

Assessing the relationship between religiosity and rationality.

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Abstract

The study has been conducted to assess the relationship between religiosity and rationality of adolescents (aged between 14-17). It was hypothesized that students who are more religious would be less rational as compared to less religious students. It was also hypothesized that male students will be more rational as compared to female students. A total sample of 600 (320 male, 280 female) students, predominantly Muslims were selected randomly from different colleges and schools in the Swat area. The religiosity level of participants was measured using Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth (RaSSy), and their rationality using the Rational-Experiential Inventory for Adolescents (REI-A). The score of participants on RaSSy scale was correlated with their score on the REI-A inventory by applying the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. Also, the score of male participants on the REI-A scale was compared with the score of female participants by applying the Independent-samples t Test. Results showed a negative correlation ($r=-0.605$, $p<0.01$) between the scores of participants on the RaSSy scale and the REI-A inventory. Results also showed that male participants had higher scores on the REI-A scale, $t(598)=5.624$, $p<0.001$ as compared to female participants. Hence, it was concluded from the results that those who were more religious had lower rationality and also that male students had higher rationality as compared to female students.

Keywords: Religiosity, Spirituality, Rationality, Experientiality, Adolescence.

Accepted on June 24, 2017

Introduction

Religion has been there since human reached behavioral modernity [1]. Most of the world population believes in some kind of deity, a God, a Lord and savior. Religion gives hope, a sense of love, affection, and a belief that we are not on our own in the endless expanse of the universe [2]. About 59% of world population thought of themselves as religious persons, 23% of the world population thought of themselves as secular, non-religious, atheist or agnostic, whereas 13% believe they were convinced atheists [3]. Most of the atheist communities are scientists, Psychologists, philosophers, and educationists of the highest order although some or many of them are religious [4]. Hence there has been a debate over science or religion, the idea of whether religion is good or bad, compatible or corrosive, and pursuing the same goal or not is undecided. Religion might be a significant catalyst in creating a conflict of faith, belief, and divine laws with proof, logic, experimentation, as well as the universal laws of nature. To find out the truth and reality about this fundamental question of our existence, scholars from both sides have been discussing and debating over such issues [5].

There are opposing arguments of whether it is more rational, logical and wise to take side with religion or is it more appropriate to accept where science leads us through its rigorous ways. These conflicting ideas lead people to investigate the relationship of religiosity and rationality. It

coerces individuals to seek evidence for how much rational or irrational people become under the influence of religious affiliations and indoctrinations [6].

The word religiosity means the amount of religious behavior, belief, or spiritual level. It refers to the belief in a supreme deity, and it may involve the acceptance of a doctrine or scripture as moral and obligational authority resulting in the submission of one's will to the supreme authority or God. Religiosity is the belief and practice of a religion. Religiosity is defined by belief in God, acceptance of a doctrine or scripture and ritualistic activities or worship of a supreme deity and power, often referred to as God. Religiosity can be defined as an individual's beliefs and rituals concerned with God or faith affiliation [7].

Spirituality is a different personal and subjective experience of religious beliefs and practices. It is the subjective way that one experiences and lives out religion [7].

Spirituality is a personal quest for understanding answers to the deep, curious, and introspective questions about self and the universe, questions about the meaning and purpose of life and the existence of God and one's relationship to him. Spirituality may or may not lead to the construction of religious affiliation and community [7].

Rationality is defined as having or exercising the ability to reason [8]. In other words, it is the ability to think logically

and analytically and to rely on and enjoy thinking in analytical and logical ways [9].

Rationality is the quality or characteristic of being reasonable, based on evidence or logic. Rationality means to give logical explanations for one's beliefs or of one's actions with one's reasons for action. "Rationality" has various and different meanings in economics, sociology, psychology, evolutionary biology and political science [9].

Experientiality refers to the confidence in one's intuition and being reliant on intuition and feelings while making decisions [9].

Adolescence refers to the transitional period between puberty and adulthood expanding mainly over the teen years [10].

Cognitive and social processes in psychological theories can assist psychology experts understand better the work of religious beliefs in adapting to and understanding their role in psychotherapy. People from many religions do not use information and data gathering techniques and strategies but rather use heuristics to form judgments about ideas. This conformation of own group bias toward other groups can assist such judgments and protect them from any disconformity of the evidence. Belief in a religion provides a discipline and knowledge of a catastrophic and ambiguous world. Many religions emphasize forgiveness, which is useful in resolving any rivalries and social issues. One more helpful and useful religious belief is an omnipresent spiritual attachment figure. Harmful influences of religious faith include its practicing coercive control to maintain conformist belief and its promotion of an external locus of control. Another perspective that psychological health experts practice contrary to the religious belief is free information acquisition and self-progress, and directs individuals to attain capabilities essential to alter and structure their lives. Therapist and mental health professionals are far less likely to align to a religious belief as compared to the general population or psychiatric patients. A therapist job is to attend to client's problems and engage in problem solving rather than opposing religion and promoting anti-religious views [11]

According to Richard Dawkins, "not only is science opposed to religion; religion is opposed to science. It teaches people to be satisfied by the explanations religion provides which are mostly trivial, faiths based and non-empirical and ignore or oppose the scientifically and statistically accurate, quantified explanations. It teaches them to accept power, revelation and belief instead of always insisting on proof. Beliefs like these promote blind devotion and child indoctrination which are both immoral [12].

Researchers Lynn et al. correlated faith in God and average IQs of people from 137 countries. Using data from a U.S. study of 6,825 adolescents, they actually found that the average IQ of non-religious people was 6 points higher than religious people. The authors also determined the correlation

between intelligence and religiosity on a national level. The researchers found out a correlation of 0.60 between atheism rates and degree of intelligence, which was considered to be "highly significant statistically" [13].

In clinical view, there is no actual clear and distinct line between normal belief and a pathological one. Historically, Psychologists such as Freud himself believed all faith to be pathological [14] whilst the current definition of delusion in DSM-V excludes religious doctrine from pathology completely [15]. From a subjective viewpoint, a directional view to delusional thinking (emphasizing conviction, preoccupation, and extension rather than content) might be helpful in determining what is and is not pathological. Religious beliefs are all out of the scientific realm therefore can be easily labelled as delusional or pathological from a philosophical viewpoint. However, a religious belief's dimensional qualities, its cultural factors, and its impact on total functioning may be more important considerations in clinical work [16].

Based on findings from these previous studies, two hypotheses were derived. First, students with higher religiosity level will be less rational as compared to students with lower religiosity level, and that male students will be more rational as compared to female students.

Method

Participants

The total number of participants in the sample were 600, belonging to various colleges and schools in the Swat region. Among these 600 participants, 320 were male and 280 were female participants. A random sampling methodology was used in the selection of this sample. The age of these participants ranged from 15-17 years and their qualification ranged from class 5th to class 11th.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were used in the study to measure religiosity and rationality levels of the participants. To measure the religiosity of students the Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth (RaSSY) was used (Appendix A) which was developed by Brittany C. Hernandez. This scale was standardized on a sample of 307 children of age ranging from 7-11 years and their qualification ranged from 4-11th grade [7].

For the measurement of rationality, the Rational-Experiential Inventory for Adolescents (REI-A) was used (Appendix B) which was developed by Marks et al. The scale consists of two subscales for the measurement of Rationality and Experientiality. This scale was standardized using a sample of 306 adolescent students aged between 13.1 and 18.8 years and their qualification ranged from grade 8 to 12 [17].

Procedure

Participants were briefly instructed on how to fill the

questionnaires and what is the purpose of the study. The scales were filled with informed consent and understanding of the items. Honesty and sincerity were keenly advised and confidentiality of their data was assured. Any query or question from the participants was attended to, by the test taker. Both the scales were scored as per procedure in the manuals for REI-A and RaSSY. The scores attained on the RaSSY scale were correlated with the scores attained on the Rational-Experiential Inventory for Adolescents. The scores of both male and female participants on REI-A inventory were also compared.

Results

The results from the statistical analysis showed that religiosity is negatively related to rationality. Participants' religiosity score on the RaSSY scale and their Rationality score on the REI-A scale were negatively correlated ($r=-0.605$, $p<0.01$). The participants' religiosity score was also correlated with their experientiality which was a subscale of REI-A and a significant negative correlation was found between their religiosity levels and their experientiality (i.e., $r=-0.448$, $p<0.01$).

For the REI-A total score, Independent-samples *t* test indicated that male participants attained significantly higher scores on the rationality subscale of REI-A, i.e., $t(598)=5.624$, $p<0.001$. The mean score of male participants was higher ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.348$) than the mean score of female participants ($M=3.166$, $SD=0.3973$).

Discussion

As mentioned previously, two hypotheses were constructed. First, Students with higher religiosity levels will be less rational as compared to students with lower religiosity level. Secondly, male students will be more rational than female students. Results from the statistical analysis supported both the hypotheses. It was proved that students who were more religious were less rational and that male students were more rational as compared to female students. These results support the findings of previously conducted studies such as a study conducted by Gervais and Norenzayan suggests that the higher the capability of analytical thinking in participants the higher their tendency for religious disbelief [18].

A similar study was conducted which used 8 measures of rational emotive irrationalities to test the hypothesis that religious indoctrination would make social maladjustment. The study was conducted in two parts 351 participants at once and 383 at the 2nd time, the results showed a strong negative correlation between intrinsic religiousness and its effect on adjustment [19].

Many psychologists maintain and believe in the view of Sigmund Freud that religion is neurosis, intoxicant, poison and childishness to be overcome. Thus, Mortimer Ostow claimed that evangelical protestants are incapable of obtaining the realities we have in modern times [20].

Twentieth century sociologist Kingsley Davis [21] writes

that rationalistic perspective towards religion would be a major logical fallacy because religion or religious behavior itself is non-rational. Marx goes further to say that religion is the opiate of the masses and a tool for exploitation of human reason.

Conclusion

It was concluded from the study that students who were more religious and performed a big number of rituals and prayers tended to be less rational than those who were less religious and performed less rituals. It was also concluded that male students were more rational as compared to female students. The research requires a lot of further investigation on a more diverse, multicultural and worldwide scale, an investigation throughout the world among people of different nations and religious, ethnic groups. This study was conducted on a predominantly Muslim population therefore a similar study on a bigger and diverse sample in terms of religion would highly validate this study.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported and supervised by Ms. Roya Shahiman Zada, Lecturer, Department of Psychological Studies, University of Swat. We are thankful to her for her tireless efforts in guiding this research to its end.

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