

Religious Orientation, Spirituality, and Life Satisfaction: A Gendered Perspective

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Abstract

In recent times, religiosity and spirituality have received much attention towards mental health, but very few investigations worked on their role on life satisfaction within the gender perspective. The present study, however, investigates the relationships between religiosity, spirituality, and life satisfaction among individuals residing in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Pakistan, with special reference to gender. For this purpose, a sample of 150 adults (71 men and 79 women) were selected by convenient sampling technique and was evaluated using validated versions of three scales: Religious Orientation Scale (ROS), Spirituality Scale (SS), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS). Results indicate that religiosity and spirituality have a significant positive correlation with life satisfaction. Results of linear regression showed that religiosity and spirituality significantly predict life satisfaction. Women reported more religious orientation and spirituality as compared to men in the sample studied. The study is useful for both men and women, highlighting the importance of one's orientation towards religion.

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Introduction

Religiosity and spirituality are essential elements of individual growth and social development in religious communities globally. Religion, religiosity, and spirituality have multiple fluctuating definitions. The term religion and spirituality give overlapping meanings ([Hill & Pargament, 2003](#); [Zinnbauer et al., 1997](#)). William James (1902), a psychologist, states religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude.” [Delener \(1990\)](#) defined religiosity as “the degree to which beliefs in specific religious values and ideals are held and practised by an individual.” Kaiser (2000) [Kaiser](#) discusses it as “a specific set of based values and practices, normally shared by way of a community or group.” [Canda and Furman \(2010\)](#) reflect on religiosity as “an institutionalized pattern of values, beliefs, symbols, behaviors, and experiences that involves spirituality, a community of adherents,

transmission of traditions over time, and community support functions that are related to spirituality.” In contemporary American society, many people connect religion to religious institutions and leaders. In contrast, for some people, spirituality is the human dimension of beliefs, experience, and actions for providing meaning and purpose to everyday life ([Rambo and Haar Faris, 2012](#)). [Pollack \(2003\)](#) sees religiosity as an understated picture of positive aspects of religious activity.

Spirituality was identified as a significant element of well-being in the 70s ([Dierendonck, 2012](#)). Generally, the term “spirituality” is difficult to define ([Koenig, 2009](#)) due to its different meanings for different people ([Egan et al., 2011](#)) and multiple usages in religion and other contexts ([Khanna and Greyson, 2014](#)). The term, in religion, refers to “the more intrinsic aspect of religious life”; however, in the general context, it

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refers to “the aspects of personal life, specific streams of belief and practice in particular traditions” (Underwood, 2006). Koenig et al. (2009) denote spirituality as “a personal exploration of core questions about life, meaning and transcendent forces, which may (or may not) lead to a commitment to specific religious beliefs and practices.” The word “spirituality” can become so vague and ultimately meaningless when taken out of the religious context (Underwood, 2006). The term increasingly refers to religious experience rather than personal or subjective (Hill & Pargament, 2008). For instance, “spirituality is an inner attitude towards God, the divine, higher reasons, or principles, while religiosity is an outer institution and/or practices” (Rowold, 2011). Spirituality holds the position of the heart and soul in religion (Pargament, 1999). A comprehensive operational definition of “spirituality” may include beliefs, practices, and other factors (Underwood, 2006).

Religion and spirituality are interrelated constructs (Hill et al., 2000). Spilka (1993) categorizes spirituality into God-oriented, World-oriented, and Humanistic, or People-oriented. Religiousness/ religiosity and spirituality are intertwined inherently (Hill et al., 2000). Pargament (1999) argues that religion develops from a broad construct, and spirituality evolves from individual expression. Hill et al. (2000) state religiosity as “the collective and institutionalized expressions of faith, while spirituality is individualized and independent forms of devotion.” Rowold (2011) argues that religiosity is an outer attitude based on institutions and/or practices, while spirituality is an inner attitude. Kor et al. (2019) suggest that religiousness requires affiliation to a religious denomination, specific religious beliefs, and practices, while spirituality does not include this, yet both are highly correlated terms. Religion and spirituality are the phenomena relating to socio-psychological, cognitive, emotional, and personality domains of humankind (Hill et al., 2000). Religion is considered a vehicle through which spirituality is expressed (Keller, 2016). Despite the commonalities and differences, religiousness/religiosity and spirituality are relatively highly correlated, which brings satisfaction in one’s life (Kor et al., 2019).

Life satisfaction is a standard evaluation of an individual’s emotions and attitudes. Telfer (1980) formulates the theory of life satisfaction and defines happiness as a state of an

individual’s whole pleasure. Shin and Johnson (1978) discuss it as “a measure of an individual’s quality of life and its preferences”. Elkins et al. (1988) describe it as “having a dedication to the actualization of high-quality potential in all aspects of existence, which incorporates realizing that spiritual values provide extra delight than materialists and spirituality is imperative with one’s courting with self and all else.” Diener et al., (1985) states that “life attainment is a complete evaluation of consciousness and temperaments about one’s life at a specific stage with duration varying from negative to affirmative.” In Pakistan, the majority of people believe in religiosity and spirituality. Being a religious and spiritual individual, people do proper checks and get satisfaction by doing religious and spiritual activities; the inner self of an individual become satisfied. Religiosity is characterized by grace, love, and adequate entertainment for lifestyles.

Religion and Gender

The relationship between gender and religion has been explained in broad terms and is interpreted in analytical and descriptive research in various ways. The analysis of religion has been categorized into three dimensions; micro, meso and macro (see also Leszczyńska 2016). Studies that particularly talk about individual experiences in religious orders (on the micro-level) focus on the institutional (Meso level) or structural and cultural contexts (macro level). Distinctively, these three levels are analytical in nature, albeit entangled and dynamic in social realism. Focus on the individual dimension comprises an integral part of studies on the relations between gender and religion. Here, the differences between women’s and men’s religiosity and religious identity draw the most attention. Researchers mostly use constructivist heuristic and essentialists’ strategy to conceptualize these differences (Francis, 1997). As per the essentialists (particularly, gender orientation theories) viewpoint, the differences between the religiosity of women and men are large because of biological sex characteristics. The religiosity of women is expressed in terms of high involvement in religious practices and their connection with God (Younas & Kamal, 202). On the other hand, men’s low level of religiosity reflects their “natural” wisdom and rationality. In these analyses, gender is interpreted as

characteristic of an individual rather than as an element of social structure or institutions. The constructivist tradition, especially structural location theories and gender role socialization theories, seeks the causes of differences in religiosity between women and men in social conditions and cultural experiences. The former theories view different patterns of socialization of women and men, which are responsible for creating women's inclination towards community, irrationality, and emotionality. Consequently, this makes women more "prone" to being religious. In the latter group of theories of structural location, women's roles and positions in the family, and particularly their involvement in care practices, serve as a useful explanation for their high religiosity.

Literature Review

To date, there is limited fragmented literature and empirical research examining religiosity and spirituality as predictors of happiness, well-being, and life satisfaction in Pakistan. Recent studies explored the potential role of spirituality for a socio-emotional adjustment ([Kor et al., 2019](#)). [Abbas et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated that religions are positively correlated with life satisfaction in a sample of 200 females in District Sialkot, Pakistan. [Abidi and Majeed \(2019\)](#) found in a study that spirituality intrinsically matters in producing happiness and well-being. [Mahmood et al. \(2017\)](#) examined a remarkable relationship between religious adherence and life satisfaction in adults of different areas of Multan. [Bukhari et al. \(2017\)](#) investigated that religiosity positively associated with psychological well-being. [Yeniaras and Akarsu \(2016\)](#) examined a positive linear association between religiosity and life satisfaction. Hafeez and Rafique (2013) found in a sample of 60 females that spirituality and religiosity are predictors of psychological well-being in the residents of old homes. [Gull and Dawood \(2013\)](#) investigated that religiosity positively predicts life satisfaction. [Ngamaba and Soni \(2017\)](#) founded a positive correlation between religion/spirituality and subjective well-being based on the findings from the world value survey from 1981 to 2014.

Previously, investigations explored the association of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity with life satisfaction (Agha babaei and Blachnio 2014; Agha babaei 2014; [Sillick and Cathcart 2013](#); [Ghorbani et al. 2010](#)). [Dierendonck \(2012\)](#)

recognized spirituality as an important factor for basic psychological needs. Ismail and Desmukh (2012) explored a positive correlation between religiosity, life satisfaction, and well-being, whilst a negative correlation between religiosity, loneliness, and anxiety in Pakistani Muslims. [Abdel-Khalek \(2010\)](#) explored significant relationships between religiosity, happiness, and life satisfaction. [Okulicz-Kozaryn \(2010\)](#) examined 79 nations in a World Values Survey and found a bimodal correlation, either satisfied or dissatisfied, between religiosity and life satisfaction. [Clark and Lelkes \(2009\)](#) examined in EU Social Survey and analyzed 9,000 people from 26 European nations and determined that religiosity increases lifestyles. [Krause \(2008\)](#) observed that church-based friendship and life satisfaction are positively related. Religious delight can protect people from stressors in their everyday lives ([Bierman, 2006](#)). [Suhail and Chaudry \(2004\)](#) explored, regular with previous worldwide reports, that the wide variety of happy human beings exceeds individuals who are unhappy and Eastern people are more satisfied and gladder as humans from many Western countries. They discovered spiritual and religious associations as predictors of higher satisfaction and subjective well-being, among other predictors.

[Harris \(2002\)](#), in a meta-analysis, distinguished that religiosity positively associated with psychological well-being. [Koenig et al. \(1993\)](#) examined a substantial association between religiosity and mental well-being. [Christopher et al. \(1989\)](#), in a study, established that religiosity, both private and public, is associated with life satisfaction. Spirituality is more of a man or woman exercise and has to do with having an experience of peace and motive. People considered spirituality a remedial way to cure their illness and pains ([DeLaune & Ladner, 2006](#)). Religious welfare grounds the character to have integrated distinctiveness, pride, happiness, affection, admiration, positive viewpoints, internal concord, will power and way in life ([Freeman, 2004](#)). Spirituality enlightens the coronary heart and contemplations with genuine God-insight ([Zinnbauer et al. 1999](#)). [Bergan and McConatha \(2000\)](#) explored that religious affiliation strongly promotes life satisfaction.

[Younas, Muqtaadir, and Khan \(2018\)](#) found a positive relationship between religious orientation and optimism, but the study was

conducted with two religious groups, i.e., Muslims and Christians. Moreover, [Younas et al. \(2020\)](#) worked on Piri-Muridi and found that people gain spirituality, life satisfaction, and otherworldly gains through Pirs (spiritual healers). The literature lacks a clear understanding of the role of religiosity and spirituality as predictors of life satisfaction in one's life. Furthermore, gender has always been neglected mostly with reference to religious variables within the Pakistani context.

Research Objectives

Owing to the scarcity of research within the socio-psychological milieu of Pakistan, our study aims to investigate religiosity, spirituality, and life satisfaction in adults. Specifically, the present study emphasizes the objectives:

- 1) To determine the role of religiosity and spirituality as predictors of life satisfaction.
- 2) To determine the gender differences across religiosity, spirituality, and life satisfaction.

Research Design and Methods

Population Sample

This study is based on a cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study included 150 adults. The sample consisted of 71 men and 79 women respondents. The sample was taken using a convenient sampling technique from a community residing in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Data Collection Tools

The following scales were used in the study:

Religious Orientation Scale

For measuring the religious orientation of the participants, the validated version of the Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised Religious Orientation Scale ([Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989](#)) was used. The scale consists of 14 items and has 3 sub-scales, including intrinsic orientation measured by 8 items and extrinsic personal and extrinsic social, religious orientation, which are measured by 3 items, respectively. The reliability estimate for the intrinsic scale is .83. The reliability estimate for Ep (Revised) and Ep/Es (Revised) are .57, .58, and .65, respectively. The Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised Religious Orientation Scale is a

valid instrument to access the religiosity of adults ([Salsman & Carlson, 2005](#)). Although Cronbach of .57 and .65 is deemed too low reliability is dependent upon the intrinsic characteristics of the sample, sample size, and a number of items.

Spirituality

For measuring the spirituality of the participants, the Spiritual Transcendence Scale ([Piedmont, 1999](#)) was used. The scale consists of 24 items and has 3 sub-scales, including prayer fulfilment, universality, and connectedness. Scale possesses good internal consistency for the three domains with Cronbach alphas of .65, .85, and .85 for the connectedness, universality, and prayer achievement sub-scales, respectively. All the items of both scales are positively worded. There are no cutoff scores on two scales; therefore, high scores on sub-scales indicate high religiosity and spirituality, and low scores on sub-scales indicate low religiosity and spirituality. Both scales are based totally on 5-factor Likert kind response pattern. The response categories covered 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for impartial, 4 for agree, and 5 for strongly agree.

Life Satisfaction

For measuring the life satisfaction of the participants, satisfaction with the assessment scale was used ([Diener et al. 1985](#)). The life satisfaction scale is a five-item scale that evaluates the pleasure of life. For each assessment, there is a scoring algorithm leading to one of three acuity range: Low, Moderate, or high the response classes blanketed 1 for strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, three slightly disagree, 4 for neither agree nor disagree, 5 for slightly agree, 6 for agree, 7 for strongly agree.

Procedure

For the current study, the participants were informed about the purpose, nature, and importance of the research, and written informed consent was taken before administering the scales. The participants were given the questionnaire. About 20 to 30 minutes were taken by respondents to complete the questionnaires.

Results

Based on the questionnaire adopted, Table 1 shows the psychometric properties of variables.

The result indicates that all scales have a reliability coefficient of greater than .70, which shows greater internal consistency. The values of

skewness and kurtosis for all variables are less than 1, which shows that data is normally distributed.

Table 1. Range of Psychometric Properties of Variables

Variables	N	M	SD	A	Potential	Actual	Skewness	Kurtosis
Religious orientation	150	49.76	6.034	.72	1-70	36-69	.18	.43
Spirituality	150	69.67	6.637	.80	24-120	53-87	.19	.21
Life satisfaction	150	23.95	5.490	.70	5-35	9-35	-.47	-.33

Relationship between Religious Orientation, Spirituality, and Life Satisfaction

In order to determine the relationship between the study variables, we conducted correlation

analysis to gauge the positive links between the variables.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Religious Orientation, Spirituality and Life Satisfaction

Variables	1	2	3
Religious Orientation	-	.43***	.24***
Spirituality		-	.23***
Life Satisfaction			-

*** $p < .001$

Table 2 shows the result of the Pearson correlation. The result display that religiosity has significant tremendous correlation with spirituality $r(148) = .43, p < .001$ and lifestyles

pleasure $r(148) = .24, p < .001$. Spirituality has significant fine correlation with life satisfaction $r(148) = .23, p < .001$.

Table 3. Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Effect of Religious Orientation and Spirituality on Life Satisfaction Among Adults

95% CI			
Variables	B	LL	UL
Constant	13.03***	38.28	54.49
Religious orientation	.23***	.31	.63
R ²	.058		
F	9.13***		

95% C			
Variables	B	LL	UL
Constant	10.68***	1.531	19.835
Spirituality	.19***	.060	.321
R ²	.053		
F	8.28***		

*** $p < .001$

Table 3 shows the linear regression analysis and its effects on religious orientation and spirituality. The table shows that life satisfaction predicts religious orientation with a variance of 5.8%. The regression equation is found to be $F(1, 149) = 9.13, p < .000$. Life satisfaction increased

to 23% for each score of religiosity. Linear regression evaluation is also computed to predict life satisfaction from spirituality. A significant regression equation is found $F(1, 149) = 8.28, p < .000$, with a variance of 5.3%. Life satisfaction increased .19 for each score of spirituality

Table 4. Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Values for Men and Women on Religious Orientation and Spirituality

Variables	Men = 71		Women = 79		t(148)	p	LL	UL	Cohen's
	M	SD	M	SD					
Religious orientation	48.34	6.13	51.04	5.68	6.03	.006	-4.60	-.79	-0.45
Spirituality	67.85	6.54	69.85	6.31	6.63	.001	-5.48	-1.39	0.31

Table 4 displays mean standard deviation and t- values for men and women on religious orientation. Findings indicate significant mean difference in religiosity with $t(148) = 6.03, p < .05$. Results show that Women ($M = 51.04, SD = 5.68$) significantly scored higher as compared to men ($M = 48.34, SD = 6.13$). Findings indicate significant mean difference across spirituality with $t(148) = 6.63, p < .05$. Mean differences of women ($M = 69.85, SD = 6.31$) reveal that they score higher as compared to men ($M = 67.85, SD = 6.54$).

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate religious orientation, spirituality, and life satisfaction among adults of Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhawa with reference to gender. The reliability of the scales was ensured, and the internal consistency of the scales was confirmed through reliability analysis. The values of skewness and kurtosis indicate that data is normally distributed.

The research findings of this study demonstrate that there exists a relationship between religious orientation, spirituality, and life satisfaction (see Table 2). Within the previous investigations, [Choen \(2002\)](#) examined the connection between religiosity and spirituality on life satisfaction in 163 catholic and protestant young people elderly 17 to 23. The spirituality self-raking item was the highest or second-highest correlation with life satisfaction. However, among the additional dimensions of coping, support, identity, doctrinal knowledge, practice analysis, only spirituality was a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

The first objective of the study was to determine the role of religious orientation and spirituality significantly as predictors of life satisfaction as per the findings of this study. The present results are much like the prior research and studies (see Table 3). For instance, Previous research findings predict the positive role of religiosity and spirituality for life satisfaction and well-being ([Abbas et al., 2018](#); [Mahmood et al.,](#)

[2017](#); [Bukhari et al., 2017](#); [Ngamaba and Soni, 2017](#); [Aghababaei and Blachnio 2014](#); [Aghababaei 2014](#); [Sillick and Cathcart 2013](#); [Gull and Dawood, 2013](#); [Hafeez and Rafique, 2013](#); [Ismail and Desmukh, 2012](#); [Ghorbani et al., 2010](#)). Therefore, in the light of this study and previous studies, it can be concluded that religiosity can be used to ensure life satisfaction in Pakistani society.

The second objective was: To determine the gender differences across religious orientation, spirituality, and life satisfaction. The findings revealed that women showed a higher score on religiosity and spirituality measures than men (see table 4). Gender contrasts in religious matters were examined in a national and longitudinal example of 680 understudies. Females had been observed to be more religious when contrasted with male ([Koenig, 2009](#)). It is prescribed that university girls, to an additional amount than university guys, “encounter a vigorous religious, social perspective to their religious beliefs” that is, they appreciate the everyday association with God using petition, are looking for a way from religious counsellors or educating while at the same time adapting to private issues, sense sure that God is a blessing and dynamic of their lives, get comfort and insurance from confidence, and express sentiments of commitment to and love for God ([Buchko, 2004](#)).

Conclusion and Research Implications

The findings of the present study demonstrate that religious orientation and spirituality have a significant positive association with life satisfaction. Linear regression analysis indicates that life satisfaction is significantly predicted by religiosity and spirituality. Women were found considerably more religious and spiritual as compared to men in this investigation. To sum up, religiosity and spirituality lead to higher levels of life satisfaction in Pakistani Muslim society. The nature of this study is descriptive; hence it was conducted without including the

exploratory goals. In the future, it might be interesting to work on qualitative studies on these variables keeping in view the in-depth exploration and inhibited beliefs of people. Further, in order to increase the generalizability, the sample size should be increased, and other provinces of Pakistan should also be involved so that comparisons could also be drawn.

Additionally, it is worthy of mentioning that the state religion of Pakistan is Islam, and the present study is conducted keeping in view the Muslims' life satisfaction. For Muslims, the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are divine sources of guidance for all spheres of human life ([Tahir & Zubairi, 2019](#)). Generally, Muslims emphasize religious affiliation and

spiritual association for promoting their happiness, enjoyment, and life satisfaction. The Quran clarifies that religiosity and spirituality promote life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Quran: 23:1-11, 91:9, 87-14; [Pickthall, 1999](#)). This understanding of the Islamic concept of religiosity and spirituality necessitates reflecting upon the Muslim community concerning its relationship with life satisfaction, particularly in Pakistan. Hence, Future studies may work on the Islamic perspective to explore these constructs. Furthermore, this will contribute to the body of literature, and mental health workers in Pakistan may help the Muslim community keep in mind the religious affiliation of Muslims.

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