



Religiosity moderates the relationship between time perspective and life satisfaction[☆]



Aneta Przepiorka^{a,*}, Malgorzata Sobol-Kwapinska^b

^a The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Institute of Psychology, Lublin, Poland

^b University of Wrocław, Poland

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ABSTRACT

Religiosity is linked with fundamental issues in life, which is why it has a very strong influence on human psychological functioning. The present study is focused on intrinsic religiosity (IR) and extrinsic religiosity (ER) as moderators of the link between time perspective and life satisfaction. The participants were 591 Poles, aged 18 to 73. They completed three measures: Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI), and the Religious Orientation Scale–Revised (ROS-R). The results suggest that religiosity, especially ER, functions as a buffer reducing the strength of the negative relationship between negative time perspectives – i.e., Past-Negative perspective and Present-Fatalistic time perspective – and life satisfaction. One of the contexts in which the results were interpreted was the instrumental approach to religion, in which religion is treated as a means to gain benefits for oneself, such as forgetting about problems, justification, or a sense of mental comfort.

1. Introduction

“When I have a terrible need of – shall I say the word – religion. Then I go out and paint the stars.”

Vincent van Gogh.

The aim of the present study was to empirically test the influence of religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967) as a moderator with specified interaction effects on the relation between time perspective (TP; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and satisfaction with life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985).

1.1. Religiosity

The role of religiosity in human life is undeniably important, and its relation to happiness and life satisfaction is still an open question that has lost none of its relevance. One concept of religiosity was introduced by Allport (1961, 1963, 1966), who distinguished intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. This distinction was a result of an attempt to answer the question of how to explain the fact that, on the one hand, as studies show, religious people are more prejudiced against people of other religions, races, beliefs, etc., less humane, and less tolerant than less religious people (e.g., Krikpatrick, 1949), while on the other hand religions demand that their faithful live according to the ideas of mercy,

love of one's neighbour, devotion to others, etc. (Allport & Ross, 1967). According to Allport, the solution to this paradox is to distinguish two types of motivations for religiosity: intrinsic and extrinsic (Allport & Ross, 1967). We speak of intrinsic religiosity when religiosity is a kind of semantic framework in which the entire life is considered (see Donahue, 1985a; Rychlak, 1977). What is of fundamental importance to people with intrinsic religiosity is religious experience (Allport & Ross, 1967). The religious motive is the basic motive guiding behaviour. Personal needs are harmonized with the demands of religion. Religion is a value in itself. *“In such a life (where religion is an intrinsic and dominant value) there is no place for rejection, contempt, or condescension toward one's fellow man”* (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 441). In the case of extrinsic religiosity, religion is a matter of comfort and social convention; it is self-seeking, instrumental treatment of religion as a means to gain benefits for oneself. Individuals with this type of religious orientation use religiosity to gain a variety of benefits, such as a sense of security, a decrease in anxiety, securing oneself a good future after death, justifying one's evil deeds, regaining good well-being, satisfying the need for intimacy with others and the need for social status, or even gaining material benefits (Allport & Ross, 1967). Allport and Ross (1967) wrote about these two motives for religiosity thus: *“the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion”* (p. 434). According to Allport (1963) extrinsic

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* Corresponding author at: The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Institute of Psychology, Al. Raclawickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland.
E-mail addresses: aneta.przepiorka@kul.pl, aneta.przepiorka@gmail.com (A. Przepiorka).

religiosity even resembles a neurosis in which religion constitutes a defence against anxiety. Donahue (1985a) points out that extrinsic religiosity is not so much religiosity as attitude towards religiosity. According to Allport and Ross (1967), people professing a particular religion can be placed on a continuum whose ends are intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Donahue (1985a) stresses that people differ in the level of both types of religious motivation. The intrinsic and extrinsic orientations have been investigated among the followers of major religions and in different cultures (e.g., Francis & Crea, 2016; Griffiths, Dixon, Stanley, & Weiland, 2001; Maltby & Day, 2003; Sergej & Miran, 2007).

In previous studies, extrinsic religiosity correlated significantly positively with prejudice, dogmatism, and death anxiety. There were no significant associations between these variables and intrinsic religiosity (see Donahue, 1985b). Intrinsic religiosity was significantly positively correlated with religious commitment, internal locus of control (Kahoe, 1974), meaning in life (Crandall & Rasmussen, 1975), self-acceptance (Singh & Bano, 2017) and empathy (Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1984), and negatively correlated with trait anxiety (Baker & Gorsuch, 1982), depression (Genia & Shaw, 1991), dogmatism and prejudice (Donahue, 1985a), with the use of threat appraisals (Maltby & Day, 2003), and permissiveness (Haerich, 1992). By contrast, extrinsic religiosity correlated significantly positively with trait anxiety (Baker & Gorsuch, 1982), viewing stressful events as anxiety provoking (threat) and reflecting aspects of loss and sadness (loss) (Maltby & Day, 2003), depression (Genia & Shaw, 1991), as well as dogmatism and prejudice (Donahue, 1985a). Extrinsic religiosity was also significantly positively correlated with the sense of helplessness (Spilka & Mullin, 1977) and permissiveness (Haerich, 1992) as well as negatively with empathy (Watson et al., 1984). Several studies have demonstrated that intrinsic religious orientation is associated with better physical and mental health (Masters, Lensegrav-Benson, Kircher, & Hill, 2005; Salsman & Carlson, 2005; Smith, Richards, & Maglio, 2004). Intrinsic religious orientation is a protective factor against mental illness, while extrinsic religious orientation has been classified as a risk factor for mental illness (Hunter & Merrill, 2013). Intrinsic religiosity and spiritual well-being were found to be associated with hope and positive mood states in elderly people coping were associated with cancer (Fehring, Miller, & Shaw, 1997). In addition, there was a positive relationship between Future Time Orientation (FTO) and interest in the future beyond death as well as belief in God (intrinsic religiosity; Öner-Özkan, 2007). There have been some ambiguous findings, too: Sillick and Cathcart (2014) found that intrinsic religiosity was negatively correlated with happiness, whereas extrinsic social religiosity was positively correlated with it. However, they used a different measure of happiness – namely, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, and the participants' religion remains unknown. Another study with a Polish sample (Aghababaei & Błachnio, 2014) revealed that the associations of subjective well-being and purpose in life with intrinsic religiosity were stronger than their associations with extrinsic religiosity measures.

In the present study, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are examined as variables influencing the relationship between time perspective and satisfaction with life. Religiosity is strongly linked with the temporal aspect of human functioning – it is connected with attitudes towards the future after death, evaluations of one's life until the present day, as well as attribution of meanings to past and present events (see Cohen et al., 2005; Öner-Özkan, 2007). We therefore suspected that religiosity would moderate the relationship between time perspective and satisfaction with life. The study was conducted in a Polish society, where almost 90% of the population declare they are Catholics (this includes Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, and Byzantine-Slavic Catholics; CIA World Factbook).¹

1.2. Time perspective

Time perspective is a tendency to focus on the past, present, or future accompanied by a positive or negative evaluation of these dimensions of time (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) distinguished five types of time perspective: past-negative perspective – a tendency to focus on the negatively evaluated past; past-positive perspective – a tendency to focus on pleasant memories and to evaluate the past positively; future perspective – a tendency to think about the future in terms of plans, aims, and pleasant dreams; present-hedonistic perspective – a tendency to focus on pleasure here and now at all costs; and present-fatalistic perspective – a tendency to be passive in the present, associated with a sense of having no control over time.

Research results indicate that time perspective is linked with many aspects of human life. Especially past-negative perspective is a type of time perspective that is linked with negative aspects of psychological functioning. This attitude towards time was found to be positively correlated with depression, aggression, trait anxiety, fear, neuroticism, problems in social relations, low self-esteem, and propensity for addiction (Klingeman, 2001; Stolarski, Matthews, Postek, Zimbardo, & Bitner, 2014; Zhang & Howell, 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). By contrast, past-positive perspective was positively related with amicability and energy, self-esteem, sense of security, and sense of happiness (Bryant, Smart, & King, 2005; Zhang & Howell, 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Focus on the future was positively associated with optimism, health-oriented behaviours (such as having preventive screenings), and academic achievements (Barber, Munz, Bagsby, & Grawitch, 2009; Boyd & Zimbardo, 2005; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, 2008). However, strong focus on the future may reduce spontaneity and the inability to enjoy the present time (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Sobol-Kwapinska, 2009, 2013; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). Present-hedonistic perspective was positively correlated with risky behaviours, addictions, aggression, depression, energy, sensation and novelty seeking (Daugherty & Brase, 2010; Rothspan & Read, 1996; Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards, 1994; Zimbardo, Keough, & Boyd, 1997). While present-fatalistic perspective was positively correlated with neuroticism, aggression, depression, trait anxiety, and life dissatisfaction (Stolarski et al., 2014; Zhang & Howell, 2011; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

Time perspective is a relatively stable tendency to adopt a particular attitude towards time. The Time Perspective Therapy (Sword, Sword, Brunskill, & Zimbardo, 2014; Zimbardo, Sword, & Sword, 2012), whose aim is to balance the client's time perspective, involves work not so much on removing past-negative perspective as on balancing this attitude towards time with a focus on positive aspects of the past. It is therefore important to find psychological variables that influence the relationship between time perspective and satisfaction with life. In other words, it is important to identify the variables that function as moderators of the relationship between time perspective and life satisfaction. A moderator is a variable that changes the direction or strength (or both) of the relationship between a predictor variable and a criterion variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

As regards the previous studies on moderators of the relationship between time perspective and well-being, Chen et al. (2016) tested the moderating effect of age on the association between present-fatalistic perspective and life satisfaction. The authors based their hypothesis on the life-span theory of control, distinguishing primary control and secondary control (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995), as well as on the model of assimilative and accommodative coping (Brandstätter, 2009). Primary control consists making efforts to change the world in such a way that it meets one's expectations. Secondary control consists in changing one's expectations regarding the world. Secondary control helps accept reality as it is, which is particularly important in situations of confrontation with difficult experiences that one has not much influence on (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). In the case of the assimilative mode, a person makes an effort to modify the circumstances

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>.

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