



Exploring the Relationship between Religiosity, Life Satisfaction, and Death Anxiety: A Contemporary Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship among religiosity, life satisfaction, and death anxiety in a sample of Pakistani adults, with a focus on the moderating role of life satisfaction in the link between religiosity and death anxiety. Drawing on theories such as Terror Management Theory and Meaning Management Theory, the study examined how spiritual beliefs and subjective well-being interact to influence existential concerns. Participants (N = 200) completed standardized measures assessing their levels of religiosity, life satisfaction, and death anxiety. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between religiosity and death anxiety, as well as between life satisfaction and death anxiety, while religiosity was positively associated with life satisfaction. Moreover, life satisfaction significantly moderated the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety, suggesting that individuals with both high religiosity and high life satisfaction reported the lowest levels of death anxiety. These findings have important implications for clinical practice and public mental health, particularly in religious and collectivist societies, highlighting the protective role of spirituality and life meaning in managing fear of death.



Introduction

Death is an inevitable reality; however, its psychological effects vary significantly across individuals, influenced by cultural ideas, personal values, and religious perspectives. Religiosity frequently serves as a crucial coping technique for persons confronting the fear of death. Similarly, a person's subjective assessment of his/her overall well-being is linked to life satisfaction and serves as a protective indicator against death-related sorrow. This triad of religiosity, life pleasure, and death anxiety has grasped the attention of researchers, particularly in socio-religiously engrained nations like Pakistan.

Terror Management Theory (TMT) posits that awareness of mortality induces existential dread, which individuals mitigate by engaging in cultural belief systems and affirming their self-worth (Pyszczynski et al., 2015). In this context, religiosity serves as a significant psychological safeguard, providing a sense of purpose, moral structure, and, frequently, the assurance of life beyond death (Vail et al., 2010). Nevertheless, empirical studies indicate that the correlation between religiosity and death dread is not always linear. Although strong religious beliefs are often linked to reduced death dread, persons exhibiting moderate religiosity occasionally express intensified existential apprehensions (Jong et al., 2020).

Religiosity can also enhance mental health by facilitating people getting importance in life, hope, and acceptance when things are rough (Koenig, 2018). Higher life satisfaction has been shown to ease anxiety of dying by improving personal serenity and fulfillment (Zheng et al., 2023). Thus, both religiosity and life satisfaction may independently or synergistically affect a person's experience of death anxiety.

Recent data from various sociocultural contexts substantiates the proposition that religiosity is inversely correlated with death anxiety. For instance, Rybarski et al. (2023) discovered that in cancer patients, religious comfort served as a mediator between religiosity and reduced death fear, but religious struggle was associated with increased anxiety. In a Pakistani context, Husain et al. (2024) created the Believers' Death Anxiety Scale (BDAS), which highlighted the significance of cultural-religious frameworks in comprehending death-related anxieties.

Life satisfaction has also become a crucial protective factor. Khan et al. (2013) found that Pakistani university students with a strong religious orientation also had higher levels of life satisfaction and fewer existential worries. In addition, Mazhar and Bhatti (2024) demonstrated that spiritual well-being in hemodialysis patients was associated with an improved quality of life and reduced fear of death, indicating that the existential assurance afforded by faith increases emotional resilience in health-compromised populations. Moreover, religiosity might not only predict reduction in death anxiety but also put impact via its beneficial effects on psychological well-being. Rabbani et al. (2025) found that spiritual well-being has been a significant predictor of life satisfaction and diminished anxiety of death in Muslims, hence strengthening the mediation function of wide-ranging mental well-being. In international literature, the belief in an afterlife or reawakening, dominant in several religious traditions, has consistently correlated with less death fear (Vail et al., 2010; Jong et al., 2020).

This study highlights the complex interplay between religiosity and life happiness in influencing anxiety towards death. Yet, the course and intensity of this linkage may get influenced by contextual factors, including religious policy, emotional coping mechanisms, cultural standards, and subjective belief systems. Consequently, there exists a necessity for culturally informed research, especially in Muslim-majority nations such as Pakistan, to elucidate these processes with greater precision.

Significance of the Study

The current paper is of immense importance in investigating the intricate relationship among religiosity, life satisfaction, and death anxiety, notions that are vital to existential and cross-cultural psychology. As the world gradually gets under the impact of sociopolitical turmoil, health issues, and pervasive ambiguity, the psychological consequences of mortality awareness have intensified. Death anxiety is a common feeling, but how people deal with it depends on their culture, religion, and how they feel about themselves. Consequently, examining these categories within a

collectivistic and religiously committed country like Pakistan yields significant, contextually relevant findings.

Meta-research supports the significance of religiosity and life satisfaction in reducing death anxiety (Koenig, 2018; Pyszczynski et al., 2015; Zheng et al., 2023). However, most of this research has been undertaken in Western or secular contexts. Consequently, Muslim-majority populations are insufficiently represented in empirical research, especially on culturally ingrained spiritual activities. This study addresses that gap by examining how Islamic religiosity contributes to emotional resilience and life satisfaction while potentially reducing death-related distress.

Furthermore, this research may offer practical implications for clinical psychology, spiritual counseling, and health psychology. Insights gained from the findings could support the development of culturally sensitive interventions aimed at improving existential well-being in populations facing end-of-life issues, chronic illness, bereavement, or trauma. Mental health professionals, religious counselors, and palliative care providers may benefit from a deeper understanding of how religiosity serves as both a protective and interpretive framework for coping with death anxiety.

At a broader level, this study also contributes to global literature by reinforcing the importance of contextual and culturally specific perspectives in understanding psychological phenomena. It encourages the integration of spiritual dimensions into psychological models of well-being and mortality salience, thereby enriching theories such as Terror Management Theory and the Meaning-Making Model. Moreover, the research may stimulate future interfaith or cross-cultural comparative studies, offering a more holistic understanding of how belief systems and life satisfaction interact in shaping human engagement with mortality.

Methodology

Objectives

- To assess the correlation between death anxiety, religiosity, and life satisfaction among young adults and middle-aged individuals.
- To investigate the effect of religiosity on death anxiety.
- To examine the role of life satisfaction as a moderator between religiosity and death anxiety.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a negative correlation between death anxiety and religiosity.

H2: There is a negative correlation between life satisfaction and death anxiety.

H3: Religiosity and life satisfaction are positively correlated.

H4: Religiosity significantly predicts death anxiety among adults.

H5: Life satisfaction moderates the relationship between religiosity and death anxiety.

Research Design

The present study employed correlational, cross-sectional research design, using a survey method for data collection. This design was appropriate for exploring associations among variables of interest without manipulating them, as well as examining potential group differences across age

categories. Standardized self-report questionnaires were utilized as the primary data collection tools.

Sample

The sample consisted of 200 Muslim participants recruited from the International Islamic University Islamabad, including 100 young adults (ages 20–35) and 100 middle-aged individuals (ages 36–50). Participants were both university students and employed individuals. Only individuals identifying as Muslim were included, to align with the religiosity measure used. A purposive sampling strategy was employed based on age and religious affiliation criteria.

Instruments

Muslim Religiosity Scale (MRS). Religiosity was assessed, and it was developed by Jabeen (2014). The scale consists of 26 items measuring both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of religiosity. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .81$).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Life satisfaction was measured (Diener, 1985), which consists of 5 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). This scale is widely used for measuring subjective well-being and has shown excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$).

Death Attitude Profile–Revised (DAP-R; Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 2005). This 32-item scale evaluates multiple dimensions of attitudes toward death, including fear of death and avoidance. Responses are scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The scale has acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .79$).

Procedure

Data gathering took place in specific academic and administrative settings at the International Islamic University, Islamabad. Individuals or small groups of participants were approached, and a brief explanation of the study's goal was given. Before taking part, all participants had to sign a written consent form. We adhered to strict ethical principles, including voluntary participation, anonymity, and privacy. Participants were instructed to fill out questionnaires in a group, which took about 15 to 20 minutes. Participants were given instructions and were advised to respond truthfully according to their present views and emotions. No deception was used in this study. After they were finished, the questionnaires were gathered and evaluated via SPSS.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the ethical standards given by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). The research procedure received approval from relevant academic consultants, and informed consent was obtained from each participant. Participants were told that they may leave at any time and that their answers would be kept private and anonymous.

Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N = 200)

Variables	f	%
Gender		
Male	99	49.5%
Female	101	50.5%

Age Range		
Adults	100	50.0%
Middle-aged	100	50.0%

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of the participants. The sample consisted of 99 males and 101 females. The age distribution was equally divided between adults and middle-aged individuals.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach's α of Study Variables ($N = 200$)

Variables	<i>K</i>	α	Potential Range	Actual Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Death Anxiety	32	.79	32–224	2–7	0.44	7.54
Religiosity	26	.81	26–130	2–5	0.10	1.97
Life Satisfaction	5	.89	5–35	1–7	-0.52	-0.22

All instruments demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The Muslim Religiosity Scale ($\alpha = .81$), the Death Anxiety Profile–Revised Scale ($\alpha = .79$), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale ($\alpha = .89$) showed acceptable to excellent Cronbach's alpha values.

Table 3. Intercorrelations Among Study Variables ($N = 200$)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Death Anxiety	-	-.63**	-.67**
2. Religiosity		-	.59**
3. Life Satisfaction			-

Note. $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3 indicates that death anxiety was significantly and negatively correlated with both religiosity and life satisfaction. A significant positive correlation was found between religiosity and life satisfaction.

Table 4. Moderation of Religiosity on Death Anxiety by Life Satisfaction ($N = 200$)

Step	Predictor	β	R^2	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1	Religiosity	.44	.19	6.93	.001
2	Religiosity	.35		5.03	.001
	Life Satisfaction	.19	.22	2.69	.008
3	Religiosity	.31		4.64	.001
	Life Satisfaction	.23		3.40	.001
	Religiosity \times Life Satisfaction	.22	.29	4.54	.001

Step 1 shows that religiosity alone accounted for 19% of the variance in death anxiety. In Step 2, life satisfaction added incremental variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$), and in Step 3, the interaction term contributed an additional 7%, resulting in a total of 29% explained variance. The moderating role of life satisfaction was statistically significant.

Table 5. Simple Linear Regression of Religiosity Predicting Death Anxiety ($N = 200$)

Predictor	β	SE	95% CI	R^2
Constant		0.29	[2.07, 3.24]	
Religiosity	0.44	0.08	[0.43, 0.78]	.19

The regression model indicates that religiosity significantly predicted death anxiety, explaining 19% of the variance in the outcome variable.

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationships among religiosity, life satisfaction, and death anxiety, and to examine whether life satisfaction moderates the effect of religiosity on death anxiety. The findings offer valuable insights into how personal belief systems and psychological well-being interact in the regulation of existential fears, particularly within a collectivistic and religiously inclined society like Pakistan.

The significant negative correlation found between religiosity and death anxiety aligns with a growing body of literature indicating that religious beliefs serve as an important protective factor against death-related fear (Roushani, 2012; Vail et al., 2010). Islamic doctrines regard death not as a conclusion but as a passage to a different existence, highlighting accountability, eternal reward, and divine mercy. This metaphysical perspective can cultivate a sense of existential security, alleviating the fear linked to death (Abdel-Khalek, 2011). Terror Management Theory (TMT) offers a valuable framework for comprehending this interaction. Terror Management Theory posits that awareness of mortality engenders the capacity for debilitating terror, which individuals navigate through cultural worldviews and belief systems that bestow symbolic immortality (Pyszczynski et al., 2015). In Pakistan, where religion is a part of both public and private life, being religious may give people a clear picture of the world that protects them from the mental effects of mortality salience.

As stated in this study, life satisfaction exhibited a negative correlation with death anxiety. This indicates that persons who perceive their life as meaningful, purposeful, and content are less susceptible to the fear of death. This conclusion aligns with existential theories, such as Meaning Management Theory (Wong, 2008), which suggest that the acceptance of mortality is enhanced by a life abundant in meaning and fulfillment. Individuals who find fulfillment in their relationships, professional endeavors, and spiritual practices may possess a greater capacity to face the certainty of death without experiencing excessive worry (Yalom, 2008). Moreover, those possessing elevated life satisfaction may regard death not as an interruption, but as a natural conclusion of a life well-lived. This cognitive reframing can lead to greater acceptance and psychological peace (Ardelt, 2003).

The positive relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction further strengthens the argument that spiritual belief systems can significantly enhance subjective well-being (Krause, 2003; Pargament, 2011). In collectivist cultures, religious practice is often a source of communal identity, moral guidance, and emotional stability. For many Pakistanis, engaging in religious rituals, maintaining a relationship with God, and living a value-driven life provide deep personal fulfillment, thus contributing to life satisfaction. This also supports the literature suggesting that religious individuals may possess greater coping resources, clearer life purpose, and stronger social networks, all of which are known contributors to subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2011).

The moderation analysis revealed that life satisfaction not only independently predicted death anxiety but also amplified the protective effect of religiosity on death anxiety. Specifically, religiosity alone accounted for 19% of the variance in death anxiety, while the addition of life satisfaction and its interaction term increased this to 29%. This demonstrates a synergistic interaction: the presence of high life satisfaction strengthens the inverse relationship between religiosity and death anxiety. This finding is important because it highlights that religiosity's buffering role is not uniform across individuals; it is more effective when accompanied by a

positive evaluation of one's life. Put differently, even strong religious beliefs may not significantly reduce death anxiety if a person is dissatisfied with their life. This nuance has been overlooked in many previous studies and contributes to a more complex understanding of the psychology of death anxiety.

Implications of the study

The results have several implications for clinical psychology, spiritual counseling, and community mental health initiatives. First, they suggest that interventions aimed at reducing death anxiety in religious populations should consider enhancing both religiosity and life satisfaction. Therapeutic approaches grounded in existential therapy, logotherapy, or spiritually integrated psychotherapy may be particularly effective (Wong, 2010; Pargament, 2011).

Second, life satisfaction appears to serve a dual role: as a buffer against death anxiety and as an enhancer of the protective effects of religiosity. Clinicians may therefore benefit from including life satisfaction-enhancing strategies (such as gratitude practices, meaning-making interventions, or cognitive restructuring) in culturally sensitive treatment plans.

In public health and policy contexts, these findings advocate for greater recognition of the spiritual dimension of mental health, especially in Muslim-majority countries. Educational curricula and awareness programs that integrate spiritual literacy, meaning-centered development, and psychological well-being could address deep-rooted fears and promote holistic resilience.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations merit attention. The cross-sectional design precludes any conclusions about causality. Future studies employing longitudinal or experimental methods could establish the directionality of relationships between religiosity, life satisfaction, and death anxiety.

Additionally, the study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which are susceptible to biases such as social desirability, particularly relevant in measuring religiosity or death anxiety in collectivist and religiously orthodox contexts. Subsequent studies may integrate implicit measures or behavioral indicators to enhance self-report data.

The sample was both culturally and religiously homogeneous, as it consisted solely of Pakistani Muslims. This improves internal validity but makes it harder to apply the results to other situations. Subsequent research should use comparative designs using participants from various religious traditions or secular perspectives to investigate cultural disparities in the psychological treatment of death anxiety.

Finally, additional psychological constructs, such as hope, resilience, or spiritual well-being, may be investigated as potential mediators or moderators. Looking into these routes might assist in improving models of how belief systems affect well-being and existential issues.

Conclusion

The findings provided in this study pointed out the importance of religiosity and life happiness in alleviating death dread among Pakistani people. In this country, religion is not only a subjective entity but a deeply established societal basis; spiritual engagement seems to provide existential comfort. However, this buffering effect is much improved when people also feel happy and fulfilled in their lives. Religiosity may offer representational immortality and a feeling of divine drive; on the other hand, it is the connection of faith and life pleasure that seems to best prepare individuals to face the certainty of death with minimal psychological pressure. This multilayered

perspective challenges reductionist views of religiosity as uniformly protective, prominence the necessity for comprehensive interventions that incorporate both spiritual and psychological aspects of well-being.

Healthcare professionals, including clinicians, counselors, and community health workers operating within culturally and religiously integrated societies, can utilize these findings to formulate spiritually attuned solutions. Researchers must persist in examining the intricate relationships among belief systems, well-being, and existential anxiety across many groups and developmental stages. In the end, the study adds to our understanding of how people deal with death by showing how faith, meaning, and happiness in life are all connected and help people stay strong mentally.

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