

## Religiosity and Juvenile Delinquency Gilan-e-Gharb, Iran

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**Abstract:** One of the research areas hotly debated in the sociology of religion is the effect of religion and religiosity on delinquency in the community. The current research was aimed to investigate the relationship of religiosity and its dimensions with juvenile delinquency in Gilan-e-Gharb, Iran. In this descriptive cross-sectional study, 390 youth in Gilan-e-Gharb were included in the study through cluster sampling method. Data were collected through Glock and Stark's religiosity questionnaire and delinquency scale. The obtained data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis). The findings indicated the means of  $4.35 \pm 0.64$  and  $1.66 \pm 0.70$  for religiosity and delinquency, respectively. There was a significantly inverse correlation between dimensions of religiosity and delinquency; consequential religiosity ( $r = -0.537$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and emotional religiosity ( $r = -0.328$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) were reported to have maximum and minimum correlation with delinquency. Consequential and emotional religiosity with beta coefficients of 0.386 and 0.125, respectively obtained the highest and lowest levels of correlation with prevention of juvenile delinquency. The results showed that all four dimensions of religiosity were effective to explain the prevention of delinquency which is indicative of positive impact of religion on social order via reducing delinquency.

**Key words:** Religiosity, juvenile delinquency, correlation, Gilan-e-Gharb, Glock

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### INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a subbranch of deviation and crime that can be defined as the violation of legal standards by the youth.1 committing a crime has several reasons including lack of emotional relationship in the family, consuming drugs and alcoholic drinks, unemployment, poverty, marginalization, illiteracy and the young population (Jalaeipour and Nesar, 2000; Ahmadi, 2005; Zangeneh, 2004; Aliverdinia *et al.*, 2008; Nazoktabar *et al.*, 2006).

Religion is certainly one of the factors affecting crime prevention in various societies. Haden believes that religion is the major factor of socialization and intellectual and practical integrity and orientation in solving problems and social issues (Armki and Bahar, 1998). Durkheim believes that no community has been known to live without religion during the history. Durkheim argues that religion is derived from the rituals, the ethical power of society is felt through participation in the religious ceremonies and moral and social emotions are strengthened and revived by religion (Hemilton, 2002). In addition to Durkheim, other scholars like Ferom, Marks,

Weber and believe that religion in the community can act to maintain social order, validate social norms and regulate the relations between humans.

**Litratue review:** Although, most of the studies are in agreement with this idea that religiosity has beneficial effects on delinquency (Leah *et al.*, 2007; Wesley *et al.*, 2009; Simons *et al.*, 2004; Kenneth *et al.*, 2003; Meier, 2003; Harris, 2003), some other studies do not support this inverse relationship (Cochran *et al.*, 1994; Hirschi and Stark, 1969).

During different historical periods and in various communities, religions have existed in different forms. Religion has also had a special position in the Iranian community such that most of the times religion has been extra-institutional and has overshadowed other parts of the community (Armki and Ghiasvand, 2002). Taleban (2004) believes that the Iranian community is a very appropriate candidate for the use of religious groups to reduce juvenile delinquency owing to its deep-rooted tradition of shi'ite Islam (Taleban, 2004).

The teenagers and the youth think about and seek their religious identity after their childhood. On the other

hand, studying the juvenile delinquency is of great importance because of both the harms imposed on its victims and the problems encountered by the people who commit delinquencies. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the amount of religiosity in the youth and find out whether religiosity and religious commitment in the youth prevent delinquent behaviors. The present research was conducted to investigate the relationship of religiosity and its dimensions with juvenile delinquency in Gilan-e-Gharb, Iran.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out in the first 6 months of 2014 among the 15-29 years old youth of Gilan-e-Gharb, Iran. According to the data obtained from the statistical center of Iran, the statistical society of the present study included 7355 people (3994 females and 3361 males). The study sample was calculated to be 390 people (190 men and 200 women) by Cochran formula. The inclusion criteria in the study consisted of tendency to participate in the study having at least primary education and over, minimum age of 15 and residence in Gilan-e-Gharb. Cluster sampling technique was utilized to select the study sample. Since, Gilan-e-Gharb has <50000 population it has not reached the regional limit; therefore, it is considered as district. Thus, 8 districts of the city were judgementally selected as clusters. To this end, 3 blocks were chosen from each cluster; totally 24 blocks and 10 samples in each block were selected. First, the residential buildings were counted in each block and sampling was performed through simple random sampling and based on the building number. The instrument for data collection included a three-section questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire comprised of demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status and education), the second section comprised of Glock and Stark's religiosity questionnaire which measured the religiosity level of an individual in ideological, consequential, experiential or emotional and ritualistic dimensions and the third section analyzed the delinquency variable, adopted from Taleban's typology which was used to measure delinquency variable and included five sub-scales of theft and fraud, aggression and destruction, moral deviation, sexual deviation and cultural deviation.

The Glock and Stark's religiosity questionnaire has frequently been used by researchers and its validity and reliability have been analyzed and confirmed by various studies (Serajzadeh and Pouyafar, 2009; Serajzadeh, 1998; Jamshidiha *et al.*, 2014; Nazoktabar *et al.*,

2006). The validity and reliability of the delinquency questionnaire have also been approved in previous studies (Serajzadeh and Poyafar, 2009).

The Glock and Stark's questionnaire consisted of 31 items on four dimensions of ideological, consequential, experiential or emotional and ritualistic religiosity and the items were designed based on 5-point Likert scale. The responses included completely disagree, disagree, partially agree, agree and completely agree. The samples selected a response for each item. The score given to each item ranged from 1-5; score of 1 for the completely disagree option and score 5 for the completely agree option. The total score range of the questionnaire was 0-100.

The delinquency questionnaire adopted from Taleban's typology included 38 items, based on Likert scale, on five sub-scales of theft and fraud, aggression and destruction, moral deviation, sexual deviation and cultural deviation. The responses comprised of >10 times, 5-10 times, 2-5 times, 1-2 times and none. The samples selected one of the options as the criterion compatible with them. The score given to each item ranged from 1-5; score 1 for the response "none" and score 5 for the response ">10 times". The total score range of the questionnaire was 0-100.

To conduct the study, the required permissions were taken from the vice chancellor of research and technology of the university. The researcher then visited the given blocks in Gilan-e-Gharb in different days and times from April to September 2014 to collect the data.

The collected data were analyzed by SPSS-21 Software using descriptive statistics (frequency (%), mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Pearson correlation coefficient, ANOVA with repeated measures, stepwise multiple regression). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of data distribution, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between different dimensions of religiosity and delinquency and ANOVA with repeated measures and stepwise regression analysis were applied to predict delinquency level based on the dimensions of religiosity.  $p < 0.01$  was considered significant.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this study from 390 samples, 190 (48.7%) participants were male and 200 (51.3%) participants were female. The mean and standard deviation of the samples' age was  $22.83 \pm 3.63$  and the age group of 20-24 had the highest frequency ( $n = 202$ , 51.8%). In terms of marital status, 345 (88.5%) samples were single and 45 (11.5%)

samples were married. With regard to education, 21 (5.4%) participants had elementary education, 140 (35.9%) of them had diploma, 85 (21.8%) of them had associate degree, 135 (34.6%) participants had bachelor degree and 9 (2.3%) samples had master or higher degrees. Most of the samples had bachelor degree ( $n = 140$ , 35.9%).

The findings of this study showed that from among the four dimensions of Glock and Stark's questionnaire, the maximum and minimum means were reported for ideological dimension ( $4.52 \pm 0.68$ ) and ritualistic dimension ( $3.46 \pm 0.98$ ). The total mean of delinquency in the study sample was  $1.66 \pm 0.70$  out of 5. From among the five dimensions of delinquency, the maximum and minimum means were reported for sexual deviation ( $1.77 \pm 0.85$ ) and moral deviation ( $1.43 \pm 0.83$ ) dimensions (Table 1).

Moreover, the results showed a significantly invers correlation between dimensions of religiosity and delinquency; consequential religiosity ( $r = -0.537$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and emotional religiosity ( $r = -0.328$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) had the maximum and minimum correlation with delinquency, respectively (Table 2).

With regard to the correlation between the four dimensions of religiosity (ideological, consequential, ritualistic and emotional) and delinquency, the findings of regression analysis indicated that among the variables included in the primary regression model, all dimensions of religiosity remained in the model. According to the beta

coefficients, all four variables significantly explained delinquency. The comparison of the standardized coefficients also showed that consequential religiosity ( $\beta = -0.386$ ) and emotional religiosity ( $\beta = 0.125$ ) had the maximum and minimum role in explaining the prevention of juvenile delinquency. According to the obtained impact factor, 32.9% of the variance or dispersion of delinquency variable was expected to be related to religiosity (Table 3).

In the present study, the mean of religiosity in the studied population was reported to be at a high level. It was higher in consequential and ideological dimensions than in ritualistic and emotional dimensions. The above findings are in line with the results of previous studies conducted by Jamshidiha *et al.* (2014), Nazoktabar *et al.* (2006) and Serajzadeh (2004).

Meanwhile, the ideological religiosity dimension was in a better position than other dimensions of religiosity which is in agreement with our empirical evidence in the juvenile community, specifically and in the whole Iranian society, generally (Serajzadeh, 2004). Basically, the ideological dimension of religiosity is associated with such beliefs as believing in God, truth of Prophet Muhammad, Qur'an, day of judgement and life after death and the experiential or emotional dimension of religiosity includes emotions and feelings like fear of God, a sense of spirituality, etc. which are deeply rooted in the psychological structure of human being and in human communities. However, the dimensions of participation in the public rituals or application of religious instructions in the daily life have always been less common and have been controversial (Serajzadeh and Tavakoli, 2004).

In terms of delinquency variable, the juvenile delinquency was reported to be at a low level; the maximum and minimum means of delinquency were reported for sexual and moral delinquency, respectively. This finding confirms the results by Sinha *et al.* (2007).

Table 1: Comparison of the mean and standard deviation of different dimensions of religiosity and delinquency in the study samples

Religiosity dimensions	Mean $\pm$ SD	Delinquency dimensions	Mean $\pm$ SD
Ideological/Religious belief	4.52 $\pm$ 0.68	Sexual deviation	1.77 $\pm$ 0.85
Experimental/Religious feeling	4.11 $\pm$ 0.69	Cultural deviation	1.75 $\pm$ 1.01
Consequential/Religious effect	3.84 $\pm$ 0.78	Aggression and destruction	1.74 $\pm$ 0.71
Ritualistic/Religious practice	3.46 $\pm$ 0.97	Theft and fraud	1.63 $\pm$ 0.73
Total religiosity	3.98 $\pm$ 0.64	Moral deviation	1.43 $\pm$ 0.83
		Total delinquency	1.66 $\pm$ 0.70

Table 2: Correlation between dimensions of religiosity and dimensions of juvenile delinquency

Hypothesis	Independent variables	Dependent variables	Correlation coefficients	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Consequential/religious effect	Delinquency	-0.537**	0.000
2	Ideological/religious belief	Delinquency	-0.456**	0.000
3	Ritualistic/religious practice	Delinquency	-0.410**	0.000
4	Experiential/religious feeling	Delinquency	-0.328**	0.000
5	Total religiosity	Total delinquency	-0.525**	0.000

\*\*Correlation at confidence level >99% is significant

Table 3: Regression analysis of the effect of independent variables on delinquency

Dimensions of religiosity	SE	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ )	R	R <sup>2</sup>	t-values	Sig.
Constant	19.267	1.027	-	0.573	0.329	18.763	0.000
Religious effect	-1.726	0.259	-0.386			-6.676	0.000
Religious practice	-0.580	0.190	-0.161			-3.060	0.002
Religious belief	-1.082	0.329	-0.211			-3.285	0.001
Experiential/Religious feeling	0.639	0.314	0.125			2.038	0.042

Furthermore, the findings revealed a moderately inverse correlation between religiosity and delinquency. All four dimensions of religiosity had a significantly negative correlation with delinquency. Among the dimensions of religiosity, the consequential and ideological dimensions had the highest correlation and ritualistic and emotional dimensions had the lowest correlation with delinquency. These findings are in line with the results of the studies by Serajzadeh (2004), Taleban (1998), Nazoktabar *et al.* (2006) and Bahr and Haffmann (2008). The researchers believe that the consequential dimension of religiosity is indicative of the commitment of an individual to observe the do's and don'ts in the realm of shariah and has the highest inhibitory impact on delinquent behaviors. On the other hand, the more the beliefs and religious experiences are manifested in the practice and practical aspects of an individual's life, the more inhibitory effect they will have on delinquency.

In addition, the findings showed that all four dimensions of religiosity (consequential, ideological, ritualistic and experiential or emotional) had the most optimum role in explaining the prevention of delinquency, respectively and could explain and anticipate 32.9% of changes in the delinquency variable. These findings are compatible with those of the studies carried out by Nazoktabar *et al.* (2006). In the study conducted by Nazoktabar *et al.* (2006), only the consequential dimension of religiosity had a direct impact on delinquency with the maximum effect in explaining the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

The current study had several limitations including poor generalizability of the results due to individual, cultural and social characteristics of the samples. Moreover, the data were collected through self-report technique which may have affected the accuracy of the results. Thus, similar studies are recommended to be carried out on other social groups like employees, workers as well as other age groups. In addition, further research is suggested to be conducted at regional and national levels to shed more light on this area of research.

## CONCLUSION

The means of religiosity and juvenile delinquency were reported to be  $4.35 \pm 0.64$  and  $1.66 \pm 0.70$  out of 5, respectively. All dimensions of religiosity were significantly correlated with delinquency and explained it. In general, the findings of the current survey confirmed this theory that the ascetic content of religious instructions about controlling the sensual desires and refraining from unlawful deeds makes more religious individuals better control their desires and avoid delinquent behaviors.

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