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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Mar., 2006), pp. 303-310

Published by: [Religious Research Association, Inc.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3512360>

Accessed: 21/01/2013 11:55

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RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION TYPES IN IRANIAN MUSLIMS: DIFFERENCES IN ALEXITHYMIA, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

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REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS RESEARCH 2006, VOLUME 47(3): PAGES 303-310

In a study designed to assess the psychological implications of religious types in Muslim society, Iranian university students (N = 191) responded to the Allport and Ross (1967) Religious Orientation Scales along with measures of alexithymia, emotional intelligence, self-consciousness, and psychological adjustment. The Intrinsic type displayed greater evidence of self-insight and adjustment than did the three other types, including most importantly the Indiscriminately Pro-religious type. These data failed to support the hypothesis that an Indiscriminately Pro-religious type would be most adaptive in Muslim society and instead demonstrated that previously observed mental health advantages of the Intrinsic type cannot be limited to a single religion or culture.

Research into the psychological implications of religion must address the unavoidable preliminary challenge of describing the diversity that exists in religious commitments. The Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scales of Allport and Ross (1967) are among the most influential attempts to operationalize that diversity (e.g., Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch 2003). The Intrinsic Scale theoretically records a mature motivation in which believers sincerely try to live their faith. The Extrinsic Scale instead measures a supposedly more immature orientation in which individuals use their religion as a means to sometimes-selfish ends. Data obtained with these instruments have generally though not invariably confirmed expectations that the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Scales would predict adjustment and maladjustment, respectively (Donahue 1985).

Innumerable arguments against and defenses of these scales have occurred over the almost 40 years of their use (e.g., Spilka et al. 2003). Allport and Ross (1967) noted one potential problem from the outset. Some of their respondents scored high on both measures, paradoxically appearing to be mature and immature at the same time. They responded to this discovery by suggesting that the two scales could be used to identify four Religious Orientation types. In displaying high levels of both orientations, an Indiscriminately Pro-religious (IP) type seemed to engage in an unthinking embrace of all religion. An Indiscriminately Anti-religious (IA) type disavowed both motivations and thus appeared to reject religion generally. The Intrinsic (INT) type scored high on the Intrinsic and low on the Extrinsic Scale, whereas the opposite pattern characterized the Extrinsic (EXT) type. These two “purer” types presumably described motivations that paralleled the original understanding of the two Religious Orientation Scales.

Evidence supporting the validity of these types has been obtained in numerous investigations (e.g., Hood, Morris, and Watson 1990; Morris, Hood, and Watson 1989; Watson, Morris, and Hood 1989). In addition, the INT type typically appears to be more psychologically adjusted, at least in largely Christian samples, with the relative maladjustment of the three other types being dependent upon which aspects of psychosocial functioning are analyzed (Watson, Morris, and Hood 1990).

Left largely unexplored is the question of whether types are valid and have similar implications in non-Christian samples. Especially interesting would be an examination of these types in Muslim societies. Western psychological research rests upon conceptual foundations that some scholars believe to be wholly incompatible with the theistic frameworks of Islamic society (Murken and Shah 2002). Particularly relevant to the issue of types is the observation that "Islam, at its core, makes no distinction between the spiritual and the temporal" (Moughrabi, 1995:72). The theocratic social structures of Iran, for example, formally promote an integration of the "spiritual and the temporal," and thus perhaps of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic dimensions of religious belief. In such a society, would the INT type continue to display the greater level of adjustment? Or, when a union of the "spiritual" with the "temporal" is a formal principle of social life, would the IP type be more adaptive?

Previous studies have established that the Allport and Ross (1967) scales are valid for use with Iranian (Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood 2002) and other Muslim (Khan, Watson, and Habib 2005) samples. Findings that the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Scales can correlate negatively in American and positively in Iranian samples (Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood 2002) also suggest that the IP type might indeed have more adaptive implications in Iran. In testing this possibility, the present investigation reexamined the Muslim contention that religious faith promotes inner awareness and more harmonious self-functioning (Khansari 1987; Frozanfar 1991). Support for this claim was obtained in an earlier study of Iranian university students when the Intrinsic Scale predicted higher Self-Consciousness and Emotional Intelligence, less evidence of the emotion-processing dysfunctions associated with Alexithymia, and greater overall adjustment (Watson et al. 2002).

In the present investigation, Religious Orientation Scales were administered to a completely new sample of Iranian university students, along with measures of inner awareness and psychological adjustment. The purpose was to obtain data for testing two competing hypotheses. One hypothesis, based upon the possibility that types function similarly across cultures, was that INT participants would display the highest levels of inner awareness and psychological adjustment. A second, perhaps equally plausible, hypothesis was that in a society dedicated to integrating the "spiritual" with the "temporal," the IP type would instead be associated with these psychological implications.

METHOD

Participants

Research participants were 139 male and 52 female undergraduate volunteers from the University of Tehran. With an average age of 21.5 ($SD = 3.1$), this sample included 47 freshmen, 32 sophomores, 56 juniors, 53 seniors, and 3 individuals who failed to indicate their educational status.

Measures

Persian versions of all measures were included in a single questionnaire booklet containing, in sequence, the Religious Orientation (Allport and Ross 1967), Toronto Alexithymia (Bagby, Parker, and Taylor 1994), Trait Meta-Mood (Salovey et al. 1995), Self-Consciousness (Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975), Self-Esteem (Rosenberg 1965), Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein 1983), and Depression and Anxiety (Costello and Comrey 1967) scales. Correlations among these measures paralleled previous Iranian and American data and conformed to theoretical expectations. Presentation of these instruments in a set sequence, therefore, appeared to have no empirically noteworthy consequences. Translations of all scales had occurred in preparation for earlier studies and had been checked for accuracy by translating all Persian articulations of questionnaire items back into English. Evidence supporting the validity of these instruments in Iran was reported in previous investigations (e.g., Ghorbani, Bing, Watson, Davison, and Mack 2002; Ghorbani et al. 2003; Ghorbani and Watson 2004, 2005; Watson et al. 2002).

Allport and Ross (1967) Scales were administered as adapted for use with Iranian samples (Robinson and Shaver 1973; Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood 2002:74). These Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation measures included Persian translations of the original English items, but response options ranged from 0 to 3. Responding on all other instruments occurred along a 0 (“strongly disagree”) to 4 (“strongly agree”) Likert scale.

Measures of alexithymia, emotional intelligence, and self-consciousness assessed inner awareness. “Alexithymia” literally means “without words for emotions.” The 20-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale (Bagby et al. 1994) contains three factors that describe this maladaptive lack of emotional self-insight: Difficulty Identifying Feelings, Difficulty Describing Feelings, and Externally Oriented Thinking. The Trait Meta-Mood Scale (Salovey et al. 1995) operationalizes an information-processing model of Emotional Intelligence that includes input (Attention), processing (Clarity), and output (Repair) functions. The Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein et al. 1975) records separate Private and Public Self-Consciousness dimensions of self-awareness, along with a Social Anxiety Scale.

All remaining instruments were administered to evaluate psychological adjustment. These included the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al. 1983), and the Depression and Anxiety Scales of Costello and Comrey (1967).

Procedure

Students responded to questionnaire booklets in group settings of various sizes. Participant responses were written directly on the questionnaires and later entered by hand into a computer data file. As in previous Iranian studies, all items displaying a negative item-to-total correlation were eliminated in order to maximize internal reliabilities. Based upon this criterion, two statements were dropped from the Perceived Stress Scale and one from the Extrinsic Scale. The eliminated Extrinsic item said, “It doesn’t matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life.”

Each scale was scored in terms of the average response per item. Data analysis focused initially on correlations among measures. Then, as in previous studies (e.g., Hood et al. 1990), participants were grouped into types by comparing individual Intrinsic and Extrinsic scores to scale medians in order to define who was relatively high and low in the two Religious Orientations. Medians were 1.67 for the Intrinsic and 1.30 for the Extrinsic Scales. These procedures led to the identification of 43 INTs, 37 EXTs, 51 IPs, and 60 IAs. A pre-

liminary MANOVA revealed no overall gender main effect or interaction with types; so, this variable was ignored. A final MANOVA examined overall type differences in the psychological measures. ANOVAs followed by Student-Newman-Keuls post hocs ($p < .05$) then isolated which specific type contrasts were statistically significant.

RESULTS

Correlational results confirmed that inner awareness and adjustment variables had mental health implications consistent with theoretical assumptions and with previous Iranian data. In other words, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Consciousness, and Self-Esteem displayed a positive relationship with more adaptive functioning, whereas Alexithymia, Social Anxiety, Depression, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress displayed linkages indicative of maladjustment.

Intrinsic ($\alpha = .68$, $M = 1.68$, $SD = .52$) and Extrinsic ($\alpha = .64$, $M = 1.31$, $SD = .49$) Scales correlated positively ($.43$, $p < .001$). Relationships of these measures with all other variables are presented in Table 1. The Intrinsic Scale was associated with higher levels of the Repair dimension of Emotional Intelligence and with lower Depression, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress. The Extrinsic Scale predicted greater Alexithymia.

The MANOVA revealed significant overall type differences [Wilk's $\lambda = .66$, $F(39, 518.96) = 2.05$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$]. As Table 2 demonstrates, INT participants proved to be the most adjusted. In particular, they displayed superior inner awareness and mental health (1.) relative to the EXT type in terms of Difficulty Identifying Feelings and Private Self-Consciousness; (2.) relative to the IA type in terms of Repair, Depression, and Anxiety; and (3.) relative to all three other types in terms of Clarity. The only suggestion that the IP type might have positive adjustment implications appeared in its similarity to the INT and IA groups in scoring lower than EXT students on Externally Oriented Thinking. In the only other significant contrast, IA participants self-reported lower Difficulty Describing Feelings than did the IP and EXT groups.

DISCUSSION

Theocratic Iran is an interesting society for researchers trying to understand the cross-cultural implications of religious commitments. Previous studies examining largely Christian American samples have, for example, suggested that the INT type displays generally superior adjustment relative to the three other Allport and Ross (1967) Religious Orientation types. Such results, nevertheless, have reflected a more secularized cultural environment in which the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Scales can correlate negatively. Iran presumably exemplifies the Muslim commitment to integrating the "the spiritual and the temporal" (Moughrabi 1995:72), and with the present and previous groups of Iranians, positive Intrinsic correlations with the Extrinsic Scale tend to support the existence of that integration and to suggest that the IP type might be most adaptive. In this investigation, however, the IP type was not psychologically healthiest in an Iranian sample, as it sometimes mirrored the EXT and IA groups in being relatively more maladjusted. Indeed, these Iranian data paralleled previous American results in identifying the INT type as most adjusted overall.

This study again supported the Muslim assertion that faith in God should promote self-insight and psychological well-being (Khansari 1987; Frozanfar 1991). Such a conclusion seemed apparent in findings that the Intrinsic Scale and/or type predicted greater Clarity, Repair, and Private Self-Consciousness and lower Difficulty Identifying Feelings, Exter-

Table 1
Correlations of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scales
with Personality Scales in Iranian Muslim Sample (N = 191)

Measure	α	Correlation		Intrinsic	Extrinsic
		M	SD		
Difficulty Identifying Feelings	.76	1.86	.74	.01	.21**
Difficulty Describing Feelings	.64	1.97	.72	.13	.30***
Eternally Oriented Thinking	.51	1.48	.51	-.04	.25**
Attention	.72	2.34	.53	-.04	-.13
Clarity	.69	2.32	.57	.06	-.12
Repair	.61	2.47	.64	.26***	.05
Private Self-Consciousness	.78	2.66	.61	.17*	-.02
Public Self-Consciousness	.68	2.78	.60	.11	.07
Social Anxiety	.75	2.03	.81	-.02	.12
Depression	.89	1.52	.76	-.32***	-.11
Anxiety	.66	1.84	.70	-.18*	-.05
Self-Esteem	.63	2.50	.81	.07	.03
Perceived Stress	.82	1.83	.64	-.27***	-.05

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

nally Oriented Thinking, Depression, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress. Such results, incidentally, conformed not only with Muslim perspectives, but also with views of religious figures in the history of the West. About self-insight, for instance, John Calvin (1960/1559:35-37) once argued that “without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God” and that “without knowledge of God there is no knowledge of self.” And with regard to an example relevant to well-being, Augustine (1942/397-400:1) had earlier and famously said about God, “Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.”

Along with numerous other findings (e.g., Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood 2002; Khan et al. 2005), the present data supported previous arguments that Allport’s (1950; Allport and Ross 1967) analysis of religious motivation might be useful in attempts to understand Muslim belief (Watson and Ghorbani 1998). To suggest that it is useful does not mean that it is optimal, however. Conceptual frameworks and measures developed in one culture will undoubtedly have limitations when applied to another (Khalili et al. 2002; Murken and Shah 2002). The Allport and Ross (1967) Scales, for example, might fail to capture the positive potentials of an Extrinsic orientation within Iranian society. With a more culturally sensitive measure, the IP type might turn out to be most adaptive. The possibility of beneficial consequences being associated the Extrinsic motivation has even been suggested in the West (e.g., Pargament 1997), and if so, measures of such an orientation could help uncover positive implications of an alternative operationalization of the IP type in American samples as well.

In addition to concerns about the cultural sensitivity of the Allport and Ross (1967) Scales, other considerations suggest a need for caution in interpreting these data. Two issues deserve emphasis. First, theocratic Iran is a developing country that confronts numerous economic and other challenges (e.g., Mason 2002). The “temporal” dynamics of Iranian daily life may,

Table 2
Inner Awareness and Adjustment Differences among Iranian Muslim Intrinsic (INT: N = 43), Extrinsic (EXT: N = 37),
Indiscriminately Pro-religious (IP: N = 51) and Indiscriminately Anti-religious (IA: N = 60) Types

Measures	Religious Orientation Type												Partial η^2	Post Hoc
	INT		EXT		IP		IA		M	SD	F			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD						
Difficulty Identifying Feelings	1.66	.70	2.07	.71	2.01	.62	1.73	.84	1.73	.84	3.44*	.05	INT < EXT	
Difficulty Describing Feelings	1.91	.74	2.15	.50	2.25	.64	1.66	.77	1.66	.77	7.73***	.11	IA < (IP, EXT)	
Eternally Oriented Thinking	1.33	.47	1.74	.48	1.53	.37	1.37	.58	1.37	.58	6.01**	.09	(INT, IA, IP) < EXT	
Attention	2.46	.61	2.21	.47	2.28	.49	2.41	.52	2.41	.52	2.05			
Clarity	2.56	.77	2.23	.44	2.22	.38	2.32	.58	2.32	.58	3.45*	.05	INT > (EXT, IP, IA)	
Repair	2.63	.56	2.46	.68	2.54	.50	2.29	.73	2.29	.73	2.88*	.04	INT > IA	
Private Self-Consciousness	2.86	.58	2.52	.64	2.72	.52	2.57	.66	2.57	.66	2.83*	.04	INT > EXT	
Public Self-Consciousness	2.84	.63	2.75	.65	2.83	.52	2.71	.62	2.71	.62	0.55			
Social Anxiety	1.91	.74	2.14	.70	2.05	.77	2.02	.94	2.02	.94	0.57			
Depression	1.18	.72	1.53	.58	1.49	.72	1.77	.85	1.77	.85	5.31**	.08	INT < IA	
Anxiety	1.57	.61	1.81	.66	1.90	.76	2.00	.71	2.00	.71	3.32*	.05	INT < IA	
Self-Esteem	2.61	1.01	2.44	.60	2.52	.75	2.44	.84	2.44	.84	0.43			
Perceived Stress	1.64	.63	1.88	.56	1.78	.59	1.97	.72	1.97	.72	2.44			

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

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consequently, be more variable than in societies established for longer periods of time, and this variability may affect efforts to describe any Iranian integration of the “temporal” with the “spiritual.” Indeed, such influences perhaps explained why the correlation between the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Scales seemed more robust in the present than in previous Iranian samples (Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood 2002; Watson et al. 2002).

Second, undergraduates from a leading university are unlikely to be representative of Iranian society as a whole. In this project, the Iranian INT type was like its American counterpart in predicting relatively superior adjustment, but different findings could have been obtained with participants sampled from other segments of the Iranian population. As emphasized previously, however, the appearance of any commonalities at all might be useful across cultures that so often seem so far apart. Even if apparent only in subsets of the Iranian and American populations, similarities in types and in other empirical findings might serve as points of agreement upon which at least some better mutual understanding could be achieved (e.g., Ghorbani et al. 2004).

In summary, this study most broadly confirmed that Allport’s (1950) conceptual and empirical approach to religion could serve as a useful foundation for initiating efforts to develop a Muslim psychology of religion (Watson and Ghorbani 1998). Whether his approach can support only a beginning rather than an extended analysis of Muslim beliefs is a question for future researchers to answer. Already, it is clear, however, that application of Allport’s conceptual framework within Islamic societies can lead to a better understanding of religious commitments generally. In this investigation, for example, the conclusion that the Allport and Ross (1967) INT type defines relative mental health proved to be a generalization that had validity across at least some religions.

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