



Big Five Personality, Religiosity, Gratitude to God and Well-Being: A Preliminary Investigation

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Abstract

Individual personality and its link with religiosity has gained researchers' attention in the past few decades. But the relationship of religiosity, personality, gratitude and well-being has largely been under investigated. Against this backdrop, this study entailed investigation of the mentioned relationship. The data for the current study was collected from two business schools of a large public sector university in Pakistan. 314 responses were received and used for statistical analysis. The findings highlight that the personality is significantly related with one's religiosity. Interestingly, all dimensions of personality are not linked with religiosity, as agreeableness, conscientiousness are related with intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Openness to experience is only related with the external-social religiosity. Religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being are also related. Implications and future directions for researchers are also provided at the end of the study.

Keywords:

Big-five personality, Gratitude to God, Religiosity, Students, Well-being.

Introduction

Human's life outcomes are dependent upon numerous skills and abilities. One of such is one's cognitive skills (e.g. covering numeracy, mental abilities, and literacy skills) (Herrnstein & Murray, 2010). These cognitive skills have often been used to define one's mental capabilities like memory, comprehension and other aspects. But last few decades have seen increased emphasis on other aspects like "non-cognitive skills", often defined as skills those are not directly an outbreak of one's mental and cognitive abilities but are linked with psychological aspects (e.g. beliefs, interests, motivation and personality) (Rammstedt et al., 2017). The first champions of non-cognitive skills include Nobel-Prize winner economist James Heckman. Along with his coauthors, he argues that studies should carry on the personality and its outcomes considering the non-abilities aspect (Heckman et al., 2006).

The landmark studies on non-cognitive skills have highlighted various life outcomes associated to them. For instance, it has been observed that positive personality factors (e.g. optimism, conscientiousness) are important predictor of one's health and morality (Allison et al., 2003; Rasmussen et al., 2009). On the other hand, negative personality traits (e.g. low emotional stability and external locus of control) are negatively associated with one's life satisfaction (Rammstedt, 2007). Similarly, it has been observed with persons with positive traits (Conscientiousness) have happy marriage life and have low divorce rate (Roberts & Bogg, 2004). It has also been observed that one's performance and earnings are also related with the personality, as positive trait individuals perform better and earn more (Judge et al., 2012).

The increased significance of non-cognitive skills has attracted researchers from across the globe. Some of them have highlighted the need of studies focusing on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. For instance, Wechsler (1950) highlighted that humans should be assessed for both intellectual and non-intellectual traits into IQ tests, to give a true and fair picture of someone. Out of many predecessors, Vernon (1950) used the X factor of personality along with cognitive Spearman-type factor (g) in the model to determine educational abilities. He added personality and interest as non-cognitive factor. But the theoretical building and assessment of non-cognitive skills still lacks behind (Rammstedt et al., 2017), more specifically with reference to personality theories and other non-cognitive aspects. Against this backdrop, this study aims at investigating the link between personality, religiosity, gratitude to God (non-cognitive skills) with the outcomes (i.e. well-being).

There is extant of literature that has focused on the personality, religiosity and gratitude. For example, positive personality traits (e.g. agreeable and conscientiousness) are positively linked with the socio-psychological outcomes. Other factors (e.g. neutral – extroversion) are weakly correlated with such outcomes (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018; Saroglou, 2010).

Similarly, one's personality has been associated with the religious orientation, but how both the aspects of personality are linked with the gratitude to God is an area that has not gained due attention in the past. Against this backdrop, this study entails investigation of the relationship of the said variables. Moreover, the existing literature covers a wide range of investigation carried out in the developed and western world where the personality and its link with other non-cognitive skills has gained focus. Moreover, the link of personality and religiosity with the gratitude to God has been missing from eastern, under-developed and Muslim societies (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018). Thus, the current study adds value in existing literature by investigating the said relationship.

This study also aims to investigate the relationship of the aforementioned non-cognitive skills with the well-being. According to Aghababaei (2017) well-being is an important consideration for humans and they always intend to find the best predictors that may improve it. One of the such factors is the personality, while religiosity and gratitude to God are the predictors that have not gained due attention in the past. Furthermore, the need of studies relating non-cognitive skills and well-being is highlighted by the recent calls (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018). Thus, the current study aims at finding relationship between personality traits (here big five personality dimensions), religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being.

We conducted this study in Pakistani society, which has major chunk of population from monotheistic religions (Islam & Christianity). The study seems valuable as the non-cognitive characteristics like gratitude to God is the basic premise of all revealed religions. Thus, there would be presence of all gratitude to God in the society. Furthermore, it is also expected that individuals would have either internal or external aspect of religiosity. Furthermore, it is also expected that the gratitude to God would be related with the well-being as both personality and religiosity are related with that.

Literature review

Personality is one of the non-cognitive skills and is one of the most widely investigated topics. It has been measured using numerous measures its dimensions. Out of available measure Big Five Personality (BFP) measure is the most widely used and accepted technique. As the name denotes it covers five dimensions, covering: agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extroversion, and openness to experience. Empirical literature proves that these personality dimensions can offer numerous individual work outcomes (e.g. anxiety, self-esteem, affectivity; organizational outcomes e.g. employees' attitudinal, behavioral and performance outcomes) and personal level outcomes (Allison et al., 2003; Rasmussen et al., 2009). Personality traits are also found to influence the family level outcomes (e.g. life satisfaction and family interface, low divorce rate) (Bell et al., 2012; Erdle et al., 2010; Grevenstein et al., 2018; Judge et al., 2012; John C. Loehlin, 2013; Müller & Schwieren, 2020; Musek, 2007; Roberts & Bogg,

2004; Schermer et al., 2012; Soto, 2019; van der Linden et al., 2013). The empirical studies are reported from across cultures and samples (Erdle & Aghababaei, 2012; Hull & Beaujean, 2011; John C Loehlin, 2012; Muncer, 2011; Van der Linden et al., 2012). These studies have focused on the neurological bases of BFP dimensions (Erdle & Aghababaei, 2012), while the psychological determinants have largely been not given due attention (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018; John C Loehlin, 2012).

Using life history theory as the basic premise, it is observed that individual personality emerges due to various factors covering the religious environment, general factors of personality and environment (Emmons et al., 2008; Erdle et al., 2010). It is therefore observed that the religiosity and personality of an individual are positively related (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018), specifically those facets of religiosity that are genuine, mature and are linked with the socio-psychological adjustments of individuals (Aghababaei, 2013).

Out of various socio-psychological mechanisms are the intrinsic religiosity and gratitude towards God. In the great monotheistic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism), worship of God is important to show thankfulness and gratitude to God for all His gifts and mercies. Social-psychological adjustment is further explained with the religiosity (extrinsic and intrinsic). Extrinsic religiosity is defined as the immature faith that becomes the basis of convenience for one to meet the psychological and social needs. Intrinsic religiosity, on the other hand, covers the religious sentiments that determine one's motives for life (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

Past studies have observed that the BFP traits, religiosity and gratitude are related. For instance, both agreeable and conscientiousness dimensions of BFP are strongly related with these social-psychological mechanism, while extroversion, on the other hand is weakly correlated with these aspects (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018; Saroglou, 2010). Though the relationship of BFP with both the aspects of religiosity has widely been investigated, their relationship with the gratitude to God and well-being have not gained due attention in the past studies. The relationship of BFP with various other individual aspects of personality (e.g. religious orientation) have been investigated in the western world, but the Muslim population has not been studied at a larger extent (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

Moreover, individual well-being has also been ignored in the socio-psychological adjustment perspective. According to Aghababaei (2014) well-being has largely been discussed for its consequences while its link with the personality and socio-psychological adjustment mechanism has largely been ignored. Past studies have also found that personality is a significant predictor of well-being. For instance, it has been observed that individuals with extraversion and emotional stability report strong relationship with level of well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Similarly, it has also been observed that religiousness has significant

relationship with the well-being (e.g. Diener, et al., 2011). These findings are observed across samples, for instance, Francis and Crea (2019) found that college students in USA with high religiosity had higher level of happiness. Others have found that religiosity itself is not a good predictor of well-being in the BFP traits (Barrie, 2012). Thus both the religiosity and BFP traits should be investigated in tandem. Yet another aspect that has not been investigated is the link of well-being with the gratitude towards God. As the gratitude to God is the basic premise of the monotheistic religions, it is expected that its presence is mandatory when one is religious either internal or external aspect of religiosity. As religiosity and personality both are related with the well-being of individual, it is expected that the gratitude to God would also be related with one's well-being. As there is lack of empirical literature on the relationship between gratitude to God, religiosity, personality and well-being, this study aims to provide an empirical evidence from a Muslim society. On the basis of given literature and discussion following hypotheses are formulated:

H1a-c: Personality traits are positively related with the religiosity (intrinsic, extrinsic-personal and extrinsic-social)

H2: Personality traits are positively related with gratitude to God

H3: Personality traits are positively related with the well-being

H4: Religiosity is positively related with the gratitude to God and well-being

H5: Gratitude to God is positively related with the well-being

Material and methods

The data of the current study was taken from a sample of 314 students from two business schools of a large public sector university. Majority of the study were male (63.5%), enrolled in undergraduate program (Bachelors 63%), with average age of 22.5 years. The scale for the current study were adopted from previous studies. Big Five Personality (BFP) was assessed with widely used scale of Rammstedt and John (2007). It is a shorter version covering 10 items and is found reliable and useful scale. Gratitude to God scale was measured using four items scale of Krause (2006), which covers items like "*I am grateful to God for all He has done for me*". Well-being was operationalized using four items Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) which is used as global happiness index (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). It covers items like "In general I consider myself -----". Three dimensional religious orientation scale of Aghababaei (2012) was used to measure religiosity of individuals. Each dimension of religiosity was measured with single item measure. Extrinsic-personal religiosity was measured by using "What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow". Extrinsic-social religiosity was operationalized by using "I go to mosque or religious community mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there". Intrinsic religiosity was measured

through “My whole approach to life is based on my religion”. All these items were measured used 10 items scale.

Findings & discussion

Results of the statistical analysis are presented in table-1 (reliability) and 2 (correlation analysis). It is pertinent in table-1 that all the measures were reliable, as the estimated values were above the value of threshold value of .70. The reliability score of big-five personality is 0.91 which shows the usefulness of the measure. The religiosity measures also scored acceptably (i.e. 0.73-0.88), thus showing that the measure is reliable. Gratitude to God and well-being are also reliable as the values of Cronbach alpha are above threshold and show high reliability.

Table-1: Reliability analysis

Variable	Reliability value
Big five personality traits	0.91
Intrinsic religiosity	0.73
Extrinsic-personal religiosity	0.81
Extrinsic-social religiosity	0.79
Gratitude to God	0.83
Well-being	0.88

Table-2 covers the results of bivariate correlation results among all the measures are reported. Each personality dimension is first tested for its relationship with the religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being. It is evident that agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability are significantly related with intrinsic religiosity ($\beta=.11^*$, $.09^*$, and $.13^{**}$). Extraversion and openness to experience, on the other hand, have no relationship with the intrinsic religiosity. Out of five dimensions of personality only agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively related with the extrinsic-personal religiosity ($\beta=.21^{**}$, $.23^*$), while none of the dimension is significantly related with the extrinsic-social religiosity, except openness to experience ($\beta=.10^*$). All the dimensions of big-five personality are significantly related with one’s gratitude to God ($\beta=.32^{**}$, $.25^*$, $.30^*$, $.21^*$, and $.20^{**}$ respectively). A look at the table highlights that out of five dimensions of personality only agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability are significantly related with the well-being of individuals ($\beta=.33^*$, $.42^{**}$, and $.49^*$ respectively). These findings are in-line with the studies of Aghababaei (2013), where the author reported that personality differently influences the religiosity of individuals, and agreeable and conscientious individuals are more likely to be religious in nature.

Further evaluation of relationship highlights the relationship between religiosity, gratitude of God and well-being. The table highlights that the intrinsic-religiosity is not related with one’s external-personal religiosity ($\beta=.05$) but related

with extrinsic-social religiosity ($\beta=.10^*$). These results highlight that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are not fully related. It is further evident that intrinsic-religiosity is related with the gratitude to God ($\beta=.29^*$) and well-being ($\beta=.33^*$). Extrinsic-personal religiosity, on the other hand, is significantly related with the extrinsic-social religiosity ($\beta=.11^{**}$), gratitude to God ($\beta=.39^*$) and well-being ($\beta=.41^*$). Gratitude to God is also related with the well-being ($\beta=.40^*$), thus it is proved that personality, religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being are related.

Table-2: Bivariate correlation results

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Intrinsic-religiosity	.11*	.09*	.13**	.02	.06	(.73)				
7. Extrinsic-Personal religiosity	.21**	.23*	.04	.03	.09	.05	(.81)			
8. Extrinsic-social religiosity	-.07	.10	.08	.03	.10*	.10*	.11**	(.79)		
9. Gratitude to God	.32**	.25*	.30*	.21*	.20**	.29**	.39*	.14*	(.83)	
10. Well-being	.33*	.42**	.49*	.07	.06	.33*	.41*	.19*	.40*	(.88)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

1=Agreeableness, 2=Conscientiousness, 3= Emotional stability, 4= Extraversion, 5= Openness to experience, 6=intrinsic religiosity, 7=Extrinsic-personal religiosity, 8=Extrinsic-social religiosity, 9=Gratitude to God, 10=Well-being

Discussion on findings

Humans intend to achieve various life goals, while attainment of those is dependent upon various skills and abilities. The skills are divided into cognitive (e.g. covering numeracy, mental abilities, and literacy skills) and non-cognitive skills (e.g. personality) (Herrnstein & Murray, 2010). Last few decades have seen increased emphasis on "non-cognitive skills", often defined as skills those are not directly an outbreak of one's mental and cognitive abilities but are linked with psychological aspects (e.g. beliefs, interests, motivation and personality) (Rammstedt et al., 2017).

The increased significance of non-cognitive skills has attracted researchers from across the globe. Some of them have highlighted the need of studies focusing on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Wechsler, 1950). But the theoretical building and assessment of non-cognitive skills still lacks behind (Rammstedt et al., 2017), more specifically with reference to personality theories and other non-cognitive aspects. Against this backdrop, this study aims at investigating the link between personality, religiosity, gratitude to God (non-cognitive skills) with the outcomes (i.e. well-being). Furthermore, this study also highlights the link between big five personality traits and religiosity dimensions (internal, external-personal

and external-social). The findings highlight that out of all dimensions only agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability are linked with the religiosity (but not all dimensions), while other personality factors are not linked with the religiosity. The findings thus clarify that the personality traits work in isolation and have different relationship with various outcomes. The findings are thus in-line with the findings of the previous studies (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018). Furthermore, the mixed results also support the findings of Saroglou (2010) who observed that the personality dimensions predict different outcomes. Thus, the results do not offer a complete explanation of H1.

Further investigation highlighted that the personality is linked with the gratitude to God. Here results highlight that all the dimension of personality have positive association with the gratitude to God (H2). A profound look at the dimensions highlights that the agreeableness and emotional stability have stronger relationship when compared with the other dimensions. These findings fill the gap, but support the assumptions of Aghababaei and Tekke (2018) who assumed that the gratitude to God is linked with personality. Furthermore, the relationship of religiosity with is also positive. The findings seem logical as the Pakistani society is dominated by the Muslims with a small share of Christianity. As both the religions are revealed and believe in existence of God, it was expected that the gratitude to God would be embedded in the personality and other non-cognitive traits of individuals. The findings support the assumption as both personality and religiosity are related with the gratitude to God.

It is also noticed that the personality dimensions are related with the well-being (except extraversion and openness to experience). The findings again support our assumptions that the personality has different effect on different outcomes. The findings also support the assumptions of Aghababaei (2013) where well-being was found to be influenced by different personality dimensions. The findings help us conclude that H3 is also supported. The study also entailed investigation of relationship between religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being. The findings highlight that internal and external-personal religiosity are strongly related with the gratitude to God and well-being than the external-social aspect of religiosity. The findings partially support H4, which assumes positive relationship between religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being. It is also evident that the gratitude to God is positively and strongly related with the well-being. It is also clear that the individuals with high gratitude to God have high level of well-being when compared with the other individuals (H5, supported). The findings, when compared with past literature highlight some important points to consider. For instance, the results signify that the personality dimensions influence the religious beliefs about self and others. Ferrari et al. (2017), while working on sample of roman Catholic deacons and deacon candidates also observed that personality determines the level of belief and interaction with others. Findings of Francis and Crea (2019) also support the assumption as their findings from the sample of Italian Seminarians also highlighted that personality is significantly associated with

religious beliefs, actions and overall religiosity. Aghababaei and Tekke (2018) also found that religiosity is significantly related with the well-being in the Malaysian students' sample.

Implications of the study

The findings of the study offer novel aspects in the literature of religion and psychology. The findings highlight that personality (psychological variables) is closely related with the religious aspects (intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity) and one's overall outcome (i.e. well-being). The variables under investigation have not been tested in tandem, thus the findings have theoretical implications for academia and practitioners. It highlights that the personality and religious aspects of one's socio-psychological mechanism should be linked and assessed closely. It also highlights that well-being is related with the gratitude to God (thankfulness), which clarifies that thankfulness increases one's mental contentment (i.e. well-being). Thus one's personality, religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being are closely related. The findings also highlight that the personality should be studied in isolation as the various dimensions have different perspectives and offer varying outcomes.

Limitations and future directions

Though the study covers some unexplored aspects of personal, socio-psychological and religious perspectives in tandem, it is still prone to some limitations. The foremost is the small sample and respondents from one age bracket (university students). It is observed that with change in life experience one's psychological mechanism changes and response towards them. It is thus important to study other age brackets and make a comparison of the variables under investigation. Furthermore, gender based differences could also be considered in future studies. Other variables like, Islamic Work Ethics, Islamic respect and personal gift measures could also be considered for investigation. The sample of the study should also be taken from various age brackets, income level, and cultures as all these demographical traits differentiate people.

Conclusion

This study aims at investigating the relationship between big five personality, religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being. The findings revealed that the personality dimensions are related with outcomes but not in tandem. Furthermore, a religious person shows more gratitude to God and has more well-being when compared with counterparts. Similarly, well-being has been positively and strongly linked with the gratitude to God. The findings contribute in literature by investigating the link between religiosity, gratitude to God and well-being in presence of big five personality traits.

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