An Investigation into Religious Attitudes among Students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

Abdolreza Mahmoudi
Assistant Professor of Islamic Education Department, Faculty of Medicine, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Fatemeh Mahmoudi
Ph.D Student in psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Alzahra, Tehran, Iran

Maryam Shamsaei
Assistant Professor of Islamic Education Department, Faculty of Medicine, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran

Abstract

Introduction: According to various studies, religious attitudes have effects on many psychological components and are especially influential on mental health. This study aimed to investigate religious attitudes among Shiraz University students.

Methods: This study was descriptive and correlational. All students studying at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences comprised the population. In this study, 359 students in sample were selected by random cluster sampling method and questionnaires were completed by them. Khodayarifard's religious attitude was used as data collection questionnaire. Research data analysis was conducted by descriptive statistics and t-test.

Results: The mean age of student's 20.46±1.97 years. The mean score and standard deviations of the students' religiosity were 15.74±143.22 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of religious behalf were 43.25 ± 5.02, religious behavior 44.78 ± 5.28 and religious emotions 43.26 ± 6.23, respectively.

Conclusion: Since the religious attitude is affecting various aspects of human life, there is a necessity for comprehensive and functional planning which is in accordance with the conditions of the time and student generation needs.

Keywords: religious attitudes, religious belief, religious behavior, religious emotions.
Introduction

The present era is the time for religious revival and reviewing its concepts. People nowadays have an inclination for religion because according to the latest findings of sociological research, 95% of people believe in the existence of God (Eliade, 1995; quoted by Khodayarifard et al., 2006).

The role of religion in relation to health and healing has been known in for centuries. Over thousands of years, religion and medicine have shared effects in the treatment and reduction of human suffering (Suchman & Matheews, 1988). Moreover, staying away from the original religious beliefs traps oneself into internal conflicts, mental and emotional emptiness, purposelessness and hopelessness in the face of deprivation, hardship and the stress level (Zohor and Tavakoli, 2002).

The religious attitude is integrated in the monotheistic faith which considers God as the center and it regulates values, ethics, customs and human behavior towards each other, nature and himself (Heidari Rafat and Enayati Novin far, 2010). Positive religious attitude of life satisfaction and life satisfaction is one of the predictors of mental health (Pavot et al., 1998). Religiosity is to have the knowledge and belief in one God, the prophets, the Hereafter and the laws of God and the compassion of God, saints and servants of God and commitment and practice of religious duties. In this definition, a religious belief means knowing and believing in heart in unique God, the unseen, the prophets, the Hereafter, Allah's rules and regulations. Emotions refer to the emotional aspect of religion and include love and hatred in parallel to closeness. Emotional connection with God represents educational dimensions of Islam alongside religion. Religious commitment and practice refer to later behavioral dimensions, in a manner that the religious individual, after recognition of religious orders and feeling attached to them, feels obliged to do them. According to these definitions, components of religiosity encompass the three dimensions of religious belief, religious feelings and practice and religious duties and obligations as depicted in Figure 1 (Khodayarifard et al., 2010).
Figure 1: Structure of religion based on the theoretical foundations of Islam

- *Have a unique understanding of and belief in God, the prophets, the Hereafter, the laws of God, the compassion of God and the practice of religious duty and obligation to draw near to God.
1- Recognition and Belief in the Lord alone, unseen, prophets, afterlife, God's commandments and laws.
2- An interest in unique God, prophets, saints of God, beneficiaries and family virtues and hostility to the enemies of God and enemies of saints of God and hatred of vices.
3- Adhere to Sharia and religious orders, including moral and religious laws.
4- An interest and love of God, good thought of God, trust, satisfaction of the justice of God, prophets and apostles of God's love, affection for fellow followers of his religion and respect for followers of other religions, inclination for justice, truth and philanthropy.
5. The religious experience is a subjective term that refers to individual’s reports of contacts with transcendental reality.
6. Hatred of evil, disinclination for oppression, hatred of treason and lying.
7. Prayer, fasting, praying and observance of the lawful and the unlawful.
8. Khums, Zakat, Hajj, jihad, the rites and rituals, attending holy places and sacred time for collective effort.
9. Avoiding sins, chastity, repentance, patience, gratitude, adornment and sanitation, sensible satisfaction of needs, honesty, devotion and seeking virtue.
10. Good manners and good behavior, forgiveness, faithfulness, kindness, cooperation, helping the oppressed, reconciliation between people, dedication, a tribute to kin rights, peace.

http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index
and friendship and helping the needy, family rights, standing against the oppressors and making an attempt to establish justice.

11. The proper use of nature, kindness to animals, protecting the environment and avoiding waste

Many research works examine the relationship between attitudes and religious orientation by various factors, including the relationship between religious attitudes and mental health (Koenig, 1997; Kazemian, 2009; Bahrami and Tashak, 2004), physical health (Ebrahami et al., 2008) Mental health (Bahrami et al., 2005; Janbozorgi, 2007; Kajbaf and Raie Poor, 2008), public health (Nezhadnadri et al., 2012), mental disorders (Habib vand, 2008; Bahrami et al., 2005), depression (Islami et al., 2001; expression et al., 2008; Koenig, 1997); anxiety (Bayani et al., 2008; Jesse and Reed, 2004); adjustment mechanisms (Larson et al., 1992); adjustment (Lohandal, quoted by Khodayarifard, 2000); the prevention of emotional problems (Azimi and Zarghami, 2002), fear and stress (Harold, quotes Zakavi et al., 2008), coping with stressors (Ebrahami et al., 2008); Quality of life (Shams Esfandabad and Nezhadnadri, 2009); marital satisfaction (Khodayari et al., 2007; Margaret, 1990; Call & Heaton, 1997; Sullivan, 2001; Hu’ner & Genc, 2005; Orathinkal & Vansteewegen, 2006 and Mahmoudi, 2012 ), life satisfaction (Jesse & Reed, 2006); motivation (Ghasemi, 2010), happiness (Sahraeian et al., 2011), confidence (Jesse & Reed, 2006), suicidal tendencies (Neelman et al, 1997).

In a study by Hasanovic and Pajevic the role of moral and religious beliefs as a protective factor against mental health of veterans on Bosnia and Herzegovina was investigated. The results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between moral and religious beliefs with severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse and tobacco, (Hasanovic & Pajevic, 2010).

Furthermore, Deserter et al., (2006) in their study concluded that religious approach was the only predictor of mental health (Bier man, 2006). Recent studies have shown that differences in religious attitudes are more important than religious rituals in predicting the levels of mental health (Francis et al, 2004, quoted by Sadeghi et al, 2010).

In this study, the attitude towards morality, values, life and individual behavior and social effects of religion, ideology and religious belief were measured. The reason for choosing students in this study is need for internal planning and promotion of religious issues during the course of study the students. The objective of this study is to investigate the religious attitude of students according to age, gender, residence status, marital status and educational fields.

Methods

The present study is a cross-sectional study. Students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences in 2013-2014 formed the population.
Cluster random sampling was proportionate to the size of the population. The initial sample included 392 people who completed the questionnaire out of which 33 people were excluded due to failure to complete the questionnaire.

Results were analyzed by using SPSS software and descriptive statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and the independent samples t-test.

Assessment tools in this questionnaire consisted of demographic characteristics of students and religious attitudes scale. Questionnaires were filled with students’ satisfaction and in compliance with ethical considerations in protecting individual rights.

**Religious Attitude Inventory**

This questionnaire has been developed by Khodayarifard et al (2013) in Tehran University and utilizes research background and the Quran and Islamic traditions.

This tool has 40 items which are based on the six-level Likert scale ranging from forever (score 5) to never (score 0) and consisting of three subscales of belief (12 items), emotions (12 items) and religious behavior (12 items). Total scores on this subscale show the score for general religiousness.

The religious attitude is calculated from 40 to 200. Questionnaire's content assessed ethics, values and individual behavior and social effects of religion in life, ideology and religious belief. Four items is embedded to assess the social pretense in responding to the research instrument. The reliability and validity of tool has been reported as appropriate (Khodayarifard et al., 2013).

The scale consists of the three subscales of knowledge and belief of religious attitudes, interests and religious feelings, religious commitment and behavior.

**A) Religious Knowledge and Belief:**

1) knowledge: It means the principles of religion, belief in God, the hereafter, the prophets and the knowledge of the minutiae of religion.

2) belief: It is the acceptance, confession and heartfelt acknowledgment of the principles and laws of religion.

**B) Interests and religious emotions:** they include all positive and negative emotions. Positive emotions appear in a religious person in order to understand and have heartfelt acceptance of God and his friends, believers, the faithful and religious laws, the universe and afterlife. Negative emotions are created by love of God and God's religion in relation to the enemies of religion and the enemies of prophets and apostles of God.

**C) Commitment and practice of religious obligations:** a religious person seeking the creation of knowledge and emotional feelings for God, prophets and saints of faith, considers abiding by religious tasks and laws a necessity in the areas of personal, social and economic imperatives (Khodayarifard et al., 2006).
Data were analyzed by using SPSS software. The means and standard deviations were calculated for the three dimensions and for the overall religiosity. Moreover, the relationship between religious attitude and age, gender, residence status, marital status and education were determined using ANOVA and t-test.

Results

Of the 359 students of study, 2.5 percent were males and 97.4 percent were females; 59.3 of the students were living in the dormitory and 9.5% of the students were not living in the dormitory. The mean age of the sample was 20.46. As frequency; 48.7 percent of them were studying Medicine and 51.2 percent were students of Paramedical Sciences. Also 3% (1 person) of them had religious attitudes lower than the mean, while 99% (358) had religious attitudes which were higher than the mean. Table 1 shows the distribution of religious attitude of the students in total and components.

Table 1: The religious attitude and its components in students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious components</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious belief</td>
<td>43.25</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious behavior</td>
<td>44.78</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious emotions</td>
<td>43.26</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General religiosity</td>
<td>143.22</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 1, the mean and standard deviation in total religiosity were 143.22 ± 15.74. With regard to the minimum and maximum score of religion and religiosity it seems that the mean score of students was at a satisfactory level. In addition, taking the findings of the components of the religious attitude in the whole sample into account, mean score of religious behavior is more in comparison with other two components of religious belief and religious emotions. Table 2 shows the level of religiousness and its components based on age, gender, residence status, marital status and education.

Table 2: The level of religiousness and its components based on age, gender, residence status, marital status and education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Religious components Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation Mean</th>
<th>Religious behavior Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation Mean</th>
<th>Religious emotions Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>14/39*142/64</td>
<td>43/02</td>
<td>44/73</td>
<td>43/03</td>
<td>5/66</td>
<td>%64/1230 (</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-24</td>
<td>16/03*143/93</td>
<td>44/14</td>
<td>44/74</td>
<td>43/27</td>
<td>6/27</td>
<td>(%13/147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Issue 1</th>
<th>February 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND CULTURAL STUDIES</strong> ISSN 2356-5926</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-27</td>
<td>14/83*145/92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0/72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>14/44*142/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>6/33*144/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living in the dormitory</td>
<td>14/56*143/46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living in the dormitory</td>
<td>12/38*141/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0/29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>15/73*142/38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married</td>
<td>15/67*145/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>0/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical courses</td>
<td>16/24*142/54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paramedical</td>
<td>15/28*143/85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index

Page 855
Table 2 illustrates the results obtained through ANOVA and t-test. It came to light that the differences in means of scores for age, residential status, marital status and major were not statistically significant for all the three components of religiosity nor was it significant for the total religiosity index. Significant differences were observed between males and females in that females had higher indices of religious attitude.

Distribution of scores of religiosity was obtained for students in medical and paramedical fields. Simple random sampling was carried out among students of Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and Management of Rehabilitation. The mean and standard deviation of religious belief were 142.54± 16.24 among students of Medical Sciences and 143.85±15.28 among students of Paramedical Sciences, respectively. The results showed that relationship between education and the religious attitude were not statistically significant for the overall score of religious attitude nor were they significant for the three dimensions of religiosity component for separate fields.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate students' religious attitudes among students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. As can be seen from Table 1, the overall mean and standard deviation of religiosity were 15.74± 143.22, respectively. Among religiosity components, the religious behavior of the students was stronger than others. On the whole, the findings revealed a positive attitude of students towards religious issues. This result is consistent with the findings of many other studies, for example, those of religious attitudes of students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences in a survey which showed that 57 percent of the total 384 students obtained the highest average score attitude (Zakavi et al., 2008).

In a study by Zohoor and Tavakoli (2002) among 771 students of Kerman University of Medical Sciences it was shown that 55 percent of students had strong religious attitudes. Likewise, the most important research findings of Serajzadeh and Pooyafar (2009) clarified that the religiosity of the selected sample of the population was higher than average and near the top level.

In this study, statistically significant differences were found in the mean scores of males and females in that the religious attitude in women surpassed that of men. This finding is consistent with those of Zohoor and Tavakoli (2002); Zakavi and colleagues (2008), Stark (2002) and Sadeghi et al (2010). However, the results of the relationship between gender and religiosity were in disagreement with the findings of Khodayarifard et al (2006) and Heidari Rafat and Enayati Novinfar (2010). In their study, Mohammadi and Mehrabi Honarmand (2006) concluded there was a significant difference between means of male and female students regarding religious attitudes. In fact, scores of students were significantly higher for females in religious attitudes and its components in comparison with males.
It can be said that the number of studies in which significant differences have been found between males and females are much more than the studies that reported no such differences (Sharifi, 2002). This result has been so repeatedly found in different studies and investigations in various cultures, religions and levels that some researchers consider it as a global issue which lies in the biological differences among males and females (Stark, 2002). An investigation into the relationship between marital status and religiosity showed that the overall mean score of religiosity was not statistically significant among single students and married ones. This result is consistent with those of Zakavi in Mazandaran and Khodayarifard's findings (Zakavi et al., 2008; Khodayarifard et al., 2006). An inspection of the relationship between level of religiosity and its components with field of study showed that the differences in mean scores were not statistically significant for religious components among students of different majors.

In general, this study showed that students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences had a religiosity which was higher than average in the 2013-2014 academic year. In the context of commitment to religious duties, the low mean score of adherence to religious orders on the part of some of students does not represent a religious attitude and the intervening factors should be investigated. Since many studies asserted that religion is a supporting force to reduce stress, increase love for others, have commitment to work and hope for the future introduction (Sahraeian et al., 2011). Furthermore, scientific studies are recommended to determine the factors affecting the religious attitude of people.
References


Khodayarifard, Mohammed; Ali Naghi Faghihi; Bagher Ghabari Bonab; , Mohsen Shokohi yekta; Ahmad Behpajo. (2006). Preparation and Standardization Measures of Religiosity Student. (Project) Tehran: Tehran University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences.

Khodayarifard, Mohammed; Abbas Rahimi Nejad; Bagher Ghabari Bonab; Mohsen Shokohi yekta ; Ali Naghi Faghihi; Masoud Azerbaijan; Gholamali Afrooz; Heidarali Hooman; Mortezza Manteghi; Mohsen Pak nejad; Seyed Hossein Serajzadeh, , Seyed Mohsen Fatemi; Saeed Akbari Zardkhaneh; Valliollah Farzad, Khosro Bagheri Nou Parast;


Mohamadi, Seyed Davoud; Mahnaz Mehrabizadeh honarmand. (2006). Relationship between Religious Attitude Control and the Role of Gender. Psychological Researches. 18, 47-64.


