

Religious orientation, self-esteem and happiness among undergraduate students

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The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between religious orientation, happiness and self esteem as well as to find out the significant predictors of happiness. The sample consisted of eighty undergraduate students of University of Delhi from four religious communities. For data collection Religious Orientation Scale (Gupta & Mishra, 2007), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002) and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967) were used. Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis. Results showed high intrinsic religious orientation, high level of happiness and average level of self esteem in the present sample. Significant positive correlations were found between intrinsic religious orientation and happiness, intrinsic religious orientation and self-esteem, and self-esteem and happiness. Extrinsic religious orientation was found to be negatively correlated to happiness and self esteem. Intrinsic religious orientation and self esteem emerged as significant predictors of happiness.

Keywords: religious orientation, self esteem, happiness

India is the birthplace of many religions. Religion has a pervasive influence on a person's life since it affects every aspect of life, from daily chores to larger issues in education and politics. In this way religion plays a crucial role in one's life. It affects how an individual perceives and values himself as well his level of happiness.

Religion and religiosity

The word religion classically denotes the relationship of human and the Divine. It is an ideology, meaning 'that part of the culture which is actively concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of beliefs and values' (Geertz, 1964).

Religiosity refers to the numerous aspects of religious activity and belief. It is the degree to which one believes in and is involved in religion. Practices based upon religious beliefs include prayers, assemblies, ceremonies, religious functions, codes for behavior to ensure consistency with the set of beliefs as well as maintenance and study of scriptures and texts held as sacred.

James (1902), said to be the founder of the study of religion, distinguished between Institutional religion and Personal religion. While Institutional religion refers to the religious group or organization, Personal religion, in which the individual has mystical experiences, can be experienced regardless of the culture. Freud (1961) in his book 'The Future of an Illusion' spoke of religion as an illusion. He proposed that religion is a fantasy structure from which man must be set free. Freud viewed that the concept of God is a version of the father image, while religious belief is infantile and neurotic. On the other hand, Jung (1969) expressed a positive appreciation of religious symbolism.

Religious orientation

There has been a lot of confusion regarding how to study and classify religious commitment. A solution to this confusion came from Allport's work on religion. In his classical book 'The Individual and

His Religion', Allport (1950) made a distinction between Mature religion and Immature religion. Mature religious sentiment is characterized by a person whose approach to religion is dynamic and open-minded. In contrast, Immature religion is self-serving and represents the negative stereotypes that people hold about religion. More recently, his distinction has been embodied in the terms "intrinsic religion" and "extrinsic religion". This has generated a great deal of empirical research. This distinction pertains to the different means, ends, and functions of people's religious beliefs and practices.

Religious Orientation is defined as the extent to which a person lives out his/her religious beliefs (Allport & Ross, 1967). The 'extrinsic religious orientation' is basically utilitarian and describes those who use their religion as a means of obtaining status, security, self justification, and sociability and the reasons for being religious are usually external to the person. In intrinsic religious orientation, the reasons for being religious are mostly within the person, religious faith is internalized and religion is considered as an end in itself. The intrinsic orientation describes people who have a genuine devout faith, who live their religion and embrace its fundamental teachings.

A third form of religious orientation refers to treatment of religion as an open-ended search (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993). It pertains to a willingness to view religious doubts in a positive manner, acceptance that religious orientation can change, and existential complexity, the belief that one's religious beliefs should be shaped from personal crises experienced in one's life. Batson et al., (1993) refer to extrinsic, intrinsic and quest respectively as religion-as-means, religion-as-end and religion-as-quest.

Happiness

Philosophers and religious thinkers often define happiness in terms of living a good life, or flourishing. Aristotle (2004) stated that, "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." Since then happiness has been understood in many ways. Hills and Argyle (2002) described happiness to be a multidimensional entity consisting of emotional and cognitive

components. Argyle and Crossland (1987) suggest that happiness comprises of three components: the frequency and degree of positive affect or joy, the average level of satisfaction over a period, and the absence of negative feelings. Cohen (2002) suggests that happiness is a constructive notion and is essential in upholding a healthy life style. In his book *Authentic Happiness*, Seligman (2002) describes happiness as consisting of "positive emotions" and "positive activities".

Theories of happiness have been divided into three types-need/goal satisfaction theories, process/ activity theories and genetic/ personality predisposition theories (Diener et al., 2002).

The need/goal satisfaction theories suggest that reduction of tension or satisfaction of needs lead to happiness. Csikzentmihalyi (1990) examined the process/activity conceptualization of happiness and proposed that people who experience flow in daily life tend to be very happy. The genetic and personality predisposition theories of happiness (Diener & Larsen, 1984; Watson, 2000) view happiness as stable, while the need/goal satisfaction theories and process/activity category view it as changing with life conditions. Costa and McCrae (1988) found that happiness changed little over a six year period, thereby substantiating the personality-based or biologically determined theories of happiness. Lucas and Fujita (2000) showed that extraversion and neuroticism, two of the big five factors of personality, were closely linked to happiness. The evolutionary perspective (Grinde, 2002) offers an alternative approach to understanding happiness. This approach tries to understand how to exploit the capacities of the brain in the best ways possible.

Diener (1999) considers well being to be the subjective evaluation of one's current status in the world. He uses the term subjective well being as a synonym of happiness. This subjective approach to happiness assumes that people from many cultures are comfortable in focusing on individualistic assessments of their affects and satisfaction and that people will be forthright in such personal analyses (Diener et al., 2002).

Modern western views of happiness have focused primarily on a post-materialistic view of happiness that emphasizes pleasure, satisfaction and life meaning (Diener et al. 2002). Seligman (2002) suggests that a pleasant and meaningful life can be built on the happiness that results from using one's psychological strengths. Lyubomirsky, Sheldon and Schkade (2005) propose that "a person's happiness level is governed by three major factors: a genetically determined set point for happiness, life circumstances and happiness relevant activities and practices". Based on their research they demonstrated that genetics accounts for 50% of population variance for happiness, whereas life circumstances (both good and bad) and intentional activity (attempts at healthy living and positive change) account for 10% and 40% of the population variance for happiness, respectively.

Apart from the important factors which affect happiness like personality traits (Diener et al., 1999); cultural factors, human relationships; exercise (Argyle, 2001; Sarafino, 2002); education level (Diener et al., 1999) etc, religion or religious orientation has been emerging as one of the important factors contributing to happiness.

Religious orientation and happiness

Religion is almost universally regarded as contributing to happiness. Psychologists consider that there are various ways in which religion benefits both physical and psychological well being. It encourages

healthy lifestyles like abstinence from tobacco and alcohol, provides networks for social support and encourages an optimistic outlook on life. Prayer and meditation also help to enhance physiological functioning. According to Moberg (1979), happiness is greater and psychological stress is lower for those who attend religious services regularly.

There has been renewed interest in examining the relationship between religion and various positive individual traits (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Positive association between happiness and religiosity has been demonstrated by many researchers (Francis & Lester, 1997; Francis & Robbins, 2000; Francis et al., 2003; French & Joseph, 1999; Robbins & Francis, 1996).

Researches suggest that people's religious orientation is an important variable in the relationship between religion and wellbeing and particularly regarding mental health (Batson et al., 1993, Worthington et al, 1996). A higher intrinsic orientation is generally associated with positive outcomes. For example, a recent study found positive association between intrinsic religiousness and life satisfaction, but no association between extrinsic religiousness and life satisfaction (Salsman, Brown, Bretching, & Carlson, 2005). People with an intrinsic orientation were found to be more optimistic in outlook and enjoyed greater social support from others, compared to people with a more extrinsic orientation. Other studies suggest that people who have both a flexible orientation toward their religion (high quest orientation) and strong religious commitment (high intrinsic orientation) have better physical health and adjustment to negative life events (McIntosh & Spilka, 1990).

A positive attitude toward Christianity was found positively associated with intrinsic religiosity and negatively with both extrinsic religiosity and quest religiosity in a study on 244 churchgoers by Francis and Orchard (1999). Intrinsic religiosity has been related to several positive outcomes including better self-reported health, decreased anger, hostility and social isolation along with increased self-esteem (Donahue, 1985; Masters & Bergin, 1992; McIntosh & Spilka, 1990; Maltby & Day, 2000; Laurencelle, Abell & Schwartz, 2002; Acklin, Brown & Mauger, 1983). Higher intrinsic orientation scores and positive religious coping were found to be significantly associated with higher scores on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire in a study of UK adults by Lewis, Maltby and Day (2005).

On the other hand, extrinsic orientation has been related to neutral and negative health indexes like depression, anxiety, identity diffusion, irrational thought and failure to volunteer to help (Baston, Olesen & Weeks, 1989; Swanson & Byrd, 1998; Bergin, Masters & Richards, 1987; Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996). The persons having intrinsic orientation are more likely to have a greater sense of responsibility and greater internal control. They are more self-motivated and do better in their studies. By contrast, persons having extrinsic orientation are more likely to be dogmatic, authoritarian, and less responsible, have less internal control, be less self-directed, and do less well in their studies (Wiebe & Fleck, 1980).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Rosenberg (1965) described self esteem as a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the self. Self-esteem is generally

considered the evaluative component of the self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioral aspects as well as evaluative or affective ones (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). It is also widely assumed that self-esteem functions as a trait, that is, it is stable across time within individuals. Self-esteem is an extremely popular construct within psychology, and has been related to almost every other psychological concept or domain.

Rogers (1951) suggested that there is a constructive striving in each of us to reach our potentialities, called the actualizing tendency. When a person experiences unconditional positive regard and empathy from significant others, he/she develops unconditional positive self regard (self-esteem), and the process of actualization is promoted.

Maslow (1943) developed the Hierarchy of Needs theory where one moves upwards from basic physiological needs to safety needs, belongingness needs, self esteem needs and finally the self actualization needs.

Self esteem is crucial in everything one does. Self esteem affects one's thinking, how one feels about himself, causes one's outlook to be positive or negative and affects self confidence and self image thereby determining success or failure. In this way self esteem and happiness are inextricably linked.

Happiness and self esteem

High self esteem is a very strong predictor of happiness (Wilson, 1967). Many studies have reported significant positive relationships between happiness and self esteem (Lu & Argyle, 1991). Diener and Diener (1995) surveyed more than 13,000 college students in a study of correlates of life satisfaction. High self esteem emerged as the strongest factor in overall life satisfaction. DeNeve and Cooper (1998) performed a study on a meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well being. They reported self esteem as one of the many variables most closely related to happiness.

In a study conducted by Cheng and Furnham (2002) correlations and causes of happiness and depression with various personality traits were examined among 234 adolescents. Self esteem had a positive correlation with happiness. Recently Lyubomirsky, Tkach and DiMatteo (2006) reported data from more than 600 adults. Their study indicated that happiness and self-esteem were closely tied. Some researchers consider self esteem to be a component of happiness (Argyle, 2001). For example, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) compared satisfaction with life satisfaction and reported that satisfaction with the self was the highest correlation with life satisfaction. Thus it can be said that high self esteem is essential for being 'happy'.

Religion and self esteem

Religiosity has been generally ignored as a contributing factor to self-esteem. However, the fact is that religion is an important aspect of lives of people high on self esteem. Therefore, any investigation of self esteem must also examine its relationship with religion. A very powerful relationship between teens' religiosity and their self-esteem has been observed. In a paper on 'Self-esteem of early adolescents': A National Survey of 8th Graders, at American Psychological Association in San Francisco, Dai, Nolan, and Zeng (2001) claimed that of the variables studied, religious involvement appeared to have the largest impact on how early adolescents evaluate themselves. Sherkat and Reed (1992) found that religious participation significantly increases self-esteem, but had no significant effect on

depression. People with high self esteem seem to attribute their failures to outside factors and their successes to themselves (Ickes & Layden, 1978; Miller & Ross, 1975; Snyder, Stephan, & Rosenfield, 1978). Benson and Spilka (1973) showed that positive images of God were held by religious adolescents with high self esteem. This could mean that religious youth see God as playing a considerable role in both their successes and failures.

Objectives of the study

- To study the religious orientation, level of happiness and self esteem of undergraduate students.
- To find out the relationship between extrinsic religious orientation, intrinsic religious orientation, happiness and self esteem.
- To find out the significant predictors of happiness.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 80 undergraduate students of various colleges of University of Delhi, Delhi. Participants belonged to four different religious groups- Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians with 20 participants from each religion. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique.

Instruments

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002): The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) has been derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI), which was devised as a broad measure of personal happiness. The OHI followed the design and format of the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1961) which provided, when reversed, a set of 20 multiple choice items relevant to subjective well being. The scale was reviewed by Argyle, Martin, and Lu (1995). This revised instrument is compact and easy to administer. The OHQ demonstrated high scale reliabilities with values $\alpha(168) = 0.91$ respectively. The OHQ also correlates strongly with many personality variables. (Argyle & Lu, 1990; Furnham & Brewin, 1990). A six point Likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree is used. The OHQ consists of 29 items. 12 items are reversely scored. Total is calculated by summing the scores corresponding to each statement and then dividing that score by number of items. Scores range from 1-6 with higher scores indicating higher levels of happiness.

Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1967): The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory was developed to assess attitude toward oneself in general, and in specific contexts: peers, parents, school, and personal interests. The Adult form was used which has 25 items to be answered under two categories "like me" and "unlike me". The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory shows high test retest reliability (Bedeian, Teague & Ralph, 1977), adequate internal consistency (Spatz & Johnson, 1973); high concurrent validity (Simon & Simon, 1975) and construct validity (Kokenes, 1974, 1978). Scoring keys are used for the form that has been administered. The number of correct responses is multiplied by four and a total score out of 100 is calculated. The range of the score obtained is from 0-100.

The Religious Orientation scale (Gupta & Mishra, 2007): Based on the theory of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations (Allport & Ross, 1967), the Religious Orientation Scale was designed. The

Religious Orientation Scale consists of 30 items which are to be answered by the subject on a 5 point Likert like scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Out of these 30 items, 15 correspond to extrinsic religious orientation and 15 correspond to intrinsic religious orientation. The items for extrinsic religious orientation and intrinsic religious orientation are mixed, administered and presented in a random order. These questions were administered to a group of undergraduate students and based on their responses only 28 items were administered to the actual sample selected randomly, with 14 items corresponding to intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation each. Separate scores for both extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation are calculated. The scores for both the orientations range from 1470 (with 28 items) with higher scores indicating higher intrinsic/extrinsic orientation.

Results and discussion

Table 1: Showing Means and Standard Deviations for the scores obtained on Extrinsic Religious Orientation, Intrinsic Religious Orientation, Happiness and Self esteem for the overall sample.

	Extrinsic Religious Orientation	Intrinsic Religious Orientation	Happiness	Self esteem
Mean	36.79	47.80	4.37	63.63
SD	5.87	9.40	0.64	14.26

As can be seen from Table 1, the mean for extrinsic religious orientation for the overall sample of eighty undergraduates is 36.79 and for intrinsic religious orientation it is 47.80. It can be clearly interpreted from these results that the mean score on intrinsic religious orientation is considerably higher as compared to the mean

score on extrinsic religious orientation. This suggests that the sample is intrinsically oriented. Similar results were found in a study conducted by Gupta and Mishra (2007) where the sample was found to be higher on intrinsic orientation than extrinsic orientation. Since the difference in scores of both religious orientations is considerable enough we might also explain this by stating that the youth of today is trying to understand religion as an intrinsically felt motivation inverse to the belief that they follow religion only because they are asked to do so.

The range of scores on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire is 1-6. Results of the present study show that the mean score for happiness is 4.37 meaning that the sample is high on happiness. This could be supported by the fact that the youth have lesser responsibilities and more opportunities of entertainment and also their life is full of a variety of experiences. They are yet to begin their real journey of life and they have a lot of possibilities in hand to make this journey worthwhile by indulging in interesting activities that match or challenge their task related skills (as suggested by process/activity theories of happiness (eg. Diener et al., 2002). There is more security and more peace of mind as they are assured they will be taken care of under any circumstances. Thus, they enjoy a high level of happiness.

In case of self esteem scores, the mean for the overall sample is 63.63. The mean of the sample lies within the average range thus it can be concluded that the sample of undergraduates chosen are average on self esteem.

The main aim of the present study was to find out the relationship between extrinsic religious orientation, intrinsic religious orientation, self esteem and happiness among undergraduate students. For this purpose Correlation analysis was carried out to measure the relationship among the variables.

Table 2: Product Moment Correlation among Extrinsic religious orientation, Intrinsic religious orientation, Self esteem and Happiness

		Self esteem	Extrinsic Religious Orientation	Intrinsic Religious Orientation	Happiness
Self esteem	Pearson Correlation	1	-.109	.364**	.399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.334	.001	.000
	N	80	80	80	80
Extrinsic Religious Orientation	Pearson Correlation	-.109	1	.173	-.152
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.334		.125	.177
	N	80	80	80	80
Intrinsic Religious Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.364**	.173	1	.520**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.125		.000
	N	80	80	80	80
Happiness	Pearson Correlation	.399**	-.152	.520**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.177	.000	
	N	80	80	80	80

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Regression of Happiness on Intrinsic Religious Orientation and Self Esteem

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.	Std. Error of Estimate
1	.520(a)	.270	.261	28.846	.000(a)	.54717
2	.566(b)	.321	.303	18.182	.000(b)	.53121

(a) Predictors: (Constant), Intrinsic Religious Orientation

(b) Predictors: (Constant), Intrinsic Religious Orientation, Self esteem

Table 2 shows that intrinsic religious orientation is significantly correlated with happiness ($r=.520$, $p<.01$). Ghaderi (2010) conducted a study to survey the relationship between religious orientation and happiness in elderly men and women in Tehran. The results showed that religious orientation and happiness in elderly men and women have a significant positive relationship. The amount of happiness among those who had intrinsic religious orientation was more than those who had extrinsic religious orientation. A study conducted by Baroun (2006) to investigate the relationships among religiosity, health and happiness in Kuwaiti adolescents found significant and positive correlations among all the variables. Higher intrinsic orientation scores and positive religious coping were significantly associated with higher scores on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire for the sample of adults in a study by Lewis, Maltby and Day (2005). Intrinsic religiosity has been correlated with psychological adjustment (Baker & Gorsuch, 1982; Donahue, 1985) and appears to be a reliable indicator of the extent to which people incorporate their religious principles into their everyday lives (Hoge, 1972). Maltby et al. (1999) found a strong association of intrinsic orientation with psychological well being.

However, a negative though not significant correlation has been found between extrinsic religious orientation and happiness ($r=-.152$). This implies that there exists an inverse relationship between extrinsic religious orientation and happiness. Studies have been conducted in the past obtaining similar results. In the study by Ghaderi (2010), the relationship between extrinsic religious orientation and happiness was not found to be significant. Extrinsic religious orientation where one uses religion as a means to reach some specific goal without internalizing the meaning of the religious teachings tends to have a negative effect on the level of happiness. This is because practicing religion without actually wanting to do that, might lead to anxiety and stress. A positive attitude toward life was found negatively correlated with extrinsic religiosity in a study on 246 church goers by Francis and Orchard (1999). Maltby et al. (1999) found a negative association between extrinsic orientation and psychological well being. Extrinsic orientation has been related to neutral and negative health indices like depression, anxiety, identity diffusion, irrational thought, and failure to volunteer to help (Baston, Olesen & Weeks, 1989; Swanson & Byrd, 1998; Bergin, Masters & Richards, 1987; Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996).

Self esteem has also been found to be significantly correlated with happiness ($r=.399$, $p<.01$). Lu and Argyle (1991) reported significant positive relationships between happiness and self esteem. Shackelford (2001) examined the happiness of young to middle-aged couples who had been married within the past year and found that for both husbands and wives, self-esteem was significantly correlated with happiness in the form of global, sexual, and emotional satisfaction. Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) obtained data from more than 600 adults ranging in age from 51 to 95. Once again, happiness and self-esteem were found to be highly correlated.

A significant positive correlation has also been found between intrinsic religious orientation and self esteem ($r=.364$, $p<.01$). Sherkat and Reed (1992) found that religious participation significantly increases self-esteem. Self esteem was found to be related positively to intrinsically committed faith and negatively to extrinsic consensual faith in a study by Spilka and Mullin (1977). Maltby, Lewis and Day (1999) observed a significant positive correlation between intrinsic orientation and self esteem.

The correlation between extrinsic religious orientation and self

esteem is -0.109 . This implies that using religion as a means towards an end is not significantly related to one's self esteem. There are other predicting factors of self esteem for the young adults, namely academic achievements, sports, extracurricular activities and many more. This is also supported by researches done previously. Self esteem was found to be negatively correlated to extrinsic consensual faith (Spilka and Mullin, 1977). A negative relationship between extrinsic religious orientation and self esteem was reported in Iranian and American students by Watson et al., (2002). In a study conducted by Maltby et al (1999) a significant negative correlation was observed between extrinsic orientation and self esteem.

Table 3 shows that when the independent variable of intrinsic religious orientation was entered in the regression model with happiness as the criterion, intrinsic religious orientation contributed to 27% of the variance. However, when intrinsic religious orientation was entered along with self esteem in the regression model, an increase of 5.1% was obtained in the R square accounting for 32.10% of the variance in happiness.

The results found can be substantiated by previous researches. Abdel-Khalek (2007) studied the association between happiness, physical health, mental health, and religiosity on volunteer Kuwaiti undergraduates. All the inter-correlations between the four self-ratings were significant and positive. Multiple regression revealed that religiosity accounted for around 15% of the variance in predicting happiness. Moltafet et al. (2010) in their research on personality traits, religious orientation and happiness revealed intrinsic religious orientation to be a positive predictor of happiness. A major international study of self-esteem and happiness was reported by Diener and Diener (1995). The data came from more than 13,000 college students from 49 different universities, 31 countries, and five continents. High self-esteem emerged as the strongest of several predictors of life satisfaction overall. In a sample of 406 young people (aged 14-28), Furnham and Cheng (2000) measured a number of potential correlates of happiness, including recalled parental rearing styles, scores on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, and self-esteem. They reported that self-esteem was the most dominant and powerful predictor of happiness.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results of the present study it can be seen that the present sample is higher on intrinsic religious orientation and happiness and average on self esteem. It can be inferred that the present generation is intrinsically oriented as opposed to the prevalent notion of youth being superficially religious. Results also showed intrinsic religious orientation and self esteem as significant predictors of happiness. This shows that the youngsters have an elaborate understanding of religion and that religion plays an important role in their life by enhancing their happiness, acting as a buffer in stressful situations and shaping their behavior thereby leading to happiness. Results also show self esteem as a major factor contributing to happiness. This is because how one evaluates him or herself is crucial in determining one's level of happiness. Thus, the present study tries to understand the elusive concept of happiness and the various factors contributing to it.

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