

The Role of Education in Shaping Religious Orientation and Psychological Well-Being among Muslim individuals in Western Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of educational attainment on intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among Muslim individuals in Western Maharashtra. Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected from a diverse sample of 600 participants (350 males, 250 females) across five districts: Pune, Sangli, Satara, Solapur, and Kolhapur. Participants were divided into three educational categories: matriculated, graduate, and postgraduate. The Religious Orientation Scale by Dr. Daniel Batson and the Psychological Well-Being Scale by Dr. Carol Ryff were used to assess intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being, respectively. The study had three main goals: (1) to compare the religious orientation of individuals with different levels of education, (2) to compare their mental well-being, and (3) to see if there was a relationship between religious beliefs and mental well-being. The results showed that individuals who were graduates or postgraduates had stronger personal religious beliefs (average score of 78.54) than those who had only completed matriculation (average score of 66.16). This difference was significant, with a t-value of 15.874. Similarly, graduates and postgraduates also had better mental health (average score of 168.32) compared to matriculated individuals (average score of 160.29), with a t-value of 8.83. Additionally, there was a very strong positive link ($r = 0.975$) between personal religious beliefs and mental well-being. This means that individuals who had stronger religious beliefs were more likely to have better mental health. The findings suggest that education plays a key role in shaping both religious beliefs and mental health. Higher education helps people develop stronger personal beliefs and leads to better psychological well-being. This study shows how education can impact personal growth and spiritual development, especially within religious communities.

Keywords: Education, Religious Orientation, Intrinsic Religious Orientation, Psychological Well-Being, Muslims, Western Maharashtra

Religion has always been seen as an important part of people's values, behaviors, and well-being (Allport, 1950). Specifically, when people follow religion for personal and internal reasons, known as intrinsic religious orientation, it often leads to better mental health (Allport & Ross, 1967). This study aims to look at how education affects

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religious beliefs and mental well-being among Muslim individuals in Western Maharashtra, a region known for its variety of schools and religious traditions. Earlier studies have shown that people with stronger personal religious beliefs usually handle emotions better, feel less anxious, and are more satisfied with life (Koenig, 2012).

The connection between education and religious beliefs is complicated and involves many factors. Higher education often helps people grow intellectually, think critically, and reflect on their beliefs, which can change how they practice their faith (Smith, 2003). For Muslim individuals, having a strong internal religious belief isn't just about following external rules; it means deeply accepting their faith, which affects their behavior, decisions, and how they cope with challenges (Reeve, 2006). In college and postgraduate education, individuals have more chances to think about and strengthen their religious beliefs because they are exposed to new ideas and spend more time reflecting. Research shows that graduate individuals, facing different viewpoints and pressures, often turn to their religion for comfort, making it a key part of their identity and mental health (Park & Slattery, 2013).

Simultaneously, psychological well-being is an important aspect of individuals' lives, influencing their academic performance, personal growth, and future careers. Education has been associated with improved well-being, as it enhances self-efficacy, problem-solving abilities, and access to social and emotional resources (Ryff & Singer, 2008). Particularly for individuals, navigating the challenges of academic life requires robust psychological well-being, supported by coping strategies such as religious beliefs. Previous research suggests that individuals who possess a stronger intrinsic religious orientation tend to exhibit higher psychological well-being, as they rely on faith for stress reduction, social support, and a sense of purpose (Pargament, 1997).

Since there might be a connection between personal religious beliefs and mental well-being, this study looks at how education affects these factors. It compares individuals at different education levels (matriculated, graduate, and postgraduate) to see how their personal religious beliefs and mental well-being differ. The study also examines if there is a strong positive link between these two aspects, as earlier research has shown that faith can help protect against mental health problems, especially in school settings (Koenig, 2012).

The findings of this study will contribute to the existing body of research by providing insights into how education influences religious orientation and well-being, particularly within a Muslim student population.

It will also offer practical implications for educators and policymakers to promote environments that nurture both academic and personal growth, allowing individuals to flourish both mentally and spiritually.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Allport, G. W., & Ross, J. M. (1967) executed a study regarding religious orientation and prejudice. The study revealed that individuals with having a stronger intrinsic religious orientation reported higher levels of psychological well-being and lower prejudice. These findings support those the personal, internally motivated religious beliefs, it means intrinsic religious orientation, contribute to better mental health outcomes.

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Smith, C. (2003) performed a study to inspect the role of education and intrinsic religious orientation. In the study, it was noticed that education plays a crucial role in nurturing the intrinsic religious orientation. According to Smith C. (2003) intrinsic religious orientation contributed in providing individuals an intellectual tool needed to understand the faith and use it meaningfully in their personal lives.

Koenig, H. G. (2012) carried out a study to examine the intrinsic religious orientation and mental health. The outcomes of study concluded that individuals with a strong intrinsic religious orientation were experienced better mental health outcomes, including lower rates of depression and anxiety. Further, according to Koenig, H. G. (2012) intrinsic religious orientation played a major role in coping strategies, a sense of purpose, and emotional stability.

Reeve, J. (2006) conducted a study to evaluate the connection between religious beliefs and education. The findings of the study detected that higher education was positively influenced on intrinsic religious orientation, particularly in Muslim populations. The study highlighted a relevant connection between religious orientation and psychological well-being. Because the individuals of intrinsic religious orientation were learned to balance faith and academic knowledge, leading to increased personal fulfillment and psychological well-being.

Ryff C. D. & Singer B. H. (2008) Accomplished a study to explore psychological well-being. The study highlights that individuals with higher education levels were reported higher psychological well-being as well as they were found better skills to manage stress, set meaningful goals and develop emotionally. Additionally, according to Ryff and Singer (2008), these findings were more relevant to individuals, particularly whose psychological well-being is closely tied to their educational experience.

Pargament K. I. (1997) conducted a study to assess the religious beliefs and coping style towards the stress and emotional challenges. The findings revealed that individuals with strong intrinsic religious beliefs are better skilled to handle stress and emotional challenges. Similarly, the intrinsic religious beliefs were indicated as a foundation for meaning, their purpose, and social support.

Rana S. & Imran M. (2015) carried out a study to evaluate religious orientation and psychological well-being among the Muslim college individuals. The study concluded that individuals with a higher intrinsic religious orientation reported significantly better psychological well-being. Also, higher intrinsic religious orientation demonstrated the protective role of religious beliefs in coping with academic pressures and personal challenges.

Research Objective:

1. To determine whether graduated and postgraduate individuals exhibit higher levels of intrinsic religious orientation compared to matriculated individuals.
2. To evaluate whether graduated and postgraduate individuals show higher levels of psychological well-being compared to matriculated individuals.
3. To investigate if there is a positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among individuals of various educational levels.

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Hypothesis:

1. Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in intrinsic religious orientation than matriculated individuals.
2. Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in psychological well-being than matriculated individuals.
3. There was a positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among the individuals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design:

A cross-sectional research designs: In this study cross sectional design was used. Because, the cross-sectional approach allows for the observation and analysis of gender differences in religious orientation and psychological well-being among Muslim populations at a single point in time.

Sample size and characteristics:

The total sample size for this study was included with 600 participants (350 Male and 250 Female), samples collected from the five districts in western Maharashtra such as Pune, Sangli, Satara, Solapur and Kolhapur. This distribution represents a comprehensive representation of the Muslim population in Western Maharashtra and ensures that the findings are representative of the Muslim community in western Maharashtra.

Data collection methods:

Data were collected using the survey method, which involved administering structured questionnaires to the participants. Because, this method is effective for gathering quantitative data on religious orientation and psychological well-being. Also, it supports the researcher to analyze the relationships between these variables.

Tools:

- **Special excel sheet** was used to record the participants educations.
- **Religious Orientation Scale by Dr. Danial Batson:** This scale assesses the degree to which individuals engage with their religion, distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations.
- **Psychological Well-Being Scale by Dr. Carol Ryff:** This scale measures various dimensions of psychological well-being, including autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.

Data Analysis:

Initially, collected data was analyzed according to educational levels, completed the scoring of religious orientation and psychological well-being scales, later, the scores were entered in excel sheet for further processing. Ultimately, data was analyzed by advance excel tool and JASP software.

RESULT ANALYSIS

Hypothesis: 1.

Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in intrinsic religious orientation than matriculated individuals.

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Table: 01: Descriptive statistics of intrinsic religious orientation

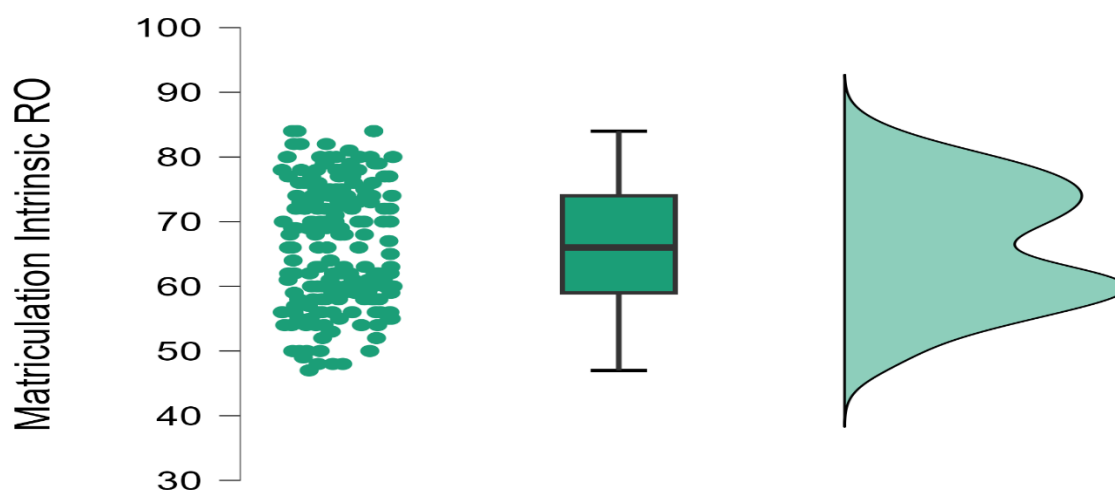
Descriptive Statistics	Graduate & PG Intrinsic RO	Matriculation Intrinsic RO
Mean	78.53777778	66.16
Standard Error	0.415042761	0.660114198
Median	80	66
Mode	80	60
Standard Deviation	6.225641422	9.335424508
Sample Variance	38.75861111	87.15015075
Kurtosis	4.292855026	1.067834091
Skewness	1.895549733	0.012905823
Range	34	37
Minimum	52	47
Maximum	86	84
Sum	17671	13232
Count	225	200
Largest (1)	86	84
Smallest (1)	52	47

Table: 02: t-Test analysis of variance.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

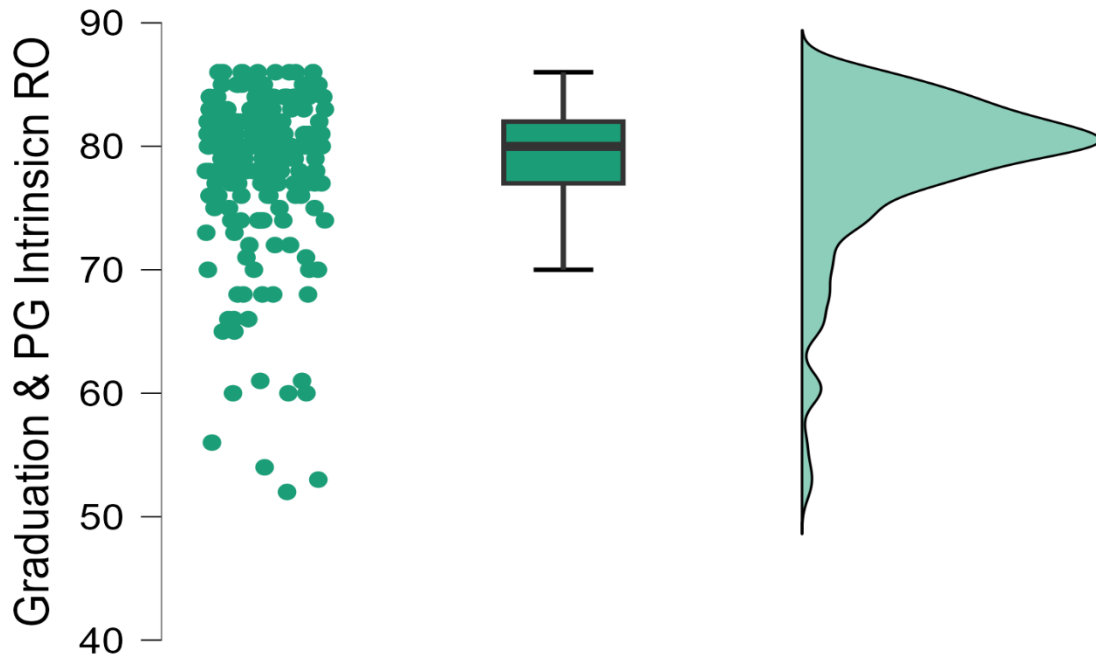
	Matriculation Intrinsic RO	Graduate & PG Intrinsic RO
Mean	66.16	78.53777778
Variance	87.15015075	38.75861111
Observations	200	225
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	340	
t Stat	15.874	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.778218	
t Critical one-tail	1.64934	
P(T<=t) two-tail	7.55643	
t Critical two-tail	1.966965734	

Matriculation Intrinsic RO



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Graduation & PG Intrinsic RO



Hypothesis: 02

Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in psychological well-being than matriculated individuals.

Table: 03: Descriptive statistics of high psychological well-being.

Descriptive Statistics	Graduate & Post Graduate	Matriculation
Mean	168.3155556	160.29
Standard Error	0.712287222	0.563843148
Median	167	159
Mode	161	154
Standard Deviation	10.68430833	7.973946269
Sample Variance	114.1544444	63.5838191
Kurtosis	4.224189496	0.305173432
Skewness	0.889138677	0.398920055
Range	92	38
Minimum	137	142
Maximum	229	180
Sum	37871	32058
Count	225	200
Largest	229	180
Smallest	137	142

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Table: 04: t-Test analysis

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	<i>Graduate & Post Graduate</i>	<i>Matriculation</i>
Mean	168.3155556	160.29
Variance	114.1544444	63.5838191
Observations	225	200
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	411	
t Stat	8.8343886	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.47877	
t Critical one-tail	1.6485695	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.9575	
t Critical two-tail	1.96575	

Hypothesis: 03:

There was a positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among the individuals.

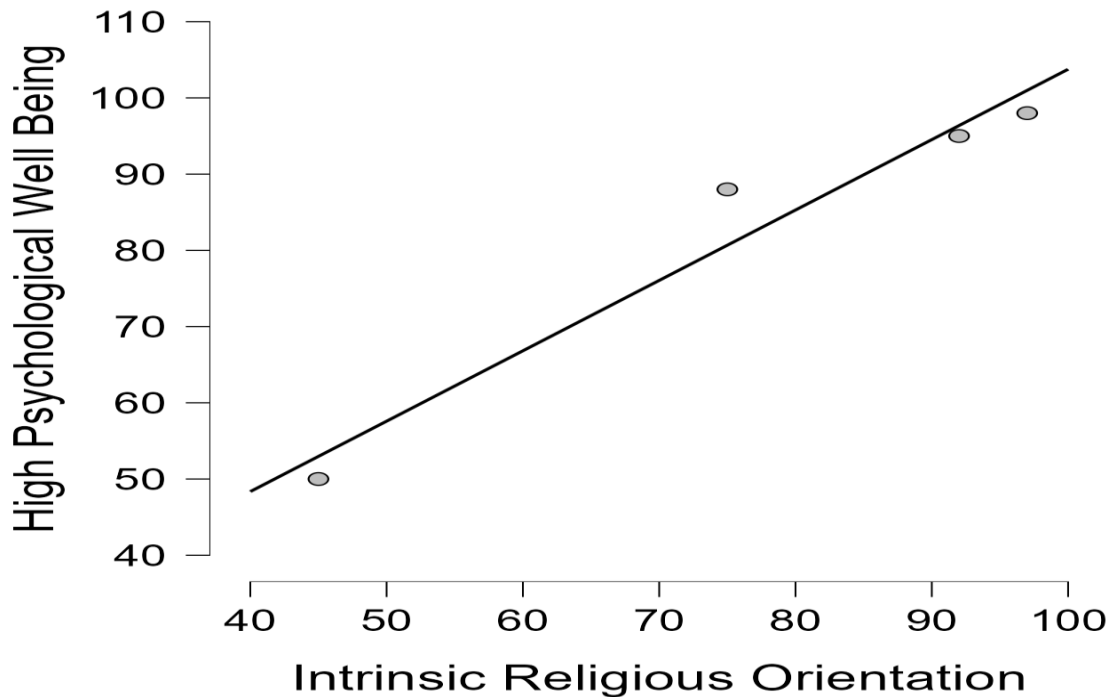
Table: 05: Pearson's Correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well being

Pearson's Correlations

	Pearson's r
Intrinsic Religious Orientation - High Psychological Well Being	0.975

Note. All tests one-tailed, for positive correlation.

Scatter plots: Intrinsic Religious Orientation vs. High Psychological Well Being



DISCUSSION

Hypothesis: 01. *Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in intrinsic religious orientation than matriculated individuals.*

The t-test conducted to compare intrinsic religious orientation (RO) between matriculated individuals and graduate/postgraduate individuals reveals a significant difference in the means of the two groups. Graduate and postgraduate individuals have a higher mean score ($M = 78.54$) in intrinsic religious orientation compared to matriculated individuals ($M = 66.16$), with a substantial t-value of 15.874. This high t-value, combined with the t-critical values for both one-tailed (1.65) and two-tailed (1.97) tests, indicates that the difference is statistically significant.

This result suggests that graduate and postgraduate individuals, who are likely to have more life experience and intellectual exposure, tend to develop a stronger intrinsic religious orientation compared to matriculated individuals. Higher education and age were played a major role in individuals' personal beliefs and internalize religious values that contributed to greater intrinsic motivation for religious behavior.

The variance in scores between the two groups also highlights that there is more consistency in intrinsic religious orientation among graduate and postgraduate individuals compared to matriculated individuals, whose responses were found more varied.

Hypothesis: 02: *Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in psychological well-being than matriculated individuals.*

The results of the t-test conducted to examine the difference in psychological well-being between graduate/postgraduate individuals and matriculated individuals that reveals a statistically significant difference. Graduate and postgraduate individuals exhibited a higher mean score ($M = 168.32$) in psychological well-being compared to matriculated individuals ($M = 160.29$). The large t-value ($t = 8.83$) indicates that this difference is not due to chance, and the rejection of the null hypothesis supports the notion that education level plays a role in psychological well-being.

One possible explanation for this finding is that higher education levels often provide individuals with more opportunities for personal development, social interaction, and career advancement; as a result, all of these things contribute positively to well-being. Graduate and postgraduate individuals may have developed better coping strategies, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities, which are linked to improved mental health outcomes. Moreover, higher education may increase self-esteem and life satisfaction and these factors have been reflected to influence psychological well-being.

Hypothesis: 03: *There was a positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among the individuals.*

The correlation analysis between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among individuals reveals a very strong positive relationship. The Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.975$) indicates a nearly perfect positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as individuals' intrinsic religious orientation increases, their psychological well-being also tends to increase significantly.

Intrinsic religious orientation, characterized by individuals who engage in religious activities for internal and personal reasons, such as a deep sense of faith or spiritual fulfillment and it

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has long been associated with positive mental health outcomes. In this study, the strong correlation indicated that individuals who are motivated by intrinsic religious beliefs, they experienced higher levels of psychological well-being.

This finding matched with previous research that links intrinsic religious orientation with positive psychological outcomes, such as increased life satisfaction, emotional stability, and reduced anxiety and depression. It highlights the protective role of intrinsic religious beliefs in mental health, especially among individuals who may face various academic and personal challenges. However, it is important to explore other contributing factors, such as social support from religious communities and personal coping strategies, in future studies.

CONCLUSION

Hypothesis: 1. *Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in intrinsic religious orientation than matriculated individuals.*

The t-test results show that graduate and postgraduate individuals have significantly higher intrinsic religious orientation than matriculated individuals, as evidenced by the large t-statistic (15.874) and the significant difference in means. The findings suggest that educational attainment is positively connected with intrinsic religious orientation, with higher education levels nurturing a deeper internalization of religious beliefs. This is an important implication for understanding how education plays a major role in personal belief systems. Similarly, it highlights the potential role of intrinsic religious orientation in contributing to personal well-being and coping strategies among Muslim Individuals.

Hypothesis: 02: *Graduated and postgraduate individuals were found higher in psychological well-being than matriculated individuals.*

The current study found that graduate and postgraduate individuals have significantly higher psychological well-being than matriculated individuals. The statistically significant difference ($t = 8.83$) indicates that higher education is associated with better psychological outcomes. These results displayed the importance of educational attainment in promoting mental health and well-being. Importantly, further research could explore the underlying factors contributing to this difference, such as academic environment, career prospects, and personal development opportunities, to better understand how education impacts psychological well-being.

Hypothesis: 03: *There was a positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among the individuals.*

The results of this study revealed a strong positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and psychological well-being among individuals ($r = 0.975$). This suggests that individuals who are motivated by internal religious values tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being. These findings emphasize the importance of intrinsic religious orientation as a potential protective factor for mental health, particularly within student populations. Future research should further explore the underlying mechanisms that explain this relationship, as well as investigate other religious and psychological factors that contribute to their well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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