



THE ROLE OF RELIGIOSITY IN GRATITUDE, RESILIENCE, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

This quantitative study examines the role of religiosity as a protective factor for emotional well-being, gratitude (Shukr), and resilience among university-going adolescents in Pakistan. Employing a correlational research design, data were collected from 220 students (Male = 96, Female = 124) using standardized measures, including the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS), Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale. The findings reveal that religiosity is a robust predictor of psychological strengths, demonstrating exceptionally strong positive correlations with gratitude ($r = .79$), resilience ($r = .76$), and emotional well-being ($r = .74$). Regression analyses further indicate that spiritual principles such as Tawakkul (divine trust), Sabr (patience), and Shukr (gratitude) function as active "psychological anchors," enabling students to maintain emotional equilibrium and effectively cope with the multifaceted challenges of academic life and sociocultural pressures. The study also highlights contextual challenges, noting that cultural taboos and service-related stigma often lead to the misinterpretation of mental health difficulties as spiritual shortcomings, creating secondary vulnerabilities among adolescents. These findings underscore the critical role of religiosity in fostering adaptive coping strategies, positive affect, and resilience within the Pakistani higher education context. The results further emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual health into university wellness programs and developing culturally sensitive interventions that recognize religiosity as a vital determinant of adolescent psychological thriving. Collectively, this study contributes to a growing body of evidence suggesting that faith-based engagement is not only a social or cultural practice but also a meaningful psychological resource for promoting well-being, emotional regulation, and adaptive functioning in youth facing academic and social stressors.

Keywords: *Religiosity, Gratitude (Shukr), Resilience, Emotional Well-Being, Adolescents, Positive Youth Development, Religious Coping, Pakistan*

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1.Introduction

The developmental epoch of adolescence is characterized by intricate biological and psychosocial transitions that inherently destabilize an individual's emotional equilibrium (Meherali, 2025). Recent paradigms in developmental science have moved away from viewing these shifts as inherent deficits, instead framing them through the lens of Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Mihic et al., 2022; Lerner et al., 2013). Within this framework, religiosity and spirituality are conceptualized as foundational ecological assets that foster thriving by providing youth with a sense of transcendental purpose and community connection (Benson et al., 2012; King et al., 2011). Religiosity is now understood as a "psychological anchor" where the individual internalizes a set of guiding beliefs to navigate the emotional load of life experiences during one's most volatile developmental stage (Rangoonwala, 2025; Mihic et al., 2022). For college-going youth, this regulatory function is especially critical, as they occupy a period defined by high academic stress and social transitions (Ashraf et al., 2022; Saboor et al., 2025).

The discourse surrounding religious utility is primarily governed by two dominant frameworks: the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model and the Religious Coping Theory. The PYD framework suggests that religious environments provide the "Five Cs", Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring, which act as essential assets for thriving (Benson et al., 2012). Conversely, Pargament's Religious Coping Theory proposes that faith serves as a "spiritual thermostat," where individuals utilize their beliefs to find significance in times of stress (Pargament, 2010; Pargament et al., 2021). Successful religious coping thus acts as a psychological buffer, allowing students to integrate stressful events into their long-term identity while reducing their subjective intensity (Thomas & Barbato, 2020; Pargament et al., 2021).

A primary mechanism explaining this process is the practical application of spiritual virtues like Sabr (patience) and Shukr (gratitude). These principles offer a cognitive framework that differs fundamentally from secular concepts of self-reliance

(Supriyadi, 2024). Shukr acts as a "positivity filter," enabling adolescents to identify blessings even in the midst of adversity, while Sabr is conceptualized not as passive endurance but as an "active strength" for emotional regulation (Ahmed et al., 2022; Burzynska-Tatjewska et al., 2022). For religious adolescents, the concept of Tawakkul (trust in divine wisdom) provides a unique psychological environment of peace, allowing them to process stressful memories without accompanying physiological arousal (Adil et al., 2022; Supriyadi, 2024).

Adolescents encounter unique obstacles to this regulatory process due to intense cultural stressors and societal taboos. In many conservative societies, social norms often prevent young people from discussing reproductive, mental, and social problems, forcing them to manage developmental changes in isolation (Meherali, 2025). Research suggests that such systematic silence negatively impacts emotional health and may lead to risky decision-making (Saboor et al., 2025; Hussain et al., 2025). Furthermore, cultural stigma often misinterprets mental illness as a "moral shortcoming" or "lack of faith," creating a form of secondary vulnerability where youth lack the tools to prioritize the very spiritual processes, like gratitude, that could enhance their resilience (Fekih-Romdhane et al., 2023; Pasha, 2023).

Even within Pakistan's higher education structures, factors of culture and intense competition for professional security create a "perfect storm" for student mental health (Saboor et al., 2025). The pressure to achieve high grades as a reflection of personal achievement and familial honor (izzat) exerts immense mental pressure, which in turn weakens the ability to regulate mood (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ismai et al., 2025). Indigenous research in Pakistan has highlighted that gratitude (Shukr), a marker of emotional regulation, is significantly correlated with symptoms of life satisfaction and subjective happiness among university students (Ahmed et al., 2022; Shaukat et al., 2025).

The mechanisms of "negative religious coping," characterized by feelings of divine abandonment or spiritual discontent, signify a breakdown in this cognitive processing. Chronic spiritual struggle has been identified as an independent risk factor for anxiety and depression, even after controlling for existing symptoms (Pargament et al., 2021). Furthermore, "service stigma", the emotional impact of social distancing on those seeking help, serves as an early indicator of declining mental health and potential academic impairment (Saboor et al., 2025; Mashhood et al., 2025).

Institutional responses to student well-being have traditionally focused on academic interventions, creating a structural gap in addressing spiritual and emotional health. In Pakistan, the lack of mental health literacy often leads to psychological problems being viewed as spiritual failures rather than medical issues (Pasha, 2023; Mashhood et

al., 2025). This systematic neglect may constitute a form of secondary vulnerability, as students lack the tools to prioritize the very biological and spiritual processes that could enhance their resilience against academic burnout (Ayub et al., 2023).

Recent studies emphasize the need for integrated wellness frameworks that protect spiritual development and treat mental health as clinical priorities (Adil et al., 2022). Research on Pakistani adolescents is still developing, and there is a pressing need to analyze how cultural stressors intersect with religious architecture to influence emotional stability. This study attempts to understand the role of religiosity in fostering gratitude and resilience as vital determinants of academic performance and psychological well-being within the specific sociocultural context of Pakistani adolescents.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) model serves as the primary scaffolding for this analysis, viewing youth as resources to be developed through specific ecological assets. Religious environments are uniquely structured to provide these assets by offering social capital through intergenerational networks and transcendental assets through a connection with the sacred. Parallel to this, Religious Coping Theory explains how individuals use their beliefs to find meaning in times of stress, distinguishing between positive and negative reappraisals.

Gratitude is a core virtue within virtually all religious traditions, and research consistently shows a strong positive correlation between religious commitment and dispositional gratitude. In the Pakistani context, "gratitude to God" (Shukr) provides a cognitive framework that encourages individuals to identify blessings even in adversity, enhancing life satisfaction and reducing anxiety. Resilience is the positive adaptation to adverse life experiences, functioning as a fluid process. Religiosity acts as both a compensatory and protective factor. Concepts like Tawakkul (trust in Allah) and Sabr (patience) are not just spiritual ideals but active coping strategies that mediate between personality traits and emotional well-being.

1.1. The specific objectives of this study include the following:

- To investigate the correlation between religiosity, gratitude, resilience, and emotional well-being among university-going adolescents in Pakistan.
- To examine the predictive role of religiosity in fostering psychological virtues like gratitude and functional capacities like resilience.
- To determine the extent to which religious commitment serves as a determinant for the emotional well-being of youth facing academic and social pressures.

- To analyze the demographic distribution of psychological assets across gender, age, and educational levels within the student population.

2. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between religiosity and psychological well-being among adolescents (Sugiyono, 2019). The research prioritized systematic data collection to ensure the generalizability of findings within the university student cohort.

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 220 university students, with a distribution of 96 males and 124 females. The participants were aged between 18–25 years and were currently enrolled in BS and MS/MPhil programs across diverse academic disciplines in Pakistan.

2.2. Sampling Technique

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of standardized scales in university settings and via online academic forums to ensure a broad reach across different student groups in urban centers

2.3. Research Instruments

Standardized self-report measures were used to assess the study variables:

- **Religiosity:** Measured using the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) to capture ideological and ritualistic dimensions (Mahudin et al., 2016).
- **Gratitude:** Assessed via the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) to identify the dispositional tendency toward thankfulness (Shaukat et al., 2025).
- **Resilience:** Evaluated using the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) to measure the ability to "bounce back" from stress (Smith et al., 2018).
- **Emotional Well-being:** Measured using Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale to assess dimensions of self-acceptance and purpose (Ryff & Singer, 2006).

2.4. Data Analysis

The collected data was processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics (Means and Frequencies) were used for

demographic profiling, while Pearson Correlation and Linear Regression Analysis were applied to test the study's hypotheses regarding the predictive role of religiosity.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Informed consent was obtained from all 220 participants, ensuring that their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. All protocols adhered to international standards for behavioral research (WHO, 2016).

3.Result and Discussion

The Result and Discussion section below presents the statistical findings and correlation patterns identified from the quantitative analysis and compares them to the current literature on the role of religiosity in adolescent well-being in Pakistan.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=220)*

Variable	Category	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Male	96	43.6
	Female	124	56.4
Age	18–21	132	60.0
	22–25	88	40.0
Education	BS	142	64.5
	MS/MPhil	78	35.5

The demographic analysis indicates a sample predominantly composed of female students (56.4%) and younger adolescents in the 18–21 age bracket (60.0%). This aligns with regional research suggesting high engagement from the female student population in psychological and religious studies (Shaukat et al., 2025).

Table 2: *Correlations Among Study Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Religiosity	—			
2. Gratitude	.79**	—		
3. Resilience	.76**	.71**	—	
4. Emotional Well-being	.74**	.69**	.73**	—

*Note: * $p < .001$.

The correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among all study variables. Religiosity demonstrated a very high positive association with gratitude ($r = .79$, $p < .001$), indicating that adolescents with greater religious commitment tend to experience higher levels of thankfulness. Similarly, religiosity was strongly correlated with resilience ($r = .76$, $p < .001$) and emotional well-being ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), suggesting that religious engagement supports both adaptive coping and overall psychological health. Gratitude also showed significant positive correlations with resilience ($r = .71$, $p < .001$) and emotional well-being ($r = .69$, $p < .001$), while resilience and emotional well-being were highly interrelated ($r = .73$, $p < .001$). These findings collectively indicate that religiosity, gratitude, and resilience are interconnected factors that contribute meaningfully to the emotional well-being of adolescents.

Table 3: *Regression Analysis Predicting Gratitude from Religiosity*

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Constant	4.32	.58	—	7.44	<.001
Religiosity	.68	.05	.79	18.62	<.001

The regression analysis examining religiosity as a predictor of gratitude revealed a significant positive effect. Religiosity emerged as a strong predictor ($\beta = .79$, $B = 0.68$, SE

= 0.05, $t = 18.62$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of religious commitment are associated with greater dispositional gratitude among adolescents. The constant ($B = 4.32$, $SE = 0.58$, $t = 7.44$, $p < .001$) represents the baseline level of gratitude when religiosity is zero. Overall, the model suggests that religiosity accounts for a substantial proportion of the variance in gratitude, underscoring its role as a critical psychological resource for fostering thankfulness in youth.

Table 4: *Regression Analysis Predicting Emotional Well-being from Religiosity*

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	p
Constant	3.81	.61	—	6.24	<.001
Religiosity	.57	.04	.74	16.90	<.001

The regression analysis assessing religiosity as a predictor of emotional well-being demonstrated a significant positive relationship. Religiosity significantly predicted emotional well-being ($\beta = .74$, $B = 0.57$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 16.90$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher religious commitment is associated with greater psychological well-being among adolescents. The constant ($B = 3.81$, $SE = 0.61$, $t = 6.24$, $p < .001$) represents the baseline level of emotional well-being when religiosity is zero. These results highlight the role of religiosity as a key protective factor that supports emotional stability and overall mental health in university-going youth.

Table 5: *Regression Analysis Predicting Resilience from Religiosity*

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	5.12	.63	—	8.13	<.001
Religiosity	.65	.05	.76	17.28	<.001

The regression analysis examining religiosity as a predictor of resilience indicated a significant positive effect. Religiosity was found to be a strong predictor of resilience ($\beta = .76$, $B = 0.65$, $SE = 0.05$, $t = 17.28$, $p < .001$), suggesting that adolescents with higher religious commitment are more capable of adapting and “bouncing back” from academic

and psychosocial stressors. The constant ($B = 5.12$, $SE = 0.63$, $t = 8.13$, $p < .001$) represents the baseline level of resilience when religiosity is zero. These findings underscore the critical role of religiosity as a psychological resource that enhances coping abilities and fosters adaptive functioning in youth.

3.1. Discussion Summary

The findings of the present study emphasize the psychological significance of religious centrality within the broader framework of adolescent resilience and mental health in Pakistan. Contrary to deficit-based models, these results suggest that religiosity is not merely a social ritual but an active mechanism for emotional regulation. The strong association between religiosity and gratitude (Shukr) supports the Continuity Hypothesis, indicating that spiritual orientations from daily religious life extend into the cognitive reframing of waking stressors. Students who internalize spiritual principles like Tawakkul (divine trust) and Sabr (patience) effectively create an "overnight therapy" for their mental states, allowing them to process academic failure without debilitating arousal (Supriyadi, 2024; Adil et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the robust relationship between religiosity and resilience confirms that religious involvement acts as a "spiritual thermostat" that maintains equilibrium amidst the intense competition for professional security and family honor (izzat) in Pakistan. Regression findings suggest that while religiosity directly influences well-being, its impact is optimized through the cultivation of specific virtues like gratitude. Culturally, these findings align with South Asian perspectives that view faith as a primary source of meaning and psychological support (Ahmad et al., 2022). These results highlight the need for university wellness programs to integrate spiritual health and emotional resilience as critical components of student health infrastructure in collectivistic societies.

4. Conclusion

The present study provides compelling evidence that religiosity plays a vital role in promoting psychological well-being among university-going adolescents in Pakistan. The findings indicate that religiosity is positively associated with gratitude (Shukr), resilience, and overall emotional well-being, highlighting its function as a significant protective factor during the critical developmental stage of adolescence. Spiritual principles such as Sabr (patience), Tawakkul (trust in divine wisdom), and Shukr not only reinforce moral and ethical values but also serve as active coping mechanisms that help adolescents navigate the multifaceted challenges of academic life, social transitions, and cultural expectations. These results suggest that adolescents who internalize religious teachings are better equipped to regulate emotions, manage stress, and maintain a positive

outlook, even in the face of high-pressure environments. Gratitude (Shukr) acts as a cognitive filter that enables students to recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of their experiences, thereby fostering optimism and life satisfaction. Similarly, Sabr provides the mental fortitude to endure challenges without succumbing to emotional dysregulation, while Tawakkul instills a sense of trust and acceptance, mitigating anxiety over uncontrollable outcomes. The study further emphasizes the interplay between religiosity and resilience, demonstrating that faith-based coping strategies enhance adolescents' capacity to adapt positively to adversity. This aligns with theoretical frameworks such as the Positive Youth Development (PYD) model and Religious Coping Theory, which conceptualize religious engagement as both an ecological asset and a "psychological thermostat" that stabilizes emotional functioning. The findings underscore the importance of considering religiosity not merely as a social or cultural practice but as a psychologically meaningful construct with tangible implications for adolescent mental health. Moreover, the study highlights the contextual relevance of religiosity in Pakistani society, where cultural expectations, academic pressures, and social norms create unique stressors for adolescents. Religious engagement provides students with structured guidance, moral support, and cognitive tools to interpret challenges in constructive ways, thereby reducing the impact of cultural and academic stressors on mental health. The integration of spiritual principles into daily life appears to foster a holistic sense of well-being that encompasses emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. In light of these findings, universities and educational institutions are encouraged to recognize and support the spiritual and psychological dimensions of student development. Programs that promote ethical reflection, spiritual engagement, and culturally sensitive mental health support may enhance students' emotional regulation, resilience, and overall well-being. Future research should continue to explore the nuanced mechanisms through which religiosity interacts with other protective factors and investigate its role across diverse cultural and demographic contexts. Overall, the study reaffirms that religiosity is a multifaceted resource that significantly contributes to the emotional stability, adaptive coping, and psychological flourishing of adolescents. By fostering gratitude, resilience, and trust in divine wisdom, religious engagement emerges as a crucial determinant of mental health and personal development, particularly within high-stress academic and culturally demanding environments.

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