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## Religious Commitment in Iran: Correlates and Factors of Quest and Extrinsic Religious Orientations

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### Abstract

Iranians responded to Quest and Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scales in order to assess their validity and factor structure within a Muslim context. A sample of 251 Iranian university students received Persian versions of these instruments along with Intrinsic Religious Orientation, Interpersonal Reactivity, Constructive Thinking, Need for Cognition, and Openness to Experience Scales. Analysis of these data revealed that the Quest Scale contained four factors and validly measured Iranian religious commitments. Extrinsic and Intrinsic Religious Orientation Scales also clarified the psychological implications of religion in Iran. Extrinsic factors corresponded to American data; and as in previous Pakistani studies, Extrinsic-Personal scores were higher on average than those for the Intrinsic Orientation, which in turn was higher than the Extrinsic-Social motivation. These findings confirmed that the Quest and Intrinsic Scales along with the Extrinsic factors may be useful in the construction of a Muslim psychology of religion.

### Keywords

Iran Quest, Extrinsic Religious Orientation, Intrinsic Religious Orientation.

### Orientations

Construction of a truly global psychology of religion clearly requires a more extensive analysis of non-Christian religious traditions. Recent efforts to encourage development of a Muslim psychology of religion have emphasized the simultaneous need for Islamic research programs that operate from non-Western philosophical assumptions (e.g., Murken & Shah, 2002) combined with other

studies that explore the utility of well-established Western constructs in clarifying Muslim commitments (e.g., Watson & Ghorbani, 1998). Scholarly endeavors that operate from such opposite directions would presumably represent a generally useful strategy for building conceptual bridges between the psychologies of Western and non-Western traditions.

How Western constructs might help clarify non-Western traditions has been suggested in recent examinations of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scales in Muslim samples. As described by Allport and Ross (1967), an intrinsic orientation reflects a sincere faith in which religion serves as an adaptive master-motive in a believer's life. An extrinsic motivation, in contrast, theoretically operates as a sometimes selfish use of religion as a means to other ends. Considerable evidence in fact suggests that the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Scales usually, though not invariably, predict psychological adjustment and maladjustment, respectively (Donahue, 1985). Similar mental health implications have been observed in Muslim samples from both Pakistan (Khan & Watson, 2004; Khan, Watson, & Habib, 2005) and Iran (e.g., Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, & Hood, 2000, 2002; Watson, Ghorbani, Davison, Bing, Hood, & Ghramaleki, 2002).

On the other hand, use of these scales in Pakistan has also illustrated an opposite opportunity of clarifying Western constructs by administering them to non-Western samples. Kirkpatrick (1989) identified separate Personal and Social factors within the Extrinsic Scale. In Pakistan, efforts to express Extrinsic-Social items in Urdu proved to be difficult as translators tended to reject the sentiments expressed by some of these statements as incompatible with their Islamic beliefs (Khan & Watson, 2004, Khan *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, when religious orientation data were expressed in terms of the mean response per item, Pakistanis displayed lowest responding on the Extrinsic-Social dimension, were highest on the Extrinsic-Personal factor, and had Intrinsic scores that fell between the two. Average responding on these measures was not formally analyzed in a previous study of Iranian and American participants, but means reported in that investigation did suggest that the Extrinsic-Social motivation was lowest in both samples (Watson *et al.*, 2002). These samples also scored highest on the Intrinsic rather than the Extrinsic-Personal orientation, with this contrast being more obvious for the Americans.

#### *Present Study*

In summary, Religious Orientation measures have demonstrated a potential to clarify and also to be clarified by studies in which they are administered to Mus-

lim samples. The present project further explored that potential by analyzing three specific issues in an Iranian sample.

First, the Quest Scale (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a, b) was administered in order to assess its validity in Iran. According to some arguments (e.g., Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993), the Intrinsic Scale failed to capture the cognitive complexity and open-mindedness associated with the religious maturity (Allport, 1950) that this scale was designed to operationalize. Quest sought to record these missing elements of maturity and has been used successfully to clarify religious commitments in a largely Sunni sample of Pakistani Muslims (Khan *et al.*, 2005). The empirical question was whether Quest would be equally useful within the largely Shi'ite cultural context of Iran.

An analysis of Quest across Islamic societies could have important theoretical implications. The Iranian philosopher Soroush (2004) recently developed a typology of Muslim religiosity that suggests a correspondence between Islamic faith and the Western religious orientation literature. Muslim "utilitarian" faith, he argued, is pragmatic and essentially represents an extrinsic use of religion as a means to other ends. "Experiential" religiosity instead reflects a more intrinsic embrace and love of God. Finally, and most importantly for the present project, a "gnostic" form of commitment operates as a rational, critical, and argumentative faith that seems reminiscent of Quest. Multiple studies using both Sunni and Shi'ite samples have already pointed toward the possible existence of Extrinsic/Utilitarian and Intrinsic/Experiential motivations in Islamic cultures. A demonstration that Quest can also serve as a valid measure in Shi'ite as well as Sunni samples would indicate that the Soroush typology could promote an integration of Muslim religion into a more global psychology of religion.

Validity of Quest was assessed by examining correlations with an array of psychological constructs. The Constructive Thinking Inventory (Epstein, 1994) measured automatic, preconscious forms of thinking that define the emotionally intelligent individual. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983) recorded different aspects of empathy and was relevant to evidence suggesting that individuals high in Quest are responsive to the needs of victims (Batson *et al.*, 1993). The Empathic Concern subscale operationalized an emotional sympathy for others, whereas Perspective Taking recorded a cognitive ability to see things from another's point of view. Personal Distress assessed negative emotional reactions to the difficulties of others that can interfere with effective helping behavior. Cognitive complexity and open-mindedness were evaluated with the Need for Cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996) and with the Openness to Experience (Goldberg, 1999) Scales. Evidence supporting the validity of Quest in Iran presumably would appear in a negative relationship

with Personal Distress and in positive correlations will all of these other constructs.

Second, the factor structure of Quest was examined. In creating the 12-item Quest Scale, Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) used four items each to define three separate conceptual dimensions involving a "readiness to face existential questions without reducing their complexity," "self-criticism and perception of religious doubt as positive," and "openness to change" (p. 440). Their analyses nevertheless failed to yield a factor structure corresponding exactly with this conceptual categorization, with four factors identified in one sample and with three in another. The factor structure of Quest has not previously been examined in Muslim samples.

Finally, Extrinsic Scale factors were re-examined in two ways. Extrinsic factors within a Muslim sample were first determined empirically rather than being scored according to previous American data. Then, the question was whether mean differences among these factors would correspond to previous findings obtained for Pakistani Muslims. An exact parallel would appear if Iranians scored highest on the Extrinsic-Personal, lowest on the Extrinsic-Social, and intermediate on the Intrinsic motivations. As noted previously, however, some evidence has suggested that Intrinsic scores might be higher than those for the Extrinsic-Personal orientation (Watson *et al.* 2002).

## Method

### *Participants*

Undergraduates enrolled at the University of Tehran served as the research participants. The sample consisted of 184 women, 58 men, and 9 individuals who failed to indicate their gender. Average age was 22.6 years ( $SD = 2.5$ ).

### *Procedure*

Measures were included in a single questionnaire booklet that contained, in sequence, the 28-item Global Constructive Thinking Inventory (Epstein, 1994), the 10-item Openness to Experience Scale (Goldberg, 1999), the 18-item Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo *et al.*, 1996), the 7-items of each Interpersonal Reactivity Index subscale (Davis, 1983), the 12-item Quest Scale (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b), and the 11-item Extrinsic and 9-item Intrinsic Religious Orientation Scales (Allport & Ross, 1967).

Development of Persian versions of all measures occurred in preparation for the present or previous projects and began with extensive discussions of the meaning of all English statements prior to their translation. Persian statements were back-translated into English by an individual not previously involved in the translation process. Noteworthy discrepancies between the original and back-translated statements were rare. In such instances, difficulties were discussed and resolved as necessary through revisions of the Persian translation. Only the Quest Scale had not been used in previous Iranian studies with the validity of all other Persian instruments being well-documented (e.g., Ghorbani *et al.*, 2000, 2002; Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, Davison, & LeBreton, 2003; Ghorbani & Watson, 2004; Ghorbani, Ghramaleki, & Watson, 2005a, 2005b)

Questionnaire booklets were administered to groups of varying size in classroom settings. Responding to the Allport and Ross (1967) scales occurred in terms of the options included in the original instrument (Robinson & Shaver, 1973) and was scored along a 1 to 4 scale. Participants reacted to all other instruments along appropriately worded 0 to 4 Likert scales.

Data analysis first involved an examination of all internal reliabilities, and as in previous Iranian studies, items displaying a negative item-to-total correlation were eliminated in order to maximize internal consistency. This procedure resulted in the removal of one Need for Cognition and two Perspective Taking and two Personal Distress items. All measures then were scored in terms of the average response per item and correlated with each other.

Factor structures of the Quest and Extrinsic Scales were determined next. With Quest, 10 of the 12 items displayed substantive loadings on an unrotated first factor ( $> .40$ ). The purpose of these procedures, however, was to determine if these 12 items would describe the three dimensions that theoretically define Quest. As in previous research exploring this issue, these data, therefore, were examined with a principal-axis factor analysis using an orthogonal rotation (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b, pp. 438-439). This procedure resulted in one item that did not load on any factor and also a factor that was defined by only a single statement. Principal components analysis with a varimax rotation uncovered noteworthy loadings for all items, defined each component by at least two Quest statements, and specified dimensions that essentially mirrored the meaning of the principal-axis factors. This factor analytic procedure also yielded results for the Extrinsic Scale that could be clearly and easily related to previous Western research (Kirkpatrick, 198). For these reasons, final factors for both the Quest and Extrinsic Scales were based on the principal components analysis. Items loading most strongly on a factor were combined to create measures of

each component and then correlated with other variables. Mean differences in responding to the Intrinsic Scale and Extrinsic factors were analyzed as a final step in these procedures.

## Results

Correlations and internal reliabilities for all scales are presented in Table 1. Lower alphas for the Extrinsic and Perspective Taking Scales suggested a need for caution in interpreting these data. With one possible exception, relationships conformed to general expectations. Constructive Thinking predicted greater Perspective Taking and Need for Cognition and lower Personal Distress. The three Empathy measures correlated positively, and Need for Cognition was associated with greater Openness to Experience and lower Personal Distress. The one possible exception involved a negative correlation of a presumably adaptive Empathic Concern with Constructive Thinking. This outcome, nevertheless, seemed explicable in terms of a covariance with Personal Distress, since a partial correlation controlling for Personal Distress eliminated this linkage ( $r = -.03, p > .20$ ).

Most noteworthy in these data were positive correlations of Quest with the Intrinsic, Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, Openness to Experience, and Need for Cognition measures. The Intrinsic Scale also correlated positively with Constructive Thinking, Empathic Concern, Perspective-Thinking, Openness to Experience, and Need for Cognition. The Extrinsic Scale predicted lower Constructive Thinking and Need for Cognition and higher Personal Distress.

### *Quest Factors*

Principal components analysis revealed four Quest factors. The first was associated with an eigenvalue of 3.08 and explained 25.6% of the variance. This Experience-Based Doubting Factor was defined by Quest items 2, 3, 5, and 6 (see Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b, p. 436). The strongest loading of .80 appeared for the self-report, "My life experiences have led me to rethink my religious convictions." All other loadings were greater than .60 (e.g., .72 for the claim that "it might be said that I value my religious doubts and uncertainties"). This factor correlated positively with the Intrinsic (.37), Empathic Concern (.29), Perspective Taking (.32), Openness to Experience (.22), and Need for Cognition (.25) Scales ( $ps < .001$ ).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Internal Reliabilities (along Diagonal), and Correlations for Religious Orientation, Constructive Thinking, Empathy, Openness to Experience, and Need for Cognition Measures

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Quest	2.54	0.47	(.66)	.14*	.10	.05	.16*	.23***	-.06	.20**	.27***
2. Intrinsic	2.75	0.49		(.70)	.06	.16*	.29***	.32***	-.05	.20**	.15*
3. Extrinsic	2.31	0.37			(.50)	-.14*	.05	.07	.17**	-.06	-.17**
4. Constructive Thinking	2.20	0.47				(.68)	-.17*	.27***	-.46***	.09	.26***
5. Empathic Concern	2.81	0.68					(.68)	.22***	.32***	.12	.09
6. Perspective Taking	2.57	0.65						(.54)	.32***	.12	.09
7. Personal Distress	2.23	0.82							(.69)	-.11	-.30***
8. Openness to Experience	2.59	0.54								(.64)	.51***
9. Need for Cognition	2.50	0.62									(.83)

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Four items (1, 4, 9, and 12) also described the second factor (eigenvalue = 1.45, variance = 12.1%). Loading most strongly on this Quest as Developmental Process component was the claim, "I was not very interested in religion until I began to ask questions about the meaning and purpose of my life" (.77). Other loadings exceeded .45 (e.g., .73 for "God wasn't very important to me until I began to ask questions about the meaning of life"). This measure was associated with greater Need for Cognition (.14,  $p < .05$ ).

The third factor (eigenvalue = 1.31, variance = 10.9%) was defined by two items: "questions are far more important to my religious experience than are answers" (.78), and "I am constantly questioning my religious beliefs" (.43). This Importance of Questioning factor covaried directly with the Extrinsic (.14), Openness to Experience (.15), and Need for Cognition (.27) Scales ( $ps < .05$ ).

Positive correlations among these three factors ranged from .28 to .42 ( $ps < .001$ ), but the fourth component failed to correlate significantly with any of the other three. This fourth factor (eigenvalue = 1.07, variance = 11.0%) was defined by two reverse-scored statements: "I find religious doubts upsetting" (.60), and "I do not expect my religious convictions to change in the next few years" (.76). This Doubt-Based Change measure correlated negatively with Personal Distress (-.14,  $p < .05$ ).

#### *Extrinsic Factors*

Analysis of the Extrinsic Scale uncovered three components with the second corresponding to the Extrinsic-Personal factor (eigenvalue = 1.87, variance = 17.0%) as defined by Kirkpatrick (1989). These items identified religion as a source of comfort during times of sorrows and misfortune (.63), prayer as a way to secure a peaceful life (.75), and prayer as useful in gaining relief and protection (.84). This Extrinsic-Personal variable correlated positively with the Intrinsic (.42), Empathic Concern (.28), Perspective Taking (.25), and Personal Distress (.15) measures ( $ps < .05$ ).

Also paralleling some Western data previously reported by Kirkpatrick (1989) was the third, Extrinsic-Social factor (eigenvalue = 1.39, variance = 12.6%). Items loading on this component referred to motivations for participating in religious life in order to establish a person within the community (.69), to formulate good social relationships (.75), and to participate in congenial social activities (.75). This factor correlated positively with the Intrinsic Scale (.36,  $p < .001$ ) and with the Extrinsic-Personal dimension (.29,  $p < .001$ ).

Perhaps most interesting was a first factor defined by items reflecting a rejection of intrinsic religious motivations (eigenvalue = 2.42, variance = 22.0%).



Loading most strongly on this Extrinsic-Utilitarian factor was the self-report, "Although I believe in my religion, I feel that there are many more important things in life" (.72). Four other items helped define this component: "although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs" (.70), "I pray chiefly because I have been taught to pray" (.64), "it doesn't matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life" (.64), and "occasionally I find it necessary to compromise my religious beliefs in order to protect social and economic well-being" (.42). These items corresponded to what Kirkpatrick (1989) described as Extrinsic-Residual items and essentially interpreted as reverse-scored articulations of an intrinsic commitment. Negative relationships appeared between this factor and the Constructive Thinking (-.16) and the Intrinsic (-.51) Scales ( $p < .05$ ). Extrinsic-Utilitarian scores also correlated negatively with the Extrinsic-Personal (-.17,  $p < .01$ ) and non-significantly with Extrinsic-Social (-.10) factors.

Significant differences appeared in average levels of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivations [Greenhouse-Geisser  $F(3/747) = 225.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. As with Pakistani samples, responding on the Extrinsic-Personal factor ( $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) was higher than that on the Intrinsic Scale [ $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 0.49$ ;  $t(250) = 9.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ], which in turn was higher than the Extrinsic-Social average [ $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ;  $t(250) = 17.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Responding on the Extrinsic Utilitarian measure ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) did not differ from that on the Extrinsic-Social factor ( $p > .75$ ).

## Discussion

This investigation demonstrated once again the potential of well-established religious orientation scales to clarify Muslim religious commitments. Correlations in Iran, as in Pakistan (Khan *et al.*, 2005), suggested that Quest may usefully assess "the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life" (Batson *et al.*, 1993, p. 169). Possible evidence of this thoughtful search for meaning appeared in positive correlations with Need for Cognition and Openness to Experience. Linkages with Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking also supported suggestions that Quest might be relevant to an empathic sensitivity to others. The adaptive implications of Quest were confirmed as well in its association with greater Constructive Thinking. In short, the Quest Scale seemed to validly measure religious motivation in Iran.

Meaningful factors of Quest were observed as well. The first three correlated positively with each other, with the fourth unrelated to these other three. None of these factors matched exactly the conceptual or empirically-derived dimensions of Quest mentioned in previous American research, but even across American samples, variability has appeared in the component structure of Quest (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991b, p. 440). Most importantly, however, all four Iranian factors were conceptually interpretable and correlated predictably with other constructs.

Perhaps most interesting in this study were findings for the Extrinsic factors. The Iranian factor structure corresponded exactly with the overall interpretation of multi-sample American data (Kirkpatrick, 1989). A Utilitarian factor described a rejection of intrinsic religious commitments, and the Personal and Social components were defined by items identical to those sometimes observed in the United States. Such parallels strongly supported the idea that appropriately translated Allport and Ross (1967) Scales can usefully promote cross-cultural research in the psychology of religion.

Differences appeared in data obtained for these three Extrinsic measures. The Personal factor described an intrinsically religious empathic sensitivity to others and was associated with higher levels of the Extrinsic-Social motivation, which also correlated positively with the Intrinsic Scale. The Utilitarian factor, in contrast, displayed negative correlations that were significant with the Personal and nonsignificant with the Social factors, with these linkages apparently explaining the poor internal reliability of the full Extrinsic Scale. The Utilitarian motivation also was associated with lower Constructive Thinking. The negative relationship of this factor with the Intrinsic Scale was highly reliable, but since this correlation accounted for only about 25% of the variance, it remained unclear whether Utilitarian items could be interpreted adequately as reverse-scored Intrinsic statements, as has been done previously (Kirkpatrick, 1989). Overall, these findings suggested that future research into Iranian religious commitments might need to focus on Extrinsic factors rather than on the full scale.

As in numerous previous Iranian and Pakistani studies, the Intrinsic Scale operationalized an apparently adaptive form of Muslim religious motivation. Such a conclusion seemed evident in positive correlations of this instrument with Constructive Thinking, Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, Need for Cognition, and Openness to Experience. This pattern of relationships also implied that no major distinctions were to be made in the mental health implications of the Intrinsic and Quest orientations in Iran, at least in terms of the variables evaluated in this project.

In parallel with Pakistani research (Khan & Watson, 2004, 2006; Khan et al., 2005), the Extrinsic-Social motivation was the lowest Allport and Ross measure (along with the Extrinsic-Utilitarian orientation). Though not formally analyzed in an earlier investigation (Watson *et al.*, 2002), this relatively lowest motivation was observed previously in both Iranian and American samples and may be a cross-culturally general phenomenon. The Extrinsic-Personal factor also was highest, a finding consistently obtained in Pakistani studies. This result, nevertheless, contrasted with previously unanalyzed Iranian and American means in which the Intrinsic average was highest (Watson *et al.*, 2002). The reliability of this finding in Iran, therefore, remains unclear and will require additional research. More generally, the Extrinsic-Personal data confirmed this factor as a strong, largely adaptive form of commitment that proved to be compatible with an Intrinsic religious motivation. Such findings supported speculation that Extrinsic motivations can have beneficial psychosocial implications (e.g., Pargament, 1992). In addition, two of the three Extrinsic-Personal items referred to prayer, and this observation was perhaps relevant to the importance of prayer as a basic "pillar" of Islamic faith.

In conclusion, the Quest along with the Allport and Ross (1967) Scales once again effectively clarified Muslim religious commitments. This was as true in Iran as in previous Pakistani studies. To suggest that such measures were useful in no way means that constructs developed in the West can exhaustively or ideally describe a Muslim psychology of religion. Scales operationalizing Muslim-specific forms of belief will undoubtedly be crucial to the ultimate success of future research, with assessments of prayer perhaps being especially important. At the same time, however, the present and previous findings suggest that a religious typology developed by the Iranian philosopher Soroush (2004) may facilitate an integration of Muslim faith into a more global psychology of religion. His description of utilitarian, experiential, and gnostic forms of Muslim religiosity suggest parallels with the Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Quest religious motivations, respectively. Data now obtained from both Sunni and Shi'ite samples support the possibility that the Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Quest Scales may in fact be relevant to Islamic cultures generally and to the Soroush typology in particular. Well-established measures of religious orientations may, therefore, play a critical role in future efforts to place even Muslim-specific constructs within a meaningful nomological net (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

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