

## Relationship between Religious Attitude and Happiness among Professional Employees

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This article is part of a larger project, which investigated the relationship between religious attitude and subjective well being among Iranian and Indian professional employees. The present article focused on feeling of happiness among Iranian population. The sample consists 1491 employees of which 744 were males and 747 were female. Religious attitude was measured by using Rajmanickam's Religious Attitude Scale and happiness was measure with The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Hills & Argyle. The main findings of the present study were that all the subscales of and total religious attitude were found to be highly correlated with Happiness. Higher the religious attitude, higher was the happiness. Further correlations revealed that higher the happiness more was future life and spirits and spirit world and lastly, happiness though significantly related, less correlated with formal religion aspect of religious attitude.

**Keywords:** Religious Attitude, Happiness, Spirituality, Prayer and Worship

Psychology of religion is the discipline that studies religion and religious phenomena using psychological theories, concepts, and methods. This discipline considers religion as influenced by psychological realities and as having an impact on these realities. Within the psychology of religion domain there has been increasing interest to furnish the theoretical perspective with empirical support. One such approach is empirical interest in examining the relationship between religion and happiness. With respect to the empirical examination of the relationship between religion and happiness, traditionally the results of these studies have been mixed, with some providing consistent support for a positive association (Inglehart, 1990; Moberg & Taves, 1965; Mookerjee & Beron, 2005; Veenhoven, 1994; Witter, Stock, Okun, & Haring, 1985; Zuckerman, Kas & Ostfeld, 1984), while others have not (e.g., Abdel-Khalek & Nacuer, 2006; Blazer & Palmore, 1970; Brinkerhoff & Mackie, 1993; Heisel & Faulkner, 1982; Janssen, Banziger, Dezutter, & Hutsebaut, 2006; McNamara & St George,

1978; Poloma & Pendleton, 1989, 1990, 1991; Shaver, Lenauer, & Sadd, 1980; Tellis-Nayak, 1982; Yates, Chalmer, St James, Follansbee, & McKegey, 1981). However, such findings are difficult to integrate, as previous research has employed a variety of different measures of both religiosity including measures of religious attitude, religious experience, religious conversion, and religious behavior, and happiness including both single-item and multi-item scales, among a variety of different samples.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is the field in the behavioral sciences in which people's evaluations of their lives are studied. SWB includes diverse concepts ranging from momentary moods to global judgments of life satisfaction, and from depression to euphoria. The field has grown rapidly in the last decade, so that there are now thousands of studies on topics such as life satisfaction and happiness. Jahoda (1958) called for the inclusion of positive states in definitions of wellbeing, which sparked a paradigmatic shift

in conceptions of mental health. No longer was the absence of mental illness sufficient for mental health; happiness became important as well. In 1984, Diener reviewed the field of SWB, including the various theories and known characteristics of happy individuals at the time. Large national studies of SWB concluded that most Americans were indeed happy, regardless of age, race, gender, income, or education level (Myers & Diener, 1995). Since 1990 there has been an explosion of research in the field, with a large number of SWB studies now occurring in the area of gerontology as well (Neugarten Havighurst & Tobin, 1961). In the present study an attempt is made to find out the relationship between religious attitudes and happiness. It is hypothesized that religious attitude does affect happiness positively.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The sample for the present research consisted of 1491 Professional Employees (Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, and Educationists). The respondents were between 36 and 56 years of age. Seventy percent were women, 60% were married. Ninety percent had a post graduate degree and 10% had a graduate degree. All of the respondents who were affiliated Muslim. Respondents were obtained from a number of workplaces and universities in the North and south of Iran.

#### **Tools**

Rajmanickam's Religious Attitude Scale (1988): In the first step Rajmanickam's Religious Attitude Scale (1988); (RRAS) was translated to Persian language and after that for checking of its validity, the translated form was sent to 3 psychometricians for review and their opinions about translation. Then translated form was sent to 2 English literatures for language correction, and again compared with original text to resolve possibly difficulties. After translation and back translation, to ensure Cronbach (Cronbach,

1951) alpha reliability in the second step, questionnaire was tested on 300 people that get 0/915 for 56 questions. Only in No.5 subscale, future life questions 5, 11, 17 and 59 were confused for subjects that caused validity of this subscale 0/194. Cronbach's alpha showed .901 values. Then these items were deleted in final form of questionnaire and RRAS with 56 questions administered to 1600 people. 109 questionnaires were rejected for incomplete response and 1491 questionnaire were considered for the analysis. Principal Component Analysis and Rotation Method, Varimax with Kaiser Normalization and screen plot show that this scale could be very well administered to Iranian sample. Responses to items are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). High scores on the scale indicates unfavorable attitude and low scores favorable attitude.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2003): From a theoretical perspective, Argyle and Crosland (1987) suggest that happiness comprises 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, such as depression and anxiety. Working from this definition, they developed the Oxford Happiness Inventory by reversing the 21 items of the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Hock, & Erbaugh, 1961) and adding 11 further items to cover aspects of subjective well-being not so far included. Three items were subsequently dropped, leading to a 29-item scale. The test constructors report an internal reliability of 0.90 and a seven-week test-retest reliability of 0.78. Va was established against happiness ratings by friends and by correlations with measures of positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. Religious attitude is a purely psychological term and has come from attitude and attitude change in social psychology. Responses to

items are scored on a 6-point Likert type scale: Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). High scores indicate higher degree of happiness.

### Results

**Table 1 Correlation coefficients between religious attitude and happiness for male (n=744), female (n=747) and total (n=1491)**

Sub-scales of Religious attitude	Males	Females	Total sample
Nature of God	-.332	-.318	-.287
Formal Religion	-.331	-.343	-.230
Future Life	-.508	-.519	-.514
Prayer and Worship	-.332	-.321	-.316
Priests	-.335	-.360	-.347
Spirits and Spirit World	-.533	-.556	-.524
Total Scores	-.492	-.551	-.468

From table I it is clearly revealed that all the correlation coefficients obtained between subscales of Religious attitude and happiness were found to be highly significant. Further, happiness was highly correlated with future life and spirits and spiritual was less correlated with formal religion. Though the obtained correlation coefficients were negative, the relationship was actually positive, since higher scores on religious attitude indicate lower attitude. In the case of male professionals it was found that all the correlation coefficients obtained between subscales of Religious attitude and happiness were found to be highly significant. Further, happiness was highly correlated with future life and spiritual world and less correlated with formal religion. Even in the case of female professionals was found that all the correlation coefficients obtained between subscales of Religious attitude and happiness was found to be highly significant. Further, happiness was highly correlated with future life and spiritual world and less correlated with formal religion.

### Discussion

The findings of the present study are in agreement with several studies done earlier,

where persons with high religiosity were found to be happier than persons with lower levels of religiosity Abdel-Khalelc, 2006; Balswick & Balkwell, 1979; Cutler, 1976; Ellison, 1991; Frankel & He Graney, 1975). There was a consistent positive relationship between religious attitude and happiness. Kaczorowski (2002), who reported a consistent inverse relationship, was found between spiritual well being and state trait anxiety, regardless of influences of gender, age, marital status, diagnosis, group participation, length of time since diagnosis among cancer patients. Investigation by Davis, Kerr and Kurpius (2003) on adolescents at risk found that the higher the spiritual well-being, existential well-being, religious well-being and intrinsic religious orientation were among males, the lower the anxiety. Harris, Schoneman and Carrera (2002) suggest that a committed, related approach to religiosity may be associated with lower levels of general anxiety. A principal components analysis suggests that a constellation of religious variables-which involves religious commitment aspects of one's prayer life, and relating to others in the religious reference group-has a significant negative relationship with trait anxiety. One could conclude that lower levels of religiosity brings more tension and anxiety and there by lower levels of happiness.

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Received: January 21, 2008

Accepted: April 28, 2008

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