



Personality dimensions and religiosity among Kuwaiti Muslim college students

Ahmed M. Abdel-Khalek*

Department of Psychology, College of Social Sciences, University of Kuwait, Kuwait

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to examine the association between Eysenck's personality dimensions and religiosity. A sample of 227 Kuwaiti Muslim undergraduates completed the Arabic versions of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, and the Muslim Attitude towards Religiosity Scale. Men obtained significantly higher mean scores on psychoticism than did their female counterparts and the effect size was medium. Religiosity significantly correlated with psychoticism (negative) and lie (positive) among men and women. In addition, religiosity significantly correlated with extraversion (positive) and neuroticism (negative) in women. The only predictor of religiosity was low psychoticism in men and women. The results were discussed in the light of religion of Islam. Most results of the present study reflect previous findings using participants from other religions.

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1. Introduction

The present research sought to examine the relationship between religiosity and Eysenck's personality dimensions of psychoticism, extraversion, neuroticism, and social desirability among an understudied sample of Muslim college students. It is noteworthy that psychological research on religiosity has tended to focus almost exclusively on Christianity. However, more evidence is needed from Muslim cohorts regarding the relationships of the study variables. Notwithstanding, Muslims are the second largest faith group in the world after Christianity, there is a paucity of studies in this respect using Muslim participants, so this paper is a replication and extension of previous work in a unique population.

Religiosity may have different meanings and impact in Christian and Muslim cultures. Furthermore, the role of religion is very different in the Islamic World than in the Western Christian world. Two studies showed that the Kuwaiti samples obtained higher mean scores on religiosity than US samples (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2012; Thorson, Powell, Abdel-Khalek, & Beshai, 1997). The difference in religiosity might have an impact on the correlation between religiosity and personality.

Many research papers have been published on the association between religiosity and personality in the light of Eysenck's personality dimensions. Using Western, mainly Christian participants, the most salient result, generally agreed upon was the significant negative correlation between religiosity and psychoticism (Francis, 1991, 1992b, 1993; Francis & Pearson, 1993; Hills, Francis, Argyle, & Jackson, 2004; Jorm & Christensen, 2004; Lewis & Maltby, 1995;

Maltby, 1997, 1999; Maltby & Day, 2001; Svensen, White, & Caird, 1992; Village, 2011; Youtika, Joseph, & Diduca, 1999). The second result to follow this one, was the significant positive association between religiosity and social desirability as assessed with the lie scale (Francis, 1992a, 1992b; Lewis & Maltby, 1995 in females). However, there was no agreement on the relation (or lack of correlation) between religiosity and both extraversion and neuroticism (Francis, 1992b, 1992c; Francis & Jackson, 2003; Hills et al., 2004; Lewis & Maltby, 1995; Maltby & Day, 2001; Svensen et al., 1992).

To the best of my knowledge, one of the few studies in this domain published in English is the Wilde and Joseph's research (1997). They extended the last-mentioned research to Muslim college students at a British University ($N = 50$). Participants responded to the Revised Eysenck Personality Scales (Short) and the Muslim Attitude towards Religiosity Scale. Religiosity was found to be associated with lower psychoticism and higher lie scores. However, there is a difference between the Muslim sample who live as a minority in UK and participants in the present study who live in an almost exclusively Muslim and Arabic society such as Kuwait. The present research was designed to address this gap in the psychological literature. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to examine the association between religiosity and Eysenck's personality dimensions among a Muslim, Arabic sample from Kuwait.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A convenience sample of 227 Kuwaiti Muslim undergraduates (113 men and 114 women) enrolled in social science courses at Kuwait University took part in the study. Their ages ranged

* Tel.: +965 24984136; fax: +965 24830157.

E-mail address: aabdel-khalek@hotmail.com

between 18 and 30 yrs ($M = 20.1$, $SD = 1.8$). Inclusion criterion was based on the acceptance of students into the study if they volunteered.

2.2. Questionnaires

2.2.1. The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975)

The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire in its Arabic form (Abdel-Khalek & Eysenck, 1983) was used. This version contains 91 Yes/No items. The EPQ measures four dimensions: Psychoticism (P), Extraversion (E), Neuroticism (N), and Lie (L).

2.2.2. The Muslim Attitude towards Religiosity Scale (Wilde & Joseph, 1997).

This scale contains 14 items adapted from the Francis Scale of Attitude towards Christianity (Francis & Stubbs, 1987). Example items are as follows: "I find it inspiring to read the Qur'an", and "Mohammed (peace be upon him) provides a good mode of conduct for me". Each item was rated by the respondent on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree. Scores on the total scale had a possible range of 14–70, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude.

This scale was translated into Arabic by the present researcher. Then, this translation was carefully evaluated and corrected by linguists and psychologists. The Arabic version correlated .67 ($N = 99$; $p < .001$) with the Hoge (1972) Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scales, indicating the convergent validity of the present scale. One of the items was excluded because it is not suitable for Muslim women: "I observe my daily prayers in the Mosque". In Islam, it is highly preferable for women to pray in their homes in general. Cronbach' alpha coefficients for all the scales of the present study ranged between .71 and .88 (see Table 1), indicating acceptable to good internal consistency.

2.3. Procedure

The EPQ along with the Muslim Attitude towards Religiosity Scale were administered anonymously to students during small group sessions in their regular classrooms during university hours in the academic year 2009/2010. The scales were paper and pencil ones. There was no sort of counterbalancing in their presentation.

3. Results

Table 1 sets out the descriptive statistics for the scales on the present sample. Reference to this table indicates that men obtained significantly a higher mean score on psychoticism than did their female counterparts. Table 2 presents the Pearson product moment correlations between the study scales. Inspection of this table indicates the significant associations between the Religiosity Scale and psychoticism (negative) and lie (positive) among men and women. Further, religiosity significantly correlated with extraversion (positive) and neuroticism (negative) in women.

To explore the predictors of the religiosity, the stepwise regression was applied for men and women separately (Table 3). The two models were highly significant and explained 11% and 21% of the total variance in the dependent variable – religiosity among men and women, respectively. The only predictor of religiosity was (low) psychoticism in both samples.

4. Discussion

It was found that men had higher mean scores on psychoticism than did their female counterparts and the effect size was medium. This finding is compatible with previous results in different cultures, e.g., Australia, Egypt, and the UK (Abdel-Khalek & Eysenck, 1983; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; Jorm & Christensen, 2004).

The present findings suggest a significant and negative association between psychoticism and religiosity in both sexes. Furthermore, psychoticism was the only predictor of religiosity. This result is congruent with the wealth of information that suggests that the low scores on the psychoticism dimension is fundamental to religiosity (see Section 1 above). The association between high religiosity and low psychoticism could be explained in light of the "religious transcendence" and high moral values in divine religions, such as caring for other people, being humane, showing kindness, having empathy, showing sympathy, seeking peace, and respecting others, among several traits. These moral values are contrary to the high psychoticism scorer. The typical high psychoticism scorer is solitary, not caring for people, troublesome, not fitting in anywhere, cruel, inhumane, lacking in feeling and empathy, insensitive, hostile, aggressive, liking for odd and unusual things, disregard for danger, and he likes to make fools of other people, and to upset them (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975).

The present results suggest a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism and religiosity among women. Several previous studies carried out on Christian, Jewish, and Muslim participants have reached the same result (Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Francis, 1992b; Hills et al., 2004; Lewis & Maltby, 1995). It is reasonable to suggest that religion is beneficial to many traits and attributes contrary to neuroticism, such as a sense of well-being, overall adjustment, health, satisfaction with life, happiness, and the quality of life, among others (Chatters, 2000; Ferriss, 2002; Hills & Pargament, 2003; Levin & Chatters, 1998; Soydemir, Bastida, & Gonzalez, 2004).

As for extraversion, the present results suggest a positive relation with religiosity in women only. This finding echoes some previous results (Egan, Kroll, Carey, Johnson, & Erickson, 2004; Maltby & Day, 2001), and suggests that religiosity is associated to some components of high extraversion, such as sociability, sensation-seeking, optimism, carefree, and easygoing (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). However, other results suggested no relation between extraversion and religiosity (Lewis & Maltby, 1995; Svendsen et al., 1992). Differences between questionnaires and samples may account for these different results. It is noteworthy to point out that the Islamic religion, such as other religions, encourages good relations with other people. One of the main characteristics

Table 1
Cronbach alpha coefficients (α), descriptive statistics, t -values, and effect size (d) for the scales among men and women.

Scales	α	Men ($N = 113$)		Women ($N = 114$)		t	p	d
		M	SD	M	SD			
Psychoticism	.72	6.08	3.69	3.63	2.75	5.66	.0001	.75
Extraversion	.72	13.69	3.26	12.96	3.92	1.52	–	–
Neuroticism	.86	12.85	5.08	13.15	5.43	0.43	–	–
Lie	.71	12.67	3.92	12.93	3.95	0.49	–	–
Islamic religiosity	.86	61.57	5.13	61.25	3.97	0.53	–	–

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