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Role of Religious Involvement in the Mental Well-being and Academic Achievement of Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The main aim of the current research was to investigate the moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the students. Survey research design under the quantitative research method was considered more suitable for this research. The population for the current study was students of the University of Mianwali. The sample was selected by using a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected from students of three departments, i.e., Department of Education, Department of Economics, and Department of Psychology, from the Faculty of Social Sciences. The total sample comprised 308 B.S students of 2nd, 4th, and 8th Semester. Two adopted scales, i.e., "The Religious Commitment Inventory" to measure religious involvement, and the Mental Well-being scale were used. Academic achievement was measured through Cumulative Grade Point Average. In the current investigation, correlation analysis, moderation, and mediation analysis techniques were applied using SPSS V.27. The results of the current research indicate that an association between religious involvement and mental well-being, as well as between religious participation and academic achievement, was found to be significant. However, the relationship between mental well-being and academic achievement was found to be insignificant. The moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the respondents was insignificant. The mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between religious participation and academic achievement of the students was also insignificant. According to the current study, it was recommended that educational institutions need to conduct seminars for awareness about the coping role of religion in the improvement of well-being and academic performance.

Keywords: *religious involvement, mental, well-being, academic achievement, students, undergraduates*

Introduction

The achievement in academic of college students is regarded as the essential objective. It is considered as the most crucial sign of students capacity building for skills application and cognitive development in the classroom settings. There are different nature of elements including personal abilities, environment of the schools and intrinsic drive that effect the academic achievement. Among all these elements, the religious beliefs and practices are imperative social and psychological factors. The engagement of religious activities is a broad term that need to be balanced with daily activities. Religion provide psychological support but an over emphasis on it at the expense of other areas of life can lead to social and psychological problems. For instance, too much dedication to prayers and ritual might interfere with balance and have an impact on the mental health and social integration. The students psychological health are interrelated to academic success itself. The academic success helps in cultivating self-assurance, self-contentment and the ability to face social and mental hindrances. Academic achievement goes beyond the classroom performance and it has considerable impact on the students psychological and social dimensions (Younis & Rabouh, 2010).

Religious beliefs helps people in shaping their views about life, which also meet psychological demands like belonging and security. Religious involvement frequently helps in adjustment and coping of psychological problems like depression, mental health and anxiety. Research show that people who frequently involve in religious activities are less targeted by depression and anxiety. Religion mainly encourage the simple life style which may reduce negative habits like self-destructive thoughts. However religious involvement may disturbs the balance in material and religious activities, uneven and excessive participation in religious activities interferes with social and psychological functioning. This imbalance may have negative on social competence as well as on mental well-being (Koenig, 2009).

The result of excessive religious involvement may be anxiety and stress. Strict ritualistic observance disregards individual ability and can lead to psychological strain. Individuals balance to fulfill their religious duties are less likely to experience depression than those who overdo it or totally disregard it. Excessive religious involvement outcomes are non-negotiable beliefs that restricts flexibility. These non-negotiable beliefs creates problems in adjustment to life and less receptive to different viewpoints (Diener et al., 2002). Spending most of time in worship may create risk of ignoring their familial responsibilities and communities. Social support is important for preserving mental well-being may be weakened due to such

neglect (Jassim, 2025). Religion is complex concept with ethical, existential and social components that work together to strengthen faith and offer coping, mechanism in facing difficult situations. A higher level of mental well-being is reported by people who find existential value in their beliefs (Baumeister, 2002). The degree and type of religious involvement may be risk as well as protective factor at the same time.

Many individuals may found shelter to religion when they experience stress or bereavement. In challenging situations, individuals who use religion as coping element mostly exhibit more hope and perseverance (McCullough et al., 2000). There has long been scholarly interest in the connection between religion and wellbeing. While Taheri-Kharameh (2016) opposes that religion offers meaning, purpose and well-being in life. Bowman and Small (2012) emphasize the impact of religious in religious activities on mental health. According to Papaleontiou-Louca (2021), religious involvements are frequently associated with favorable consequences for mental health. According to Michalos (2001), religious activities like going to church have a slight positive impact on people's subjective well-being, especially for older persons (Lawler-Row & Elliott, 2009). Students' academic success has been favorably connected with their involvement in moral and religious activities in educational settings (Quirante & Avila, 2025).

However, religious involvement does not always have a favorable impact on mental health. Since religious participation is linked to improved mental and physical health as well as longer survival, the evidence generally points to a positive influence. However, Koenig (2009) advise that the advantages of religion rely on its moderation. While neglecting religion might leave people open to thoughts of meaninglessness, excessive religiosity can restrict intellectual flexibility, induce guilt, and create psychological suffering. Therefore, defining the ways in which religion affects health and well-being is the difficult part. The World Health Organization's concept of mental well-being adds even more depth to the discussion over religion and mental health.

According to WHO (2001), it is a condition in which people reach their full potential, manage everyday stressors, work efficiently, and give back to their communities. Therefore, mental well-being is multifaceted and includes meaning, self-realization, good functioning and pleasure (Mahali, 2019). This approach is becoming more and more supported by research, which acknowledges that mental health encompasses both the absence of psychological distress and the existence of positive well-being (Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008). According to Anuradha et al. (2014), psychological distress and well-being are complimentary but different aspects of mental health. Finding a balance between social integration,

religious commitment, and academic obligations is essential for students, especially those facing challenging academic environments.

Objectives

Followings were the objectives of the current research:

1. To find out the relationship among religious involvement, mental well-being and academic achievement of students
2. To find out the moderating role of religious involvement in mental well-being and academic achievement of students
3. To find out the mediating role of mental well-being in religious involvement and academic achievement of students

Research Hypothesis:

Followings were the hypothesis of the current research:

1. H_{A1}: There is significant relationship among religious involvement, mental well-being and academic achievement of students
2. H_{A2}: There is a significant moderating role of religious involvement in mental well-being and academic achievement of students
3. H_{A3}: There is a significant mediating role of mental well-being in religious involvement and academic achievement of students

Methodology

Cross-sectional survey research design were considered more suitable for this research. The type of the study was quantitative. All students of University of Mianwali were considered population for current research. By using convenience sampling techniques, students from three departments namely Department of Education, Department of Economics and Department of Psychology from Faculty of Social Sciences were selected. The total sample comprised of 308 B.S students of 2nd, 4th, and 8th semester. By using both online and physical mean, data was collected. Two adopted scales i.e., "The Religious Commitment Inventory" developed by Worthington et al. (2003) to measure religious involvement and Mental well-being scale by Fen et al. (2013) were used. First instrument contains 10 statement and second contains 30 statements. Five point Likert scale was used. Religious involvement and mental well-being were independent variables and academic achievement (dependent variable) was measured through Cumulative Grade Point Average. Following instrument reliability, 29 students' data were used for pilot testing. Both instruments were reliable as Cronbach's Alpha for The Religious Commitment Inventory instruments was .621. and for mental well-being was .931. In the current investigation correlation analysis, moderation and mediation analysis techniques were applied. SPSS version 27 was used to evaluate the data. According to local standards, no ethical approval was required. All other ethical responsibilities were completed accordingly.

Results

Correlational Analysis

Table 1. *Relationship among religious involvement, mental well-being and academic achievement of the respondents*

		MW	AA
RI	Pearson Correlation	.227**	.137*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.016
	N	308	308
MW	Pearson Correlation		.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.225
	N		308

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation coefficient showed a positive weak relationship between Religious involvement and mental well-being of respondents; which was statistically significant ($r = .22$, $p = .00$). Therefore, alternate hypothesis was accepted. The relationship between religious involvement and academic achievement was also found weak but significant as ($r = .13$, $p = .01$). So, alternate hypothesis was accepted. However, the relationship between mental well-being and academic achievement was insignificant as ($r = .69$, $p = .22$). so, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

Moderation Analysis

Table 2. *Moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the respondents*

	β	p	LLCI	ULCI	R2	R2 Change
Constant	3.839	.000	1.917	5.762		
MW	-.009	.276	-.025	.007	.026	.006
RI	-.027	.350	-.085	.030		
MW \times RI	.000	.187	.000	.001		

It was revealed in table 2 that mental well-being was insignificantly related to student's academic achievement; and religious involvement insignificantly moderated the relationship between mental well-being and student's academic achievement as the interaction effect i.e., that mental well-being \times religious involvement \rightarrow academic achievement ($\beta = .000$, $p = .187$) was insignificant. We rejected the alternate hypothesis

Mediation Analysis

Table 3. *Mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between religious involvement and academic achievement of the students*

CI 95%

<i>Effects</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Direct Effect						
RI \rightarrow AA	.011	.005	2.191	.029	.001	.021
Indirect Effect						
RI \rightarrow MW	.001	.001			-.001	.003

Total Effect						
RI→MW→AA	.012	.005	2.413	.016	.002	.021

Note: If “zero” falls inside the 95% CI, then don’t refuse the null hypothesis; mediation cannot not be assumed.

Table 3 showed that direct effect was significant with ($\beta = .011, p = .02$, LLCI = .001, and ULCI = .021 with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval); so, religious involvement (independent variable) has an significant direct effect on academic achievement (dependent variable). Indirect effect was insignificant with ($\beta .001$, LLCI = -.001, and ULCI = .003 with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval); so, mental well-being has insignificant mediating effect between religious involvement and academic achievement. Researcher rejected the alternate hypothesis. Total effect was significant with ($\beta = .012, p = .01$, LLCI = .002, and ULCI = .021 with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval). The direct and total effect was significant but indirect effect was insignificant, so mediation hypothesis was not supported.

Discussion

The current study intended to find the moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the students. The current research findings revealed that the relationship between religious involvement and mental well-being was significant. Another study results were in the favor of current research as in the United Kingdom, both majority (Christianity) and minority religions showed correlations between attending religious services and mental health (Aksoy et al., 2020). Generally speaking, health is not the prime factor that stimuli religious participation decisions. Attending religious services, however, may be a significant way for people who are already religious to integrate into society and may be linked to longer lifespans, healthier habits, improved mental health, and increased psycho-social well-being (Chen et al., 2020). Regular service attendance was associated to improved downstream well-being and fewer "deaths of despair" (suicide, drug, and alcohol) among health professionals and outcomes closely related to mental health, according to large longitudinal investigations. Current research was supported by the findings of this study (Chen et al., 2020). According to Kaushal et al. (2021), there was no proof that religious attendance at ages 43, 60–64, or 68–69 was associated to concurrent mental health which ran counter to existing data. This study looked at the reciprocal association between psychological well-being and religiosity in a sample of adult Americans. Data from the Midlife in the United States (MIDUS) survey, which was collected at three intervals over roughly 20 years, was used in the study. The findings indicated a marginally positive between-person relationship between psychological well-being and religiosity. However, within-person changes in religiosity did not related to the future changes in

psychological well-being, and vice versa, according to the results of the random-intercept cross-lagged panel model (Joshani, 2024).

The association between religious involvement and academic achievement was also significant in current study. Teenagers who are more religious have better grades, miss fewer days of secondary school, and finish more years of college and supported current study (Horwitz, 2020). In particular, greater church attendance was associated with stronger personal spirituality, which in turn predicted better academic performance for boys and less depressive symptoms for girls (Kang & Romo, 2011). Teenagers' social capital and religious participation will be linked to how well they do in educational institutes. Nevertheless, depending on the specific academic outcome, such associations are probably going to differ. We contend that teens' participation in religious groups will improve their social capital and, as a result, positively correlate with their academic performance. Ellison and Muller (2001). The authors investigate how students' performance in marketing classes at a US institution is impacted by their religious affiliation and religiosity. There are five major religions represented in their sample of 740 students. According to their findings, there was a negative interaction effect on performance for Islam and religiosity, a positive interaction effect for Christianity and religiosity, and no interaction for Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (Li & Murphy, 2018). Academic achievement and general religion did not significantly correlate, according to a correlational study conducted among 385 students at Tehran University of Medical Sciences and contradicted the findings of the current study. The only aspect of religion that exhibited a slight but noteworthy positive connection was rituals (Ghafournia & Khajepour, 2011). Another study's results contradicted the current study by showing that university students generally did not exhibit a high level of religious involvement and that there was no statistically significant association between religious involvement and academic achievement (Jassim, 2025).

The association between mental well-being and academic achievement was insignificant in current study. In a study of UK, Stewart-Brown et al. (2000) discovered that although mental well-being was associated with health and life satisfaction, it did not directly related to exam results and supported findings of current study. According to some study, perfectionism and a rigorous workload might cause high academic achievers to experience poor mental health at the same time (Pascoe et al., 2020). This casts doubt on the notion that mental stress and high academic achievement are always positively correlated by indicating that they can occasionally coexist. Higher levels of mental well-being were found to predict greater academic success, even after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics and prior achievement (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012). According to Rodríguez-Fernández et al. (2016), among Spanish university students, mental well-

being as determined by resilience, self-esteem, and affect balance significantly predicted GPA, suggesting that well-being is a crucial component of academic achievement. Bucker et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis that supported the notion that students who are happier and mentally healthy are more likely to perform well academically and countered existing data by confirming a positive association between well-being and academic achievement across several samples.

The moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the respondents were insignificant. The use of collaborative religious coping did not change the associations between stressors and distress or well-being, according to an analysis of the moderation effects. Well-being was inversely correlated with the combination of stressors and postponing religious coping. In other words, a higher usage of postponing religious coping during stressful situations seems to be detrimental to one's positive affect and sense of fulfillment in life (Fabricatore et al., 2004). Higher religious commitment appeared to operate as a moderator promoting achievement, as evidenced by a study conducted among American college students that found it mitigated the detrimental effects of stress and low well-being on academic performance (Walker & Dixon, 2002). The moderating effect of religious participation on academic performance and mental health was significant (Ramezanzadeh & Ramezanzadeh, 2024).

The mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between religious involvement and academic achievement of the students were also insignificant.). The direct association between work-life balance and job performance does not appear to be mediated by mental health and supported current results (Gaikwad et al., 2021). Psychological well-being acted as a mediator between internalized stigma and affect balance and life satisfaction and contradicted current study results (Perez-Garín et al., 2015). Furthermore, the findings indicated that the association between psychological empowerment and well-being was partially mediated by psychological well-being. (Malik and Nisar, 2019). Although it is known that this correlation may be bidirectional, the results indicated that mental well-being partially moderated the relationship between perceived stress and reported health (Teh et al., 2013

Conclusion

The results of current research informs that the association between religious involvement and mental well-being, and religious involvement and academic achievement was significant. However, the relationship between mental well-being and academic achievement was insignificant. The moderating role of religious involvement in the mental well-being and academic achievement of the respondents were insignificant. The mediating

role of mental well-being in the relationship between religious involvement and academic achievement of the students were also insignificant.

Recommendations

1. Probability sampling techniques, such as stratified random sampling, may be used in future research to increase generalization outside of a single university setting. Research from various academic institutions and fields may reveal institutional, social, or cultural variations in the effects of religious participation on success and well-being.
2. Longitudinal survey method may record changes in academic achievement, mental health, and religious commitment over time.
3. To better understand the connection between religion and academic results, future researchers might look at additional psychological or social factors such as motivation, resilience, social support, and coping mechanisms as possible mediators or moderators.
4. To find out if religious involvement varies at different stages of students' academic journeys, future research could compare academic stages or gender groupings.

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