



Role of Religion in Shaping Moral Values

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ABSTRACT

Religion has been considered to be one of the key institutions in influencing moral values, ethical standards and social conducts of societies. Religious traditions in the past and present have given us moral frameworks by which individual behavior, social relations, and collective responsibility are guided. This paper discusses the issue of religion in the formulation of moral values by identifying how religious conception, practices and organizations have an impact on the ideas of right or wrong, justice, compassion, and social order. Based on sociological, psychological and philosophical approaches, the study brings out the role of religion in promoting moral growth of both individuals and the society. Meanwhile, it also recognizes the complexities and tension that come with the issue of religious pluralism, secularization, and globalization that have transformed the morality power of religion in contemporary societies. The paper holds that although religion continues to be a significant root of moral guidance, the maration between religion and other cultural, political and institutional sources is being increasingly mediated. This role is important in the analysis of moral formation, social cohesion, and moral decisions in different and developing societies.

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Introduction

The influence of religion on moral values has been a major issue of debate among scholars in various fields, such as, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and anthropology. Since ancient people to the current society, religion has been one of the main sources of moral teaching whereby it provides directives on how to conduct oneself, ethical reasoning and responsiveness to the society. Honesty, compassion, justice, self-restraint, and respect towards others are examples of moral values that have been expressed, strengthened, and passed through the religious teachings and rituals (Durkheim, 1912; Weber, 1930). Religion in most societies is not just a belief system but also a moral system that influences individual conscience and values among communities. Consequently, the connection between religion

and morality still is one of the important areas of the investigation, especially in situations, when religion still plays an important role in social institutions, legislation, and daily life.

Moral values are generally perceived as such values that give principles to make the judgments regarding right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable behavior. They are not values that are inborn rather they are acquired, through socialization processes that include family, education, culture and religion (Kohlberg, 1981; Bandura, 1986). Religion has a special purpose in this process, as they offer divine commandments, divine narratives and moral examples that authenticate moral norms and accord them transcendent authority (Graham and Haidt, 2010). The religious morality, in contrast to secular systems of morality, is usually justified by a belief in a superior being or divine order, so moral obligations do not seem to be subject to negotiation. This perceived sacredness adds to the strong moral commitment and promotes compliance even without external coercion (Pargament, 1997).

In the past, religious traditions were highly associated with the moral structure of societies. The major religions across the world like Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism have come up with a detailed moral code that addresses individual behavior, relationship with others, economic behavior and social justice (Smart, 1998; Armstrong, 2006). Such teachings of morality have influenced the legal systems, education and culture especially in the pre-modern and developing societies where religion and the government were closely intertwined (Turner, 2011). To illustrate, a charity, social responsibility and concern of the poor are at the heart of most religious teachings and have shaped welfare policies and community service organizations (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). In this respect religion has been used as a moral guide as well as a social regulator.

At the personal level, religion helps in the moral growth through behavioral beliefs, feelings, and inspirations. Based on psychological studies, it has been hypothesized that moral self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial behavior depend on religious involvement, especially when religious teachings focus on caring about the other and taking care of them (Batson et al., 1993; Saroglou, 2013). The values are internalised through rituals, prayers, and moral narratives, which help people to make decisions and actions. The moral sanctions of the religious society, which consist of approval and disapproval, are also sources of moral reinforcement used to create a common moral environment that helps in conformity to moral standards (Durkheim, 1912). Such mechanisms bring out the fact that religion functions not only by belief but also by social interaction and shared identity.

Religion is also a major factor in influencing moral values at the social level in terms of social cohesion and common ethical insights. Currently, Durkheim (1912) believed that religion will make collective conscience more secure by providing moral discipline and enhancing social solidarity. When in a society the religious traditions are high, the moral norms are usually integrated into community practices, festivals, and rites of passage and are thus passed on to the next generations. This group aspect of religious morality is especially notable in the developing world, where religious organizations tend to help with the vacuum created by ineffective state systems and offer moral wisdom, conflict resolution and social assistance (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). Religion is a major source of moral authority in such situations that affects the daily lives.

The influence of religion in the development of values of morality, however, is neither homogenous nor undisputed. Modernization, secularization and globalization have changed the moral terrain and especially the pluralistic societies. Secularization theorists suggest that the more societies modernize, the less moral authority religion has, and the rational, humanistic, and legal-ethical systems take its place (Berger, 1967; Bruce, 2002). Although it

is evident that religion still affects the morality in most regions of the world, particularly the developing societies, the impact of religion has been more negotiated and complicated. People are increasingly turning to various sources of moral advice, which comprise of religion, education, media and personal experience (Giddens, 1991).

Religious pluralism also complicates the connection that exist between religion and moral values. Where two or more religions exist in the same society, moral consensus might not be attained easily because various religious beliefs have different ethical priorities and interpretations (Habermas, 2006). Although justices and compassion are common moral values across a variety of religions, a variety of differences within the doctrines and practices of a number of religions may cause moral differences, especially regarding the issues of gender roles, sexuality, and rights of individuals (Hunter, 1991). All these tensions provoke significant questions concerning the role of religion in moral life of people and the degree to what extent religious values are supposed to impact laws and social policies.

Another criticism to religion is that it sometimes serves to support exclusionary, or authoritarian, moral systems, when moral authority is employed to endorse inequality, discrimination and social control (Haidt, 2012). The historical and the modern examples prove that religious moralizing systems may be used not only to foster social justice but also to justify oppression. This two-sided possibility serves as an indicator of the necessity to differentiate between moral values that promote human dignity and those that limit freedom or cause more harm (Sen, 1999). Subsequently, there is a growing academic interest in how religion morality is interacting with power, culture and societal structures.

Nevertheless, religion has remained crucial in moral discussions especially in situations where moral dilemma is created by moral uncertainty and social transformation. Religion tends to offer meaning, moral order and hope especially in developing societies where there are moral dilemmas associated with economic disparity, political instability, and poor institutions (Norris and Inglehart, 2011). Religious leaders and institutions often impact on the attitudes of people on issues like corruption, social responsibility and community welfare and determine the moral reaction to social problems.

The connection between religion and moral values in the modern societies can be described as dynamic as opposed to being fixed. Instead of fading, religion becomes more flexible to evolving social circumstances in a way that it renegotiates the understandings of its moral authority and modes of influence (Casanova, 1994). A significant number of people still use religious values to provide moral guidance as they use the secular systems of ethics. This co-existence indicates that religion is still a significant, but not a sole source of moral values in the contemporary life.

To sum up, religion has, and is still playing a major role in the development of moral values at individual and societal level. Religion offers moral codes that control behavior, social cohesion, and moral reasoning through beliefs, practices, and institutions. Although secularization, pluralism, and globalization have changed its role, religion is still a force of strong morality especially in developing societies. Religion is crucial in understanding the development of moral values, social harmony and ethical issues in the ever-complex and diverse world.

Literature Review

The interplay of religion and moral value has been widely studied through sociology, psychology, philosophy and anthropology, due to the perennial attachments given to religion as a moral institution. The classical sociological theorists considered the religion as the

source of moral order and the social cohesion. Arguing that religion was a way of establishing and maintaining collective conscience, Durkheim (1912) believed that religion establishes some moral limits and strengthens or affirms common values through rituals and symbols. In this view, moral rules are authorised by their divine nature that makes individuals attached to society and enhances social solidarity. Although Weber (1930) did not dismiss the morality of religion, he showed the importance of religious ethics in economic behavior and rational action in order to show how moral values based on religious belief systems can change social orders. Those classical roots are still applicable to the modern discussions on the moral role of religion.

Philosophical arguments have also made their share in getting to know about the moral impact of religion. According to Kant (1793), religion was considered as a means of affirming moral law by symbolic stories, but it is important to note that authentic morality had to be based on rational autonomy. Contrarily, modern moral fragmentation is in part due to the loss of religious traditions that previously gave coherence to moral frameworks (MacIntyre, 1981). In this sense, religion can provide continuity in narratives and moral integrity that the secular ethics can hardly achieve. Taylor (1989) also argued that cultural and religious worldviews are moral, implying that moral reasoning cannot be completely removed out of the context of culture and history.

Psychological studies have examined the influences of religion on cognitive and emotional controls and behaviour of morality. The theory of moral development proposed by Kohlberg (1981) has initially focused on the cognitive reasoning, but the subsequent researches have also recognized that moral decisions are significantly caused by cultural and religious backgrounds. Haidt (2001) criticized pure models of rationality by introducing the social intuitionist model by noting the contribution of moral emotions that are influenced by religious stories and societal rituals. According to the results of the empirical research, it has been found that socialization into religion correlates with an increased degree of moral internalization, especially in those cases when religious doctrines are promoted based on empathy, altruism and accountability (Saroglou, 2013). Pargament (1997) also established that religion offers moral coping skills to assist people in overcoming moral dilemmas and personal crisis.

The anthropological views stress on the cultural entrenchment of religious morality. Geertz (1973) defined religion as a set of symbols, which creates strong moral attenuations and inspirations by putting ethical standards into a sacred world perspective. According to this perspective, moral values are not philosophical principles but lived realities which are influenced by religious practices, myths, and practices within a community. Research in various cultural settings indicates that religion is central in establishing moral responsibility as it relates to family, gender and responsibility to the community (Smart, 1998; Turner, 2011). Religion is still highly embedded in the day-to-day morality in most of the developing societies, shaping the marriage, employment, and social behaviour.

The empirical sociological research has always shown that there is a correlation between moral behavior and religious involvement. Studies have indicated that when people are involved in religious practices regularly they are more likely to have a higher level of prosocial behaviors that include volunteering, donating to charitable groups, and civic participation (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). According to Batson et al. (1993) intrinsic religiosity especially religious motivation has a positive relationship with altruistic behavior. Nevertheless, other works warn that the ethical impact of religion is a factor of the religious orientation type; extrinsic or authoritarian religiosity could be associated with conformity and in-group bias instead of universal moral concern (Allport and Ross, 1967; Haidt, 2012).

Religion has especially been highlighted in terms of the role in moral socialization especially in the family and at the school level. Parents also use religious teachings to pass moral values like honesty, obedience and respect to their children (King and Boyatzis, 2004). The values are upheld in religious institutions and schools through the official teaching and ethics training to build character and morality (Sullivan, 2000). Research has reported that exposure to religion at a young age has an enduring effect on moral attitudes, even of those who are not religious in future (Smith and Denton, 2005). This implies that religion not only helps in moral development by belief but also through early social conditioning.

Even in the developing societies, religion tends to have a more active moral role because of the poor institutions of state and the inability to access formal ethical systems. Norris and Inglehart (2011) state that existential insecurity enhances the sense of commitment and dependence on religious moral directions. In these situations, religious institutions often serve as moral agents, resolving problems of corruption, social justice and welfare of the community. South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern research indicates that religious figures play an important role in shaping moral judgments on honesty, gender relations and social responsibility (Esposito, 2010; Ahmad, 2017). Religion therefore plays the role of a guide to morality and a social controller in such societies.

Simultaneously, researchers have been analyzing shortcomings and inconsistencies of religious morality. Critics reckon that religion is able to support strict moral codes that restrain individual liberty and uphold disparity, especially in gender and the rights of the minorities (Hunter, 1991; Okin, 1999). Feminist theorists emphasize the role of religious ethical systems in the past that validated patriarchal regulations and gender inequality in restricting the moral agency of women (Yuval-Davis, 2006). These criticisms imply that religious morality is not necessarily progressively or oppressively oriented, but is defined by higher power relations and social systems.

Religion and secular moral systems have been of significant concern in the modern world of scholarship. Berger (1967) was the first to foresee the depreciation of religious moral authority through the process of secularization although he subsequently noted that religion had continued to influence values (Berger, 1999). Habermas (2006) opined that it is possible to have a post-secular society where religious and secular moral standpoints are in dialogue and intermingle in the open space. This sentiment has been supported by empirical research that has indicated that most people tend to rely on religious teachings as well as secular moral beliefs when making judgments on morality (Giddens, 1991; Taylor, 2007).

Ethical conformity is also complicated by globalization and religious pluralism. Moral reasoning is exploited by exposure to other belief systems, and this promotes reflexivity in moral reasoning (Beck, 2006). Pluralism may facilitate tolerance and ethical dialogue, but on the other hand, it may escalate the moral conflicts in situations where religious values are put into conflict with the secular norms or human rights discourses (Sen, 1999). Research shows that such moral conflicts on matters like sexuality, bioethics and freedom of expression are a representation of the underlying conflicts between religious cultures and new ethical standards (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

The association between religion and moral judging has been studied with the help of experimental studies as well in recent empirical research. According to Graham and Haidt (2010), religious persons emphasize more on moral foundations pertaining to authority, sanctity as well as loyalty whereas secular persons emphasize on care and fairness. This is an indication that religion does not only influence the moral behavior but even the structure of the moral reasoning. Saroglou et al. (2009) also showed that religious morality is commonly

group focused in that it focuses much on moral obligation on the members of the in-group which can be either positive in its effects or exclusionary.

Regardless of the increasing secular forces, religion has remained important in the discourse and practice of morals. According to Casanova (1994), religion has not yet abandoned the multi-purpose arena and has shifted its form of interaction especially in the ethical discussion in the areas of social justice, peace and human dignity. The faith-based organizations are still involved in the humanitarian activities, moral advocacy or community development, which makes religion still morally relevant in the modern societies (Clarke and Jennings, 2008). These results indicate that the moral impact of religion does not disappear but takes various new forms.

Generally, the literature demonstrates that religion is an influential and versatile power in determining moral values. Although its power differs depending on the contexts and is moderated by the cultural, political, and institutional environment, religion still offers moral codes that direct the behavior, social integrity, and moral reasoning. Meanwhile, religious morality is open to criticism and change, especially in pluralistic and modern society. The prevailing literature in this area demonstrates that a detailed examination is required that identifies the contributions as well as the weaknesses of religion in the development of values in different social set ups.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design that will be used in this study will be quantitative research. Quantitative approach is suitable because it enables systematic measurement of religious beliefs, practices and moral values and also provides the possibility of statistical measurement of relationships between variables. The design will allow patterns and connections of levels of religiosity and moral orientations with a diverse population to be identified and will add to the empirical knowledge of the moral effect of religion.

Population and Sample

The study target population will comprise university undergraduates and young adults in the developing world between the ages of 18-45. The reason as to why this particular population was chosen is that the individuals in this age bracket have gone through a lot of moral socialization and are already participating actively in the religious, educational and social institutions. Multi-stage sampling method was used to choose respondents in six universities with three in the form of the public and three in the form of the private institution. Stratified sampling was employed to guarantee the sufficient representation on the gender, socio-economic status, and urban-rural living. The sample was also large, including 600 people, 100 people on each university, which is statistically significant.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire that was commissioned to conduct this study was utilized in collecting primary data. The tool had four parts, including: demography, religious orientation, religious practices, and religious moral values. Religiosity was assessed through a modified version of items of the Religious commitment inventory and extrinsic- intrinsic religiosity scales, which assess beliefs, practices and personal significance of religion. It measured moral values by modified Moral Values Scale by measuring dimensions, including honesty, empathy, justice, social responsibility, and respect towards other people. All questions were

rated on a five point Likert scale of strongly disagree, strongly agree so that they could be consistent and easy to answer.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was guaranteed by reviewing the questionnaire by subject experts in the areas of sociology and religious studies. A pilot study was done with 30 respondents to test the clarity and relevance and understanding of the items. According to feedback, some minor changes were done to make it a better wording and structure. Alpha-Cronbach Reliability was used to evaluate multi-item scales. The religiosity scale was found to have a Cronbachs alpha of 0.84 and the moral values scale depicted a coefficient of 0.87 which is a high reliability and can be used in further analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The sampled data were gathered in a 4-week period, during which the online approach and face-to-face survey method were used to gather data. Institutional email lists and social media were used to disseminate online questionnaires, whereas face-to-face surveys were conducted at the university campuses to increase the response rates and capture those who have limited access to the internet. It was explained to the participants the objective of the study and confidentially guaranteed, and an informed consent was obtained before the study. The engagement was voluntary and the respondents could drop out at any point of time without consequences.

Variables and Measurement

Religion was considered as the independent variable and measured using the indicators of religious belief, religious practice, and religious commitment. The dependent variable was moral values, which was assessed by self-reported compliance with the company with ethical norms which included honesty, fairness, empathy, and social responsibility. The control variables were age, sex, socio-economic status, education level and the type of university (public and private). The answers were coded in numbers with the higher the score, the stronger the religiosity or the stronger the moral orientation.

Data Analysis Techniques

The SPSS version 28 and AMOS version 28 were used in data analysis. The demographic characteristics and key variables were summarized using the descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between moral values and religiosity. The predictive strength of religious variables on moral values with the control of the demographical factors has been estimated using multiple regression analysis. Also, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to measure the direct and indirect influence of religiosity on moral values, and the proposed results allowed evaluating the hypothesized associations.

Ethical Considerations

During the research process, ethical standards were highly adhered to. The participants were notified of the purpose of the study, and the voluntary interest of the study, and that they could withdraw at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by not providing individual identifiers in the dataset. The information was stored safely and could only be used in academic purposes. Before data was collected, the institutions gave their approval, and this will abide by the ethical principles of conducting social scientific research.

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The researchers examined a population of 600 respondents, which was a balanced sample in terms of gender, age, and socio-economic status as well as the type of the universities. Out of the respondents, 310 (51.7) were male and 290 (48.3) were female. The age of the participants was between 18 and 45 years and the average age of the participants was 24.8 years (SD = 5.6). On the socio-economic background, 38% indicated low household income, 37% middle income, and 25% indicated high income. Regarding the type of university, 50 percent were in a public university and 50 percent in a private institution.

The summary of demographics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	310	51.7
	Female	290	48.3
Age	18–25	290	48.3
	26–35	220	36.7
	36–45	90	15.0
Household Income	Low	228	38.0
	Middle	222	37.0
	High	150	25.0
University Type	Public	300	50.0
	Private	300	50.0

The descriptive analysis of the key variables showed that the levels of religiosity of the participants were moderately high as the mean of the religiosity levels, assessed using a 5-point scale, was equal to 3.82 (SD = 0.74). The moral values were not ranked differently and mean score of 4.05 (SD = 0.61) was obtained. These findings indicate that the sample has a strong involvement in religious activities and ethical practices.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis was applied to test the existence of the relationships between the religiosity indicators (belief, practice, and commitment) and the moral values. The findings reveal that there are strong positive relations between all variables.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Religious Belief	1.00			
2. Religious Practice	0.68**	1.00		
3. Religious Commitment	0.72**	0.66**	1.00	
4. Moral Values	0.55**	0.51**	0.58**	1.00

Note: **p < 0.01

Findings of the correlation show that moral values are positively related with all the dimensions of religiosity. The correlation of religious commitment ($r = 0.58, p < 0.01$) is the most significant; therefore, one can conclude that those who internalize religious beliefs and those who commit themselves to religious rules are more likely to be considered high moral standards. There are also significant positive correlations between religious belief ($r = 0.55, p < 0.01$) and practice ($r = 0.51, p < 0.01$), which support the fact that both cognitive and behavioral dimensions of religion play a significant role in the formation of moral orientation.

Multiple Regression Analysis.

To determine the predictive value of religiosity on moral values, multiple regression analysis was performed, which controlled the demographic variables of gender, age, household income, and the type of university. The regression equation was significant ($F = 48.76, p < 0.001$) and it explained 42 percent of the variation in moral values ($R^2 = 0.42$).

Table 3: The coefficients of the regression of predicting the moral values.

Predictor	B	SE	β	t-value	p-value
Religious Belief	0.24	0.05	0.28	4.80	<0.001
Religious Practice	0.19	0.04	0.23	4.25	<0.001
Religious Commitment	0.31	0.06	0.34	5.17	<0.001
Gender (Control)	0.05	0.03	0.06	1.67	0.096
Age (Control)	0.02	0.02	0.04	1.00	0.317
Household Income (Control)	0.08	0.03	0.10	2.67	0.008
University Type (Control)	0.06	0.03	0.07	1.99	0.047

The regression findings have shown religious commitment as the best predictor of moral values ($b = 0.34, p < 0.001$), then religious belief ($b = 0.28, p < 0.001$) and practice ($b = 0.23, p < 0.001$). Among the control variables, household income and the type of university had small but statistically significant impacts whereas gender and age were not significant predictors. These results reaffirm the fact that religious values internalized and active involvement in religious practices are important determinants of the moral orientations of individuals, not just because of demographic factors.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

To elaborate on the connections between the dimensions of religiosity and moral values, the AMOS 28 was used to conduct the SEM analysis. The hypothesized model involved religious belief, practice and commitment as the independent variables and moral values as dependent variable. The fit of the model was good: $\chi^2/df = 2.15, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.045$.

Table 4: SEM Path Coefficients

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	SE	t-value	p-value
Religious Belief → Moral Values	0.27	0.05	5.40	<0.001
Religious Practice → Moral Values	0.22	0.04	4.80	<0.001
Religious Commitment → Moral Values	0.32	0.06	5.33	<0.001

The multiple regression results are corroborated by the SEM results: all dimensions of religiosity have a significant direct impact on moral values. Religious commitment once again exhibits the greatest effect with the internalized religious values playing a pivotal role in shaping ethical behavior. Religious belief and practice play significant roles as well with a strong emphasis on the complementary nature of cognition, ritual behavior and individual devotion in shaping moral events.

Exploratory Analysis: University Type and Gender.

Further testing was done on the moderation of the relationship between religiosity and moral values by gender or university type. The independent sample t-tests indicated that female

responders exhibited a little higher moral value (Mean = 4.12) in contrast to male respondents (Mean = 3.99, $t = 2.87$, $p < 0.01$), which indicated that there were slight differences in moral orientation based on gender. Equally, there was a marginally greater moral score among the students of the private universities (Mean = 4.10) when compared to the public institutions (Mean = 4.00, $t = 2.25$, $p < 0.05$). These results indicate that the institutional context and gender can contribute to the outcomes of moral behaviours but not reduce the central position of religiosity.

Interpretation of Findings

The analysis proves the existence of definite and strong positive correlation between religion and moral values among the investigated population. The best predictor of moral orientation was found to be religious commitment, which is internalized beliefs and ethical commitment, as was found in earlier studies (Saroglou, 2013; Haidt, 2012). The role of religious belief and practice is also significant and emphasizes on the importance of cognitive and behavioral aspects of religion. Household income and university type are also control variables that have a weak impact showing that demographic and institutional variables could have an impact on moral outcomes but are not primary to religiosity. There were gender differences that were moderate in nature which is consistent with the previous research that postulates women tend to report greater sensitivity to moral and compliance (King and Boyatzis, 2004).

All in all, these results support the literature that indicates that religion is a multidimensional phenomenon that influences moral cognition, ethical behavior, and social conduct. The personalization of religious values and the engagement in religious activities is very important in promoting moral growth. Also, these findings highlight the importance of religion in moral education, socialization, and behavioral directives in developing societies.

Discussion

The results of this research paper show that there is a strong and positive correlation between religiosity and moral values in developing economies. Religious commitment proved to be the best predictor of moral orientation, which shows that internalized religious beliefs and the personal support of ethical principles are central in determining the moral behaviour. It is consistent with the earlier studies that religion can offer both a system of beliefs and a code of principles, according to which one needs to make their daily choices and make ethical decisions (Saroglou, 2013; Haidt, 2012). Religious belief and practice were likewise found to be positively related to moral values which revealed that cognitive, rituals and behavioral involvement reinforce ethical attitudes through collective cognition, ritual involvement and behavioral involvement. Both the multiple regression analysis and the SEM analysis reveal that these dimensions have substantial direct impacts on moral values highlighting that moral development is a multidimensional process that is affected not only by the inner belief systems but also outside religious practices.

The exploratory analysis also showed some gender and institutional differences in moral orientation. The scores of female respondents were slightly higher than those of males and this could be attributed to socialization trends that tend to induce moral sensitivity in women (King and Boyatzis, 2004). On the same note, the students of the private universities produced slightly better moral scores as compared to their counterparts in the public universities, indicating that institutional resources, learning settings and exposure to different ethical discourses can help to develop moral. Nevertheless, the impacts of such were subsidiary to the impact of the religiosity factor and this is to imply that the personal

involvement of the religious ideals is still the major factor when it comes to determining ethical conduct.

All in all, the research highlights the importance of religion in helping to create moral consciousness and ethical behavior. It proves that religion is not only a system of beliefs but a provider of social norms, cultural values, in-built moral standards. The results are also in line with the theories of moral development, which focus on how individual values, agents of socialization, and cultural systems interrelate (Haidt, 2012; Saroglou, 2013). In less developed societies, where there might be a lack of formal moral teaching, religion seems to be an important tool of teaching moral values, directing the way of behavior and increasing social cohesion.

Conclusion

This paper supports the fact that religion is a very essential element in influencing the moral value of people in the developing societies. Religious commitment including internalization of religious belief and moral principles was found to be the strongest predictor of moral orientation followed by religious belief and practice. Although, the effects of demographic and institutional aspects, including gender, household income, and university type, were not significant, they did not decrease the powerful impact of religiosity. The results indicate that moral development is a multidimensional process that is influenced by internalized values, ritualized practices, and the social structures of religion as related with social frameworks. Therefore, religion continues to play a key role in terms of moral socialization, ethical guidance and reinforcement of prosocial conduct. These findings demonstrate the need to examine moral development in religiously heterogeneous societies at an individual and contextual level.

Recommendations

According to the findings, some recommendations can be provided to enhance moral values via the beneficial influence of religion. One, schools need to have ethics and moral education, which supplements the religious beliefs of the students and enhances the ethics of honesty, empathy, and social responsibility. Second, the programs that will promote active involvement in religious practices and ethical thinking can be promoted by the religious organizations and community leaders, so that the moral advice is internalized and not ritualized. Third, gender and institutional inequity should also be looked at by policymakers and educators by developing interventions that promote moral development among all groupings so that males and females students along with those of various socio-economic statuses have equal chances to access ethical and moral learning opportunities. Lastly, it is possible that by combining religiously-informed ethical education with civic and social programs, community cohesion, social responsibility and prosocial behavior will be improved to result in a composite system of moral development in developing communities. Through the multidimensional impact of religion, the society can be able to raise the level of ethical consciousness, enhance social norms, and encourage a moral culture.

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