

Religious Practices and Gender Differences: A Psychological Review

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ABSTRACT

Religion is a social custom that is based on a set of moral principles, laws, and rituals. It has a significant impact on how an individual's personality and perspective evolve. It is generally recognized that religiosity differs between genders. Past Studies frequently reveal that, In terms of religion, women are more likely than males to practice it. In this paper, some empirical research is presented; evaluated and discussed how gender affects religious affiliation. Significant racial and gender inequalities were found in the review, and these differences persisted even when sociodemographic factors such as education, age, marital status, family income, area, urbanity, and subjective health were taken into account. These researches bring more attention to some of the ways that gender influences religious significance and activity, as well as the strong and frequently fundamental relationships that exist between religion and gender.

Keywords: Religion, Gender, Race, Society, Discrimination

In India and other nations throughout the world, the impact of religion may be seen in people's day-to-day activities. Research reveals that the influence of religion is enormous in determining our personality and behaviour. A belief system that includes values, guidelines, and behaviour constitutes the foundation of religion as a social practice. It is structured according to social connections. This is based on the most relevant definition of religion at the time, as provided by Clarke and Jennings (2008). A person's social and personal life is significantly shaped and guided by their religion. Religious motives often influence a person's inner experiences, personal values, and every meaning that is assigned to life.

A very religious person is supposed to view the world through religious perspectives and incorporate their religion into the majority of their daily activities. But there is a huge difference in religiosity based on gender, the reason behind this is our cultural beliefs and

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practice. Despite the gender differences in religiosity, its importance is very high in today's time, because religious practices shape the thinking, perception towards the world and personality of a person. In today's time, researchers have paid a lot of attention on religion's relevance in people's lives.

Religiosity

Religion has been informed by the assessment of "religiosity," which demonstrates a deep grasp of how people connect and integrate with their religion and how they describe excellence in everyday activities (Whitley, 2009; Ahrold & Meston, 2010; Saroglou, 2009). Religiosity is characterized by a person's allegiance to and application of religious concepts, principles, and practices in daily life (Worthington, 2003). In the social sciences, the term "religiosity" is utilized to differentiate and describe both individual and collective religious affiliations, according to (Park, 2005; Roccas & Elster, 2013). A person's internal experiences, personal values, and every meaning attached to life are frequently influenced by religious causes.

It is expected that someone who is extremely religious will interpret the world using religious paradigms and so incorporate their religion into the majority of their lives. Researchers have recently focused a lot of attention on the impact of religion in people's lives (Puffer et al., 2012, Sullivan, 2011; Dillen & Van Hoof, 2016, Yurdakul & Atik, Rogers & Konieczny, 2018).

Religion and Gender

Gender differences in religiosity are among the best-documented findings in the subject of religion psychology, according to numerous textbooks. As an illustration, Beit-Hallahmi and Argly (1975) state that:

"The differences between men and women in their religious behaviour and women in their religious behaviour and beliefs are considerable... This is therefore one of the most important of the statistical comparisons to be made in this book."

At first impression, it is clear from the statistics that Compared to men, women practise more religion. Despite the statistical evidence's seeming overwhelming agreement, several experts pertaining to religion psychology strongly disagree with Argyle and Beit-findings. Hallahmi (1975). Deconchy (1973), for instance, posted the following:

"The idea that women are more 'religious' than men are a particularly prevalent assumption. In the final analysis, the idea that women are 'more religious' than men are as unsoundly based, philosophically and empirically, as it is self-evident to some people."

Likewise, to this, Poloma and Feltey (1991) contend that typecasts regarding women's increased religiosity are false. Actual cause of debate, however, is less about proving evidence exists to back up the assertion that Females are more religious than Male, it is about developing a solid theoretical foundation that can adequately explain the causes for the observed difference. To elucidate the differences in women's and men's religiosity, there are two main sets of theories in the psychology of religion (Francis, 1996).

The first group of speculation emphasizes communal or environmental aspects that affect how men and women react to religion differently. Theories of gender role socialization and theories of structural location are two subcategories of this group. The second collection of hypotheses focuses on the unique or particular psychological traits that set men and women

apart. Three criteria can be used to categorise this group: gender orientation theories, personality theories, and depth psychology theories.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

On this specific topic, most studies have found that women are often more religious than men (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi, 1975:71–9 for a summary of sociological works in this area). There has not been a significant amount of empirical research done to explain these differences, which is unfortunate. Marie Augusta Neal's (1975:38) observation about male dominance in the sociology of religion may be pertinent in this situation and help to partially explain the "prejudice and reluctance to change in the existing literature's choice of materials and subjects. Despite being an interesting field of study, hardly much empirical research has been done on it. However, two broad explanations for this issue have been found in the sociological literature.

The first investigates unequal socialization and contends that compared to men, Socialisation teaches women to be more submissive, obedient, meek, and nurturing, and these qualities are linked to greater levels of religiosity (Potvin & Suziedelis, Mol 1985). Similar to this, Nelsen and Powin (1981) claim that parent-child interaction and gender role socialization both place a greater focus on religiousness and compliance for girls than for males. They conclude that gender differences among adolescents should be anticipated in the personal but not the public spheres due to the different socialization experiences that males and females have, while males and females should respond to social pressures fairly similarly in the public sphere.

Additionally, they contend that there should be distinctions on the private dimension for young people who identify as belonging to a church rather than a sect, especially if the group lays a lot of focus on male conversion experiences. They give some evidence for the socialization theory by illuminating projected differences in gender effects between denomination, geographic locations, and elements of religiosity among 13 to 18-year-old American youths drawn from a national sample. Social trends that may support treating boys and girls similarly may weaken the capacity of theories of gender role socialization to clarify sex differences in religion.

As per the second notion, women are more religious than males are as a result of their structural place in society. In general, this perspective argues that women's decreased labour market participation and increasing parenting responsibilities lead to an increase in their involvement in religion. There is a claim that women require a foundation of individual identity and promise more than males do and that they also have greater time for church related activities because they are less likely to be employed (Martin 1967; Luckmann 1967). Furthermore, others contend that women's main parental responsibility elevates their religion because it is associated with care for the welfare of the family (Glock et. al., 1997).

Ehrenberg and Azzi (1975) found that females are highly attend church activities than male, in part because religion is a continuation of the division of work. Because she is more adept at managing the required time, the woman typically performs religious involvement, which is regarded as a home activity. Studying the interactions between religion, gender, and age using cross-sectional data from the National Survey of Black Americans reveals, that male and female across the cycle of life have high degrees of organizational, non-organizational, and subjective religiosity (Taylor & Levin, 1993). Compared to men, women displayed higher degrees of religion across seven age groups for each of the 12 religious measures, and

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this result held even after accounting for numerous identified sociodemographic factors that influence religion. Several organisational indicators revealed that this gender gap decreased somewhat or even reversed at the very oldest age groups, resembling the well-known "crossover" of Black and White mortality rates (see Markides and Machalek, 1984).

Gender disparities in religious practices have been shown in some studies, but not a belief in religion (Thompson, 1991; Potvin and Sloane, 1983). Research findings on religious attitudes and practices have repeatedly shown that women practice religion more than men do. They are more prone to be interested in religion than other people (Lenski 1953; Yinger: 1970; Sasaki 1979), having a more fervent personal devotion to religion (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle 1975; Bensen et. al., 1989), and regularly attend church (Moberg 1962; Cornwall 1989, and Bastson et. al., 1993).

Women are more likely than men to regularly pray and read the Bible, according to the 1990 General Social Survey., which is consistent with previous findings (Davis & Smith 1991). Even after adjusting for the impacts of education, marital and work status, location, urban metropolis, and health satisfaction, Black women still outperformed Black men in terms of levels of religiosity at all ages. The degrees of organisational, non-organizational, and subjective religiosity were moderate to high in both sexes.

Volunteers who identified as Christians (n = 230), Hindus (n = 56), Jews (n = 157) or Muslims (n = 87) had their genders evaluated. Women (n=302) reported being much less religiously active than men (n=226), but only among non-Christian groups. There is a suggestion that the generalization that females are highly religious than male depends on the culture and the survey technique (MacLeod,A.K., Cinnirella, M., & Loewenthal, K.M., 2002).

Limitations and Future Implications

The present study should be considered in light of some important limitations. First, this is a theoretical study, so this study does not represent the population of either Haryana or India. The study is limited to research of the United States and European countries which may be extended to India and even the whole world. Second, the study was limited to a specific group in terms of age and background. Other age groups and backgrounds could also be studied. Third, we can use self-reported measures to assess the religiosity difference based on gender. Fourth, it was not possible to study the gender difference in the variable of religiosity in a single theoretical study.

The present study has contributed to the field of social psychology by investigating the gender differences in the variable of religiosity among the population of Haryana. There is a dearth of studies that aim to study gender differences on the variable of religion in the Indian context. The study is advantageous for people in the field of psychology, social sciences and other related areas which work on religion and gender. It is also helpful for NGOs who work with religious institutions in Haryana. Due to a lack of scientific knowledge, awareness and clarification about religion, religious practices are very poor and in the wrong way.

Following future directions can be concluded

1. It is suggested that future researchers need to study gender differences on the variable of religion. It would help in understanding the nature of religion. Very few researches have been conducted in India on gender differences in the variable of religiosity.

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2. The religion scale should be constructed in the Indian context for its better analysis of the Indian population.
3. Religiosity should be studied in all age groups and with other variables to provide more comprehensive insights.
4. Spreading awareness among individuals regarding religious practices and their effects on the perception, thinking, attitude, attribution and personality of a person in India.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be said that a religion is a body of codified beliefs, practises, and ideologies that frequently relate to the admiration of and devotion to a superior force, such as a personal god or a higher power. Various practices can be included in it, such as prayers, discourses, rites, meditation, and trips to holy places, symbols, trances, and feasts. A person's life and experiences can be significantly impacted by religion, which can also enhance health and happiness, according to current psychology. In reality, research has demonstrated that religion may assist in the regulation of behaviour, the development of healthy habits, and the understanding of emotions—all aspects of life that can affect how you feel physically and mentally. However, numerous studies revealed that gender differences are associated with the religious variable.

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Conflict of Interest

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