships and societal acceptance (Utz, Psychology from the Islamic perspective, 151).

In connection with friendliness, there comes gregariousness. The word "gregariousness" comes from the Latin word grex, which means "herd" or "flock." Grex is typically produced by gregarious creatures. Generally, Humans form groups and stay near to one other. David Hume is credited with saying that the hardest punishment is to be by you (Hume, 1978, p. 363).

"Gregarious" describes the situation in which someone is encircled by other people. Thus, gregariousness is dependent upon both; the characteristics of the outside world, or the environment, and the mental states of agents, or their attitudes (Jonas Faria Costa,2022, 438). The creation of a community founded on love and fraternity is mandated by the Quran, and it is even encouraged. Examples abound throughout the scripture. Humanity's natural aspirations are love, brotherhood, and a universal and general purpose. The Quran states that socializing is a fundamental aspect of human life. Surah al-Hujurât teaches; *"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes..."*(Al-Hujurât: 13)

Allah created tribes and families so that people could recognize one another. The entire human race is one big family. All nations, different-sized tribes, and ethnic groups must be divided into minor groups to facilitate simpler identification (Shafi, Ma'arif-ul-Quran, vol. 8, 143).

A person's identity is shaped by their nation or tribe, and this is a necessary aspect of social existence. For a variety of reasons, people instinctively associate with tribes and groups. Quran explains why humans are bound to one another by marriage and birth bonds, as the cornerstone of creation's design. People can be identified from each other based on the relations they have. Quran states; *"And it is He Who has created man from water, and has appointed for him kindred by blood and kindred by marriage..."*(Al-Furqân:54)

Humans naturally identify with their family, clan, country, region, or even favourite band. Because it is ingrained in our DNA. Though it is generally known that man has never been able to dwell in solitude despite all the splendour of Heaven, the beginning of human civilization on Earth began when Hawa (A.S.) was betrothed to Adam (A.S.) for company. *"He created you (all) from a single person (Adam); then made from him his wife [Hawwa' (Eve)]..."* (Az-Zumar:6)

Also;

"... Who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women..." (An-Nisâ':1)

Allah has endowed man with a multitude of varied spiritual, physical, and intellectual traits and skills. Rarely, he has bestowed upon someone remarkable skill or supremacy in particular domains. Nowadays, everyone on the planet is inherently socially inclined and reliant on others. Thus, the groundwork for social and communal life has been established. As said before, the aforementioned ayah indicates that social existence is a natural one rather than just a conventional, selected, or obsessive one. *"And keep yourself (O Muḥmmmad S.A.W) patiently with those who call on their Lord (i.e. your companions who remember their Lord with glorification, praising in prayers, etc., and other righteous deeds, etc.) morning and afternoon, seeking His Face..."* (Al-Kahf: 28)

Throughout his conversations with his companions, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) emphasized the value of strong camaraderie. He emphasized the value of surrounding yourself with kind people. Someone who shares your values or views is what defines a good friend or partner. However, because of variations in opinions, lives, and interests, the friendship is likely to be weak and untrustworthy if the fundamental values are not shared. All believers—past, present, and future—are united by this essential fact, which forms a single stream of thinking.

Muḥmmmad (S.A.W) frequently mentioned in his teachings "The similitude of believers regarding mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever "(Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, The Book of Virtue, Enjoining Good Manners, and Joining of the Ties of Kinship, Chapter: The Mutual Mercy, Compassion And Support Of The Believers, Hadith 2586 a).

Finding and keeping good company is a duty that believers have to Allah, our community, and ourselves. Prophet (S.A.W.) was tasked with founding Islam, yet he was not alone in this task. Instead, Allah selected for him companions such as Hadrat Abu Bakr (R.A.), who went with him and conveyed the Message until it reached its destination. Prophet (S.A.W) said, "If I were to choose a bosom friend I would have chosen Abu Bakr (R.A) as my bosom friend, but he is my brother and my companion and Allah, the Exalted and Glorious. Has taken your brother and companion (meaning Prophet himself) as a friend." (Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, The Book of the Merits of the Companions, Chapter: The Virtues Of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (RA), Hadith no 2383 a.)

The word "friendship" refers to a highly regarded state that Muhammad (S.A.W) maintained for his connection with Allah. However, should he have to select one person to be his closest friend, Abu Bakr (R.A.) would be his first pick. Gregariousness is characterized as a personality feature that includes a desire to fit in with social groupings and an inclination toward group activities and cooperation. Groups help us meet our need for belonging, establish our sense of self and social identity, learn and understand through social comparison, and accomplish things we might not have been able to do alone.

Social Connections and Psychological Well-Being

People need company and social engagement during their lives, from early childhood to old age. Friendship is one important way that these interact. An individual cannot exist as a person without a relationship. Communities are the norm for humans because of their social nature. It is only via social interaction that human capacities such as thinking, questioning, learning, laughing, and functioning occur. If a person doesn't communicate with others and lives alone, they cannot be considered a normal human being.

A pleasant psychological and emotional condition is referred to as mental well-being, and it denotes the ability of an individual to perform in a productive and satisfying way on both a cognitive and emotional level. The concept of well-being has multiple dimensions (Seligman, 2012) that entail more than simply feeling content or in a good mood.

Several studies demonstrate the beneficial impact of friendship on an individual's psychological health. Consequently, strengthening social ties has a big impact on improving wellbeing. They improve our quality of life and happiness. According to R.F.

Baumeister's (2013) research, partnerships that fulfil our needs bring us happiness. George Vaillant has studied the keys to a happy life in great detail. He said, "The only thing that matters in life is your relationships with other people."(Vaillant George E, 2012). Our longevity and physical well-being are also improved by having strong, intimate relationships. Baumeister (1995) those with strong social support networks had less stress and anxiety, maintained their health, and lived longer. Throughout life, friends are a vital source of constructive socializing (Hartup & Stevens, 1997) and the notion that social support lessens the lifetime psychological impacts of stress exposure is a common way to interpret the impact of social ties on well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Maintaining healthy friendships is crucial for an individual's psychosocial well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In a study that examined several friendships at once, best friends were found to be the primary source of happiness when compared to close friends (Demir et al., 2007). Some traits of friendship, like self-validation and companionship (Demir et al., 2007), and contentment (Diener & Seligman, 2002) were discovered to be linked to happiness as well. Likewise, there was a favourable correlation between psychological well-being and perceived friend attentiveness (Taşfiliz et al., 2020) and happiness (Demir & Davidson, 2013). Researchers looked into the origins of social assistance and how it differs from other forms of help in terms of improving elderly people's mental health. Support from one's spouse, for instance, has a bigger impact on reducing negative affect, but friendship has a greater impact on enhancing positive affect (Li, H., Ji, Y., & Chen, T, 2014).

Understanding how friendliness and gregariousness manifest in extroverted individuals is crucial for comprehending the intricacies of human social interaction. This study focuses on the psychological components of extraversion in order to shed light on how these traits impact the formation and maintenance of social interactions. We can learn about the factors influencing social surroundings and improving people's well-being in general by analyzing the relationship between personality and social conduct.

Analysis and Conclusion

It becomes evident that friendships have a profound and intricate impact on mental health. Friends' emotional support functions as a buffer against life's difficulties and a source of strength when things go tough (Cohen, 2004). This network of support can be especially important while going through big life changes like changing careers, and relationships, or going through personal difficulties.

Furthermore, friendships' reciprocal character promotes a feeling of connection and belonging. Joy and fulfilment are derived from meaningful conversations, experience sharing, and achievement celebrations with friends. According to Reis et al. (2010), these constructive contacts not only improve mood but also add to the general pleasant effect linked to mental health. The emotional tapestry that is created by friends laughing together, understanding one another, and encouraging one another brightens people's lives.

Beyond an individual's well-being, friendships play a vital role in fostering resilience within the larger community. Robust social networks, frequently fostered by friendships, can radiate outward, fostering a sense of social cohesiveness and communal well-being (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Mental health results are often better in communities where people feel supported and connected.

It's critical to recognize the value of friendships. Better relationships marked by genuineness, trust, and respect for one another have been linked to improved mental health outcomes. A person's sense of security and well-being are greatly influenced by the quality and genuineness of their friendships, not just the quantity of them. It becomes clear that friendships are an investment that pays off for the rest of one's life when one realizes their importance in the quest for mental health. One cannot stress the value of developing and maintaining deep relationships throughout one's life. Strong social ties are even more important to preserve as people get older because they offer companionship, direction, and support at different phases of life.

To sum up, friendship is essential to mental health. Friendships have a profound and wide-ranging impact on everything from a person's resiliency to the well-being of their community, making the development of positive social interactions a crucial component of a happy and balanced existence. The timeless significance of friendships serves as a reminder to prioritize and appreciate these connections for the benefit of mental health and the well-being of society at large, especially as we negotiate the complexities of today's world.

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