

The Relationship between Personality Dimensions and Religious Orientation

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Abstract. Aim: The aim of the present study was to determine the relationship between personality, according to Eysenck's theory, and different aspects of religious orientation. Methods: To do so, a short form of Eysenck's personality questionnaire was administered to 80 randomly chosen subjects (40 men and 40 women). To determine various aspects of religious orientation, an author-made questionnaire was used. Such scale measures 4 different religious orientations including religiosity, religious disorganization, hedonism and religious pretentiousness. Results: The results of the present study showed that there was a significant difference between men and women in the subscales of neuroticism, psychoticism and religious disorganization. Also, an inverse relationship between religious orientation, psychoticism and neuroticism was observed. Furthermore, our results showed demographic variables as predictive variables, along with neuroticism and psychoticism, did not predict religious orientation. Regression analysis indicated that psychoticism and neuroticism were negatively related to religious orientation regardless of the presence of demographic variables. Conclusion: It seems that religiosity basically has a negative relation with psychoticism and neuroticism, and demographics variable do not play a mediating role in this equation.

Keywords: Personality; Religious Orientation; Neuroticism; Psychoticism; Religious Pretentiousness; Religious Disorganization

1. Introduction

Although the relationship between personality traits and religiosity has been examined by many studies its exact nature has not been fully understood and requires further examination. For example, it has been shown that there is a negative relationship between psychoticism [1] and religiosity [2]; nevertheless, there is no clear evidence confirming such relationship [3; 4 and 5].

Two distinct types of religious orientation have been reported [2]. According to these orientations religion can have an intrinsic orientation which emphasizes a personal religion. Also, it can sometimes emphasize on membership in a powerful group providing security, obtaining social status as well as being defined as a defensive mechanism. In this case, religion can have an extrinsic orientation [2; 6 and 7]. While Eysenck's description in the relationship between psychoticism and religiosity is more significant in relation to extraversion and neuroticism; the majority of studies performed using religious orientation scale [2] has failed to provide evidence verifying a significant relationship between low scores in psychoticism and intrinsic or extrinsic orientation [8]. Yet, some studies show a negative relationship between psychoticism and intrinsic orientation towards religion [9]. Even in these studies no significant relationship between extrinsic orientation and neuroticism has been reported.

In explaining these inconsistencies, it has been asserted that most of the studies which do not show a negative relation between psychoticism and religious orientation are do carried out on student samples [5]. Also, it has been shown that university students, in comparison with others, are less likely to maintain religious views [3]. There is evidence showing that the results of measurements performed on intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation in non-religious societies lack validity [10; 3 and 11]. As such, there is no clear and correct construct of religious orientation among these samples.

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Given the aforementioned evidence, it seems that measurement errors can explain the inconsistencies between personalities and religious orientation [11]. Therefore, the elimination of such errors could clarify the relationship between religious orientation and personality dimensions proposed by Eysenk. Thus, in order to eliminate measurement errors, an Age-Universal (I-E) [12] scale was used [3]. This scale has been adopted from religious orientation [2] and provides a refined version of intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation which is believed to have been used among both, religious and non-religious, samples [3; 11]. So, it suggests that in order to determine the relationship between religious orientation and personality dimensions in mixed samples, such scale can be used [11]

On the other hand, there is evidence that age can play a role in the relationship between personality and religious orientation) [5]. It is believed that neuroticism and psychoticism decrease with an increase in age [1]. Also, it has been shown that intrinsic religious orientation is higher in old people than in young ones [13]. Consequently, age can play an effective role in decreasing psychoticism and increasing intrinsic religious orientation [5]. Specifically, demographic variables such as age and gender have been reported to have no significant relationship between intrinsic religious orientation and neuroticism, psychoticism and extraversion [5]. Although in this study, there was a negative relationship between religion and psychoticism; however, by controlling the age variable, such relationship would no longer exist.

Altogether, findings with the new and revised scale have produced different results and have been successful in shedding light on the relationship between religious orientation and personality dimensions [3]. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to determine the relationship between religion and different dimensions of personality by using a different tool in an Islamic society.

2. Methodology

Sample. Eighty adult Iranian Muslims aged from 50-82 years old ($M=58.78$; $SD=7.14$) were randomly selected from the city of Qom of whom 40 were women and 40 were men.

Questionnaires. To evaluate religious orientation, a religious orientation scale [14] was used. Such scale evaluates individuals' religious orientations towards him/her, others and the universe. This scale consists of 4 subscales:

- The first subscale consists of phrases which, directly or indirectly, assess deep relationship with God; relationship with people according to religious teachings; adoption of behaviors as recommended by religious teachings; and afterlife this subscale consisted of 28 items;
- The second subscale determines disorganization which consists of 19 items which determines reluctance, doubtfulness, life dissatisfaction and confusion;
- The third subscale evaluates inflexible religious beliefs and behaviors and consists of 9 items;
- The fourth subscale consists of 8 items and measures general disbelief in religion, personal interpretations of religious teachings and hedonism.

The validity and reliability of this scale has already been established (REF). Specifically, its validity has been acquired by two different ways; namely, by scales (convergence validity) and by making a distinction between religious and non-religious groups (divergence validity). Also, the reliability of this scale has been assessed through a number of ways one of which is through internal consistency. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha for the first, second, third and fourth subscale are 0.93, 0.86, 0.79 and 0.57 respectively. Such results, except for the fourth subscale which is relatively high, are considered very high for other 3 subscales. Also, the results yielded through split-half method is $r=0.88$ and $P<0.000$. This scale not only enables us to obtain a score for each subscale for every individual but can yield an overall score.

For scoring this scale, a method was designed to convert raw scores to standard scores which are calculated according to differences in the scores of subjects in age and gender in each subscale and overall scale.

To assess various dimensions of personality, the short version of Eysenk's Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R) was used which measures three dimensions of neuroticism, introversion/extroversion and psychoticism. Lying is also measured by this questionnaire. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire have been assessed in men and women [15]. Specifically, they have reported the abovementioned measures

in subscales of Psychoticism (0.62, 0.61), Extraversion (0.88, 0.84), Neuroticism (0.84, 0.80) and Lying (0.77, 0.73).

3. Results

The results of this study are organized in three sections. In the first section, the statistical information regarding differences in personality and religious orientation with regard to gender are reported. In the second section, the relationship between personality dimensions and religious orientation are analyzed. Finally, in the third section, the role of demographic variables and religious orientation in predicting each one of personality variables is addressed.

The average and standard deviation of men and women are illustrated separately in Table 1. Also, the *t* value for personality dimensions and religious orientation are calculated.

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of women in psychoticism, neuroticism and lying is higher but in extroversion is lower than men. However, in these differences, the scores for men and women in psychoticism and neuroticism is significantly different from one another. Also, in terms of religious orientation there were differences among men and women such that the scores in men's religious orientation was higher than women and the scores in disorganization was higher in women than men. Despite these differences, the only significant difference between men and women was observed in religious disorganization.

3.1. Correlation between Religiosity and Personality.

The results of Pearson's correlation are illustrated in Table 2. In this Table 4 dimensions of personality are correlated with 4 dimensions of religious orientation.

As shown in Table 2, religious orientation is significantly related to neuroticism and psychoticism in a negative manner. However, religious disorganization was significantly related with 3 dimensions of personality.

Specifically, religious disorientation had the highest positive correlation with neuroticism and psychoticism, respectively.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation and *t* Values for both Genders

	Men(n=40)		Women (n=40)		<i>t</i> -value
	Mean	<i>S</i>	Mean	<i>S</i>	
<i>Psychoticism</i>	4.49	2.67	5.95	2.61	2.48**
<i>Neuroticism</i>	11.33	4.53	13.61	3.60	2.49**
<i>Lying</i>	12.74	4.19	13.24	3.26	0.59
<i>Extroversion</i>	12.38	3.75	11.98	3.60	-0.49
<i>Religious Orientation</i>	131.62	9.29	130.2	11.5	-0.57
<i>Disorganization</i>	46.92	13.0	53.76	15.4	2.13*
<i>Religious Valuation</i>	33.67	5.45	34.00	6.82	0.24
<i>Hedonism</i>	20.54	4.59	20.68	4.33	0.14

* $p < 0/05$ for two tailed test

** $p < 0/01$ for two tailed test

There was no significant correlation between religious disorganization and extraversion. Whereas religious pretentiousness was significantly correlated with lying, it had no significant relation with psychoticism. Also, hedonism had no significant correlation with any of the personality dimensions.

3.2. Predictors of Religious Orientation

When personality and demographic variables were considered as predictor and religious orientation was considered as criterion, the ANOVA analysis showed a significant model ($F(5,74)$) $P < 0/000$). However, in regression coefficient, none of the variables of age, gender and education were predictors of religious orientation. However, two dimensions of personality; e.g., neuroticism and psychoticism had an inverse relationship with religious orientation; i.e., a decrease in psychoticism results in an increase in religious

orientation. Specifically, psychoticism ($\beta=-0.48$; $P<0.000$) and neuroticism ($\beta=-0.31$; $P<0.003$) had the highest weight of prediction, respectively.

4. Discussion

According to our results, there was a significant relationship between personality dimensions and religious orientation. Religious orientation and religious disorganization has the most significant negative and positive correlation with psychoticism, respectively; while religious orientation and religious pretentiousness were negatively correlated with psychoticism.

In terms of lying, religious pretentiousness was the only dimension that positively correlated with it. Extroversion was not related with any other aspects of religious orientation.

The results of our study indicated that religious orientation in both, men and women, is the same. This finding is inconsistent with some findings [16; 17] showed that there were gender differences in relation to religiosity; but were consistent with another [9]. Furthermore, the present results confirmed the findings of another study [5] which emphasized

Table 2. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Different Variables

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Psychoticism</i> 1.0							
<i>Neuroticism</i> 0.08	1.0						
<i>Lying</i> 0.01	0.15	1					
<i>Extroversion</i> -0.022	-0.03	-	1				
<i>Religious</i> <i>Orientation</i> 0.46**	-	0.19	-	1			
<i>Disorganization</i> 0.34**	0.29**	-	-	-	1		
<i>Religious</i> <i>Valuation</i> -0.21*	0.62**	0.06	0.13	0.40**	-	1	
<i>Hedonism</i> 0.16	-0.26**	0.26*	0.02	0.66**	-	0.31**	1
	0.02	-	0.18	-0.22	0.16	-	0.19

* $p<0/05$ for two tailed test

** $p<0/01$ for two tailed test

The need to take into account demographic variables when studying the relationship between religion and personality; particularly, points out to the gender differences in some aspects of religious orientation and personality. Also, in contrast to the findings of another study [5], entering demographic variables into regression analysis, does not cause any changes in relationship between personality and religion.

Additionally, with regards to negative relation between psychoticism and intrinsic religious orientation, our results are consistent with those of another study [11] but are inconsistent with those of other studies [8; 18] with regard to lack of correlation between psychoticism and religious orientation. The present study clearly shows a negative relation between religion and psychoticism.

As can be seen, there are some discrepancies in the results of a number of studies. There could be many reasons underlying such discrepancies. First, such differences could be due to the presence of variables which mediate the relationship between religiosity and personality (mediating variables) and ignoring them could be the root of such differences in results. Secondly, the use of inappropriate measuring tools to measure the variance for the sample in which the measuring tool was used could contribute to inconsistencies in results [5]. The concerns about student sample are further evidence to this conclusion [11]. Thirdly, given the diversity of religious behaviors and the complexity of religious structures, the use of a single questionnaire can potentially contribute to obtaining different results. Hence, when studying the relationship between different dimensions of personality and religion one needs to use questionnaires that encompass a broader spectrum of religious aspects.

5. References

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