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Islamic Religiosity and Subjective Well-Being in the West: Meta-Analytic Evidence of Protections across Diverse Muslim Diasporas

**By : Sara Ghannam (BSW, MSW Student) &
Kevin M. Gorey (PhD)**

Introduction



How Many Muslims Are in the West

According to the Pew Research Centre (DeSilver & Masci, 2017)...

43.5 Million

in Europe (6% of the total population)

3.5 Million

in North America (1% of the total population)

650,000

In Australasia (1.6% of the total population)

Introduction

- ❑ Geopolitical upheaval and armed conflicts have brought Muslims to the West
- ❑ Muslims in the West face mistrust, stigmatization and discrimination
- ❑ Unique struggles = higher risk of negative mental health and lower SWB

Unique Struggles

- ❑ Intersection between discrimination based on religious identity and immigrant/refugee status
- ❑ Acculturative stress linked to status as immigrants/refugees
- ❑ Islamophobia linked with hate crimes and substantially lower employment rates
 - ❑ Exacerbated amongst Muslim women

Religion as a Protective Factor

- ☒ > 250 Judeo-Christian studies have identified religion as a protective factor
 - ☒ Few worldwide studies support this for Muslims
- ☒ Goal: complete a meta-analytic review to discover the link between religiosity and SWB in amongst Muslims in the West

Hypotheses

- ❑ Main hypothesis: there will be a significant protective Islamic religiosity-subjective well-being association
- ❑ Secondary hypothesis: there will be a stronger religiosity-subjective well-being association among Muslim women than men

Methods

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Study Selection

- ❑ Systemic search of databases: *CINAHL*, *Medline/PubMed*, *PsycINFO*, *ProQuest Sociology Collection* and *Social Work Abstracts*
- ❑ Grey literature was also searched: *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* and *Google Scholar*

Study Selection Cont'd

☒ Keyword search:

(wellbeing or well-being or well being or quality of life or wellness or positive affect or happiness or mental health or mental illness or mental disorder or psychiatric illness or psychiatric distress or anxiety or anxiety disorder or depression or depressive disorder) and (religiosity or religion or religious or religiousness or spiritual or spirituality or faith) and (Muslim or Islam).

Study Selection Cont'd

☐ Study inclusion criteria:

1. Took place in any European country, Canada, the USA, Australia, or New Zealand
2. included face valid or standardized measures of religiosity and SWB and assessed their statistical association
3. Had a Muslim majority sample
4. Published in English

Meta-Analysis

- ▣ Common size effect metric: Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)
 - ▣ Values from studies were weighted and pooled into one value
 - ▣ Statistical significance: 95% CI
 - ▣ Moderation for gender was tested

Meta-Analysis Cont'd

- Practical interpretation statistic: Cohen's U_3

Results

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Description of Primary Studies

- ❑ 21 studies selected
- ❑ Range of years (published) : 2000-2021
- ❑ Sample size range = 50- 2,661 participants
- ❑ Participants were mainly first or second-generation immigrants
 - ❑ Mainly originated from Arab, Middle-Eastern and African countries

Description of Primary Studies Cont'd

- ▣ Majority of the sample ($n = 7,145$) were:
 - ▣ Adults (61.9%)
 - ▣ Women (53.3%)
 - ▣ In the USA (52.4%)

Description of Primary Studies Cont'd

- ☒ All studies used cross-section surveys
- ☒ Majority of the study modalities were:
 - ☒ Offline, in-person surveys (66.7%)
 - ☒ Convenience surveys (81.0%)

Meta-Analytic Findings

- ▣ 19 studies supported the main hypothesis
 - ▣ $r_{\text{pooled}} = 0.20$ (95% CI 0.14, 0.25)
 - ▣ 16 studies $p < .05$ and 3 studies $p < .10$
- ▣ About 2/3 of religious Muslims scored higher on SWB than nonreligious Muslims ($U_g = 65.8\%$, $p < .05$)
- ▣ Associations were significantly heterogenous
- ▣ ($\chi^2(20) = 95.33$, $p < .001$)

Meta-Analytic Findings

- gender such apparent protections were observed to be significantly greater among Muslim women ($r = 0.26$ [95% CI 0.20, 0.37], $U_3 = 72.8\%$) than men ($r = 0.14$ [95% CI 0.09, 0.20], $U_3 = 64.3\%$); $\chi^2 (1) = 4.37, p < .05$.
- Other potential moderators:
 - religiosity was found to be significantly larger among postsecondary students ($r = 0.36$ [95% CI 0.26, 0.45] $U_3 = 78.0\%$) than among the other immigrants ($r = 0.18$ [95% CI 0.12, 0.23] $U_3 = 63.3\%$), $\chi^2 (1) = 9.71, p < .01$.

Meta-Analytic Findings

- Other potential moderators:
 - the protective effect of Islamic religiosity was significantly smaller in the 15 published journal articles ($r = 0.14$ [95% CI 0.09, 0.20] $U_3 = 61.1\%$) vs. 6 unpublished, grey dissertations ($r = 0.29$ [95% CI 0.21, 0.37] $U_3 = 72.8\%$),
 - $\chi^2 (1) = 8.75, p < .01$

Discussion

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Practical Implications

- ❑ Religiosity was proven to be a protective factor for Muslims in the West
 - ❑ Protection in women > men
 - ❑ Utilization in social services
- ❑ Policy makers should work to eradicate Islamic (all) religious discrimination in Western social structures

Limitations

- ❑ Sample may not accurately represent entire population
- ❑ Potential response biases
- ❑ Difference in scales

Future Research Needs

- ❑ Studies comparing Muslims and non-Muslims in the West
- ❑ Studies with other modalities (ex. longitudinal studies)
- ❑ Studies applying the use of Islamic religiosity as a protective factor (ex. the effectiveness of Islamic-based counselling)



*Thank You
for
Listening*

Any questions?

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