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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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.

INTRODUCTION

Human life outcomes are influenced by a variety of skills and abilities, among which cognitive skills play a significant role. These skills, including numeracy, mental abilities, and literacy, have traditionally been used to define mental capacities such as memory and comprehension (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). However, recent decades have seen an increasing emphasis on "non-cognitive skills," which are not direct outcomes of cognitive abilities but are tied to psychological traits like beliefs, interests, motivation, and personality (Rammstedt, Danner, & Lechner, 2017). Notably, Nobel laureate economist James Heckman and his collaborators were among the first to champion non-cognitive skills, arguing for the importance of studying personality and its non-cognitive dimensions (Heckman et al., 2006).

Research on non-cognitive skills has highlighted their significance in various life outcomes. For example, positive personality traits such as optimism and conscientiousness are strong predictors of health and longevity (Allison et al., 2003; Rasmussen et al., 2009). Conversely, negative traits, such as low emotional stability and an external locus of control, have been linked to lower life satisfaction (Rammstedt, 2007). Studies also reveal that individuals with positive traits like conscientiousness are more likely to have stable marriages and lower divorce rates (Roberts & Bogg, 2004). Moreover, personality traits influence professional performance and income, with positive traits contributing to higher performance and earnings (Judge et al., 2002).

The growing recognition of non-cognitive skills has sparked global interest among researchers. Many scholars have advocated for comprehensive studies that incorporate both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. For instance, Wechsler (1950) proposed that IQ tests should assess both intellectual and non-intellectual traits to provide a holistic view of an individual. Similarly, Vernon (1950) introduced the "X factor" of personality alongside Spearman's cognitive factor (g) in models for assessing educational abilities, incorporating personality and interest as non-cognitive dimensions.

Despite these advancements, theoretical frameworks and assessments of non-cognitive skills remain underdeveloped, particularly in relation to personality theories and other psychological aspects (Rammstedt et al., 2017).

This study seeks to explore the connections between personality, religiosity, gratitude to God (as non-cognitive skills), and life outcomes such as well-being. While extensive research has examined personality, religiosity, and gratitude, gaps remain. For example, positive traits like agreeableness and conscientiousness are positively correlated with socio-psychological outcomes, whereas traits like extraversion show weaker associations (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018; Saroglou, 2010). Although some studies have linked personality with religious orientation, the interplay between personality traits and gratitude to God remains understudied. Furthermore, most existing research has been conducted in developed, Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding these relationships in Eastern, underdeveloped, and Muslim societies (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

To address these gaps, this study investigates the relationships between personality traits (specifically the Big Five), religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. Well-being, as Aghababaei (2017) noted, is a fundamental human concern, and identifying its predictors remains a priority. While personality has received substantial attention, religiosity and gratitude to God have been less explored in this context. Recent calls for more research on non-cognitive skills and well-being (e.g., Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018) further underscore the relevance of this investigation.

The study focuses on Pakistani society, predominantly composed of individuals from monotheistic faiths (Islam and Christianity), where gratitude to God forms a central tenet of religious practice. Given this cultural and religious backdrop, the study anticipates finding a strong presence of gratitude to God within the population. It is also expected that religiosity, whether internal or external, will correlate with gratitude to God and that this, in turn, will be associated with well-being, given the established links between personality, religiosity, and well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality, as one of the key non-cognitive skills, has been extensively studied, with numerous tools developed to measure its dimensions. Among these, the Big Five Personality (BFP) framework is the most commonly used and widely accepted. The BFP encompasses five core dimensions: agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and openness to experience. Empirical evidence indicates that these dimensions are linked to various individual-level outcomes, such as anxiety, self-esteem, and affectivity; organizational-level outcomes, including attitudinal, behavioral, and performance metrics; and personal-level outcomes like health and morality (Allison et al., 2003; Rasmussen et al., 2009). Additionally, personality traits influence family-level outcomes, such as life satisfaction, marital stability, and reduced divorce rates (Bell et al., 2012; Erdle et al., 2010; Judge et al., 2002; Roberts & Bogg, 2004; Van der Linden et al., 2013). These findings have been documented across diverse cultural and sample contexts (Erdle & Aghababaei, 2012; Hull & Beaujean, 2011; Loehlin, 2012).

Despite the extensive research, studies have predominantly focused on the neurological basis of BFP traits (Erdle & Aghababaei, 2012), while psychological determinants have received limited attention (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018). Drawing on life history theory, personality is observed to emerge from a combination of factors, including religiosity, personality-environment interactions, and broader environmental influences (Emmons et al., 2008; Erdle & Rushton, 2010). Empirical research highlights a positive relationship between religiosity and personality, particularly with mature and authentic facets of religiosity that contribute to socio-psychological adjustment (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

Intrinsic religiosity and gratitude to God are significant socio-psychological mechanisms explored in this context. In monotheistic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, gratitude to God is a fundamental expression of faith, serving as a means of worship and acknowledgment of divine blessings. Religiosity, broadly classified into intrinsic and extrinsic categories, further explains socio-psychological adjustment. Intrinsic religiosity reflects deep-seated religious convictions that shape one's life motivations, while extrinsic religiosity denotes a more superficial faith driven by social and psychological needs (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

Studies suggest that BFP traits, religiosity, and gratitude to God are interrelated. For instance, agreeableness and conscientiousness are strongly associated with socio-psychological mechanisms, whereas extraversion shows weaker correlations (Aghababaei, 2013; Saroglou, 2010). Although the relationship between BFP traits and religiosity has been explored extensively, the link between BFP traits, gratitude to God, and well-being remains underexplored. Furthermore, while numerous studies focus on Western contexts, investigations into Muslim populations are scarce (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018).

Well-being has also been largely neglected in socio-psychological adjustment studies. While prior research identifies personality as a significant predictor of well-being, its relationship with religiosity and gratitude to God has not been thoroughly examined. For instance, studies reveal that extraversion and emotional stability are positively linked to well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Similarly, religiosity has been found to correlate with well-being; for example, religious college students in the U.S. report higher happiness levels (Francis & Lester, 1997). However, some studies argue that religiosity alone is not a strong predictor of well-being when considered alongside BFP traits (Barrie, 2012).

Given the lack of empirical research on the interplay between gratitude to God, religiosity, personality, and well-being, this study aims to address these gaps. It focuses on a Muslim society, where gratitude to God forms a central tenet of religious belief. Since both personality and religiosity influence well-being, it is hypothesized that gratitude to God will similarly correlate with well-being. The study proposes the following hypotheses to explore these relationships empirically.:

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 current study utilized data collected from a sample of 314 students enrolled in two business schools within a large public-sector university. The majority of participants were male (63.5%) and pursuing undergraduate degrees (63%), with an average age of 22.5 years. The instruments used to measure the variables were well-established scales adapted from previous studies, ensuring reliability and validity.

- **Big Five Personality (BFP):** Personality traits were assessed using the 10-item scale developed by Rammstedt and John (2007), a concise and widely accepted tool that reliably captures the core dimensions of the Big Five personality traits.
- **Gratitude to God:** Gratitude was measured using Krause's (2006) four-item scale, which includes statements such as, *"I am grateful to God for all He has done for me."* This scale effectively captures the concept of gratitude in a religious context.
- **Well-being:** The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) was employed to operationalize well-being. This global measure of happiness comprises four items, including statements like, *"In general, I consider myself ------------."*
- **Religiosity:** Religiosity was assessed using the three-dimensional Religious Orientation Scale by Aghababaei (2012). Each dimension was represented by a single-item measure:
  - *Extrinsic-personal religiosity* was evaluated with the statement, *"What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow."*
  - *Extrinsic-social religiosity* was measured through the item, *"I go to the mosque or religious community mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there."*
  - *Intrinsic religiosity* was assessed using the statement, *"My whole approach to life is based on my religion."*

Each of these items was rated on a 10-point Likert scale to capture the responses accurately. This methodological approach ensured that the measures were succinct yet comprehensive, providing a

robust foundation for analyzing the relationships between personality traits, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The results of the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 1 (reliability analysis) and Table 2 (correlation analysis). The reliability analysis presented in Table 1 indicates that all measurement scales used in the study demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency, as the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70.

- **Big Five Personality:** The scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, indicating a high level of reliability and confirming its suitability for assessing personality traits in the sample population.
- **Religiosity:** The three dimensions of religiosity also demonstrated acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.73 to 0.88. These results highlight the robustness and consistency of the religiosity measures used in the study.
- **Gratitude to God and Well-being:** Both scales demonstrated high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the threshold of 0.70. This indicates that these scales are reliable for measuring gratitude to God and subjective well-being within the context of the current study.

Overall, the reliability analysis confirms the appropriateness and consistency of the measurement instruments employed in the study, providing a solid foundation for further statistical analysis and interpretation.

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 presents the bivariate correlation results among all the measures, examining the relationships between personality dimensions, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. Each dimension of the Big Five Personality traits was tested for its association with religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. The results show that agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are significantly associated with intrinsic religiosity (β = .11*, .09*, and .13, respectively), while extraversion and openness to experience are not significantly related to intrinsic religiosity. Among the five personality dimensions, only agreeableness and conscientiousness exhibit positive associations with extrinsic-personal religiosity (β = .21, .23*), whereas none of the personality dimensions show a significant relationship with extrinsic-social religiosity, except for openness to experience (β = .10*). Additionally, all Big Five dimensions are significantly related to gratitude to God (β = .32, .25*, .30*, .21*, and .20, respectively).

Furthermore, the results indicate that only agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are significantly linked to individual well-being (β = .33*, .42, and .49*, respectively). These findings align with prior research by Aghababaei (2013, 2014), which highlighted that personality traits influence religiosity differently, with agreeable and conscientious individuals being more inclined toward religious behaviors.

The analysis also explores the relationships between different dimensions of religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. Intrinsic religiosity is not significantly related to extrinsic-personal religiosity (β = .05) but is associated with extrinsic-social religiosity (β = .10*), indicating that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are not entirely interrelated. Intrinsic religiosity shows significant associations

with gratitude to God (β = .29*) and well-being (β = .33*). Conversely, extrinsic-personal religiosity is significantly associated with extrinsic-social religiosity (β = .11), gratitude to God (β = .39*), and well-being (β = .41*). Additionally, gratitude to God is positively related to well-being (β = .40*), confirming that personality, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being are interconnected.

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 strive to achieve various life goals, which depend on a combination of skills and abilities. These are categorized into cognitive skills, such as numeracy, mental abilities, and literacy, and non-cognitive skills, including personality traits (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Over the last few decades, there has been an increasing emphasis on non-cognitive skills, defined as those not directly stemming from cognitive abilities but associated with psychological aspects such as beliefs, interests, motivation, and personality (Rammstedt, Danner & Lechner, 2017). The growing recognition of the importance of non-cognitive skills has attracted global research interest, with some scholars advocating for an integrated focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Vernon, 1950; Wechsler, 1950). Despite this, theoretical development and assessment of non-cognitive skills, particularly concerning personality theories and related aspects, lag behind (Rammstedt et al., 2017).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the relationship between personality, religiosity, gratitude to God (as non-cognitive skills), and well-being. The findings reveal that only specific dimensions of personality—agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability—are associated with religiosity, while others, such as extraversion and openness to experience, are not. This highlights the isolated functioning of personality traits and their varied relationships with different outcomes, supporting the findings of prior research (Aghababaei, 2013; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018; Saroglou, 2010). Additionally, the study finds that all dimensions of personality are positively associated with gratitude to God, with agreeableness and emotional stability demonstrating the strongest relationships. These findings confirm earlier assumptions (Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018) and fill a gap in understanding the connection between personality and gratitude to God.

The study further explores the relationship between religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. It finds that intrinsic and extrinsic-personal religiosity are strongly associated with gratitude to God and well-being, while extrinsic-social religiosity has a weaker relationship. Gratitude to God emerges as a significant predictor of well-being, suggesting that individuals with high gratitude to God report greater well-being. These findings support hypotheses regarding the interconnectedness of personality, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being and align with past research (e.g., Ferrari et al., 2017; Francis & Crea, 2019; Aghababaei & Tekke, 2018). The results also emphasize the role of religious beliefs in shaping socio-psychological mechanisms, particularly in a Muslim-dominated context like Pakistan, where gratitude to God is deeply embedded in cultural and religious practices.

Implications of the Study

This study provides valuable insights into the interplay of personality, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. The findings underline the importance of integrating psychological and religious dimensions when studying socio-psychological mechanisms. The positive relationship between gratitude to God and well-being suggests that thankfulness enhances mental contentment. These findings have theoretical implications for academia and practical significance for practitioners,

particularly in understanding how different personality dimensions influence outcomes like religiosity and well-being.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. The sample is relatively small and restricted to university students within a specific age bracket. Given that psychological mechanisms evolve with life experiences, future research should explore these variables across diverse age groups and demographics. Gender-based differences and other variables, such as Islamic work ethics and cultural influences, should also be investigated. Expanding the sample to include individuals from different income levels, cultures, and life stages would provide a more comprehensive understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between Big Five personality traits, religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being. The findings confirm that personality dimensions influence outcomes in varying ways. Religious individuals tend to exhibit greater gratitude to God and higher well-being compared to their counterparts. Gratitude to God is strongly and positively linked to well-being, highlighting its central role in enhancing mental and emotional health. By exploring these relationships, the study contributes to the literature by addressing the interplay of religiosity, gratitude to God, and well-being alongside personality traits.

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