



Effects of Mysticism on Personality Development: A Comparative Study among Muslims and Christians in Sialkot, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to examine the effects of Mysticism on Personality development among Muslims and Christians. A cross-sectional study design and convenient non-probability sampling technique was used in the study to inspect the effects of mysticism on personalities of Muslims and Christians in Sialkot, Pakistan. A sample of 200 participants was taken within the age range of above 18 years to below 50 years. The study was conducted during the period of 4 months (March-June 2020) during COVID-19 pandemic. A self-developed demographic sheet, PANAS and Quest scales were used for data collection. The findings of the current study revealed that mysticism has significant positive relationship with personality development ($r=0.175$, $p<0.05$) among Muslims and Christians respectively. Significant differences were found on study variables. Furthermore, it is found that different socio-demographic factors also contributed in the development of personalities. It is concluded from the findings that increased levels of mysticism has positive effect on personality development among both Muslims and Christians. It is highly recommended for Future researchers to use the current study to explore different factors like Is there any negative impact of mysticism on personalities? or what will be the consequences if illiterate people start following any fake mystics and follow the wrong teachings of religions and so many others?

Keywords: Mysticism, Personality Development, Christians and Muslims.

INTRODUCTION

Mysticism is a spiritual experience that not only influences the individual but also has impact in society in different ways and dimensions¹. Mysticism has a vital role in shaping personalities². Personality shaping represents the improvement of behaviors and attitudes in a more sophisticated manner to make the person unique and admirable. Furthermore, personality development is a combination of unique qualities and characteristics³. In the modern era, mysticism has a great impact on individuals because of the problems faced by the individuals today are due to, they have lost their connection with God. And a Mystic is a person who shows them the right path which leads them towards their origin again. The current study will help the researchers to explore the non-scientific or non-pharmacological ways to treat different psychological problems⁴.

Imam Ghazali has explained the concept of mysticism by saying that the body can be retreated but the soul is bonded with the body and will be freed after the death⁵. Humans are one of the greatest mysteries of God and for mysterious purposes the individual's exterior was shaped from the clay at the time of his creation and after that God breathed life into this body. Sufis or mystics are those people who seek direct and close experience of God⁶. Tasawuf/Mysticism is the denial of needs of the Nafs⁷.

Mysticism is the commemoration of God that highlights the connection of human's souls with God. Therefore, mysticism encourages activities to develop the personalities of people. The

¹ Saeed, Bareera, Syeda Salma Hasan, and Muhammad Asir Ajmal. "Psychological impacts of Sufism in 21st Century in Pakistan." *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences (JHSMS)* 2, no. 1 (2021): 38-49.

² Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne. *The idea of personality in Sūfism: three lectures delivered in the University of London*. No. 6. University Press, 1923

³<http://www.healthofchildren.com/P/Personality-Development.html#ixzz6MpvQnk00>

⁴ Aliyah, Himatul, and Supriyadi Supriyadi. "Sufistic education, a urgency of age modernity." *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 1, no. 1 (2018): 11-14.

⁵ Zaini, Ahmad. "Pemikiran Tasawuf Imam Al-Ghazali." *Esoterik: Jurnal Akhlak dan Tasawuf* 2, no. 1 (2016).

⁶ Sidik, Nur. "Tasawuf Nusantara: Pemikiran Tasawuf KH. Ahmad Siddiq Jember." (2018): 101.

⁷ Arifah, Siti Lailatul. "" Ngrowot" Tirakat In Exact Science Perspectives, Social And Psychology." *Journal Intellectual Sufism Research (JISR)* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1-4.



Holy Quran has some verses about the remembrance of Allah Almighty that states “Hearts become tranquil through the remembrance of Allah” (Quran 13:28) ⁸. Mysticism also devaluing the immoral acts of behavior to encourage the concept of spirituality by promoting education. This act of mysticism leads toward a positive change in the society ⁹.

The Islamic and Christian epistemological beliefs and the philosophical reflections on the ethical capabilities of individuals can be viewed from interreligious and inter-civilizational perspective. Both Christianity and Islam share their value systems regarding the relationship between a person and God. These shared perspectives are profoundly ethical and can work as the premise for the improvement of the ethnic, political and charitable experiences of both communities as harbingers of the harmony, coexistence and compassionate. Thus Christianity and Islam offer their spiritual values to bring together the followers of different denominations and declaring different ideologies, and can foster the ties among the followers of their respective traditions.¹⁰

A good number of researches, books, articles deal with Sufism (mysticism) and highlight various aspects of Sufism like history of Sufism, origin of Sufism, Silsila (orders) in Sufism, practices of Sufism, Sufi traditions, Sufi culture, Sufism and Islam and political influences on Sufism. The present study focuses on the psychological impacts of Mysticism on personal development and its social role and seeks to explore that with particular reference to Islam and Christianity in Sialkot.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A rich treasure of Sufi tradition is preserved in Persian language. Persian Sufi writings are so deep and profound that Persian is considered the treasure trove of the early Sufism. The

⁸ http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/subdivisions/sufism_1.shtml

⁹ ur Rehman, Ubaid, Zafar Hussain, and Alamgeer Khan. "Sufism and Personality Development." *Al-Azhār* 7, no. 01 (2021): 61-70.

¹⁰ Kirabaev, Nur, and Olga Chistyakova. "Knowing God in Eastern Christianity and Islamic Tradition: A Comparative Study." *Religions* 11, no. 12 (2020): 675.

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impact of Persian Sufism extends from the regions now in Pakistan to the regions of central Asia upto Khurasan and upper Transoxiana¹¹. Sufi influence thus spread throughout the Islamic world and shaped an otherworldly outlook of beneath the modern rising Ottoman culture. Figures like Jalal uddin Rumi became a common image of Sufism not as it were in Turkey and Persia but within the entire Islamic world¹².

The Muslim Sufis contributed in a more egalitarian and exceptionally nonpolitical manner in all the cultures and communities. The Sufis promoted the the values of Islam and were successful in their mission to teach and serve the creation of Allah without discrimination. The Sufis were well regarded by the rulers and guided the Muslim rulers to embrace the suitable ways of administration for the prosperity of both Islam and the non Muslims¹³. The primary lesson of these Sufis was brotherhood and love of the humankind that resulted in attracting numerous individuals to understand and practice Islam¹⁴.

Otto (1928) pointed, that morals in Christianity may be a socially bound ethic. Otto alluded to church father Augustine; one serves God by the social benefit of others. So, in Western Christianity, a social way has been given. Concepts like elegance and legitimization are common in Christianity, which are missing in Eastern supernatural quality. Moreover, the Christian way can be done without the coordinate help of a living ace. In differentiate, to create advance on a zen, yoga or Sufi way, the direction of a living ace could be a need. It has been clarified the comparison of supernatural occasions isn't without contemplations. The thought of Western supernatural quality as Christian may be a valuable logical device, it overlooks the numerous improvements that Christianity has experienced over time. In Christianity, the way is concerned to overcome sin and fiendish. This takes put through the mediation of a mediator, as Christ is. He gives leniency through which man is set free. Moral is social and centered on taking

¹¹ Andrabi, Syed Damsaz Ali. "Sufism: Origin and Basic Concepts." *International Journal of Culture and History* 2, no. 1 (2015): 30-36.

¹² Algar, Hamid. "Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism By Alexander Knysh." (2019): 97-103.

¹³ Algar, Hamid. "Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism By Alexander Knysh." (2019): 97-103.

¹⁴ Sedgwick, Mark. "Sufi Religious leaders and Sufi orders in the contemporary Middle East." *Sociology of Islam* 6, no. 2 (2018): 212-232.



care of important others in society. Supplication may be a prerequisite to proceed and to get ready for another step on otherworldly way ¹⁵

Despite all the contrasts and disparities in their approaches to know God, the Christian and Muslim thought has a lot in common about a person's spiritual quest. The undetectable is comprehended through the obvious. Both Eastern Christian Patristics and Arab-Islamic reasoning took the genuine reason of Man to comprise in knowing these two universes whereas climbing to God. The epistemological teachings of Christianity and Islam within the setting of the philosophical reflections on the cognitive and ethical capabilities of individuals may be seen as interreligious, intercultural, and inter-civilizational, as they set up common values and standards within the questionable period of a globalizing world. Axiological and anthropological thoughts of Christianity and Islam in their center on the relationship between a person and God are profoundly ethical and may ended up the premise for the advancement of the communities' exercises (ethnic, political, gracious, charitable) to fortify peace, progress social execution and compassionate help to those in require. .. After all, it could be a human who gets to be an image, "gathering" the Universe and implying life itself, agreeing to the compositions of the Eastern Church Fathers and the Sufis.¹⁶

Religion may be an uncommon implies of communication within the cutting-edge world. Christianity and Islam, by performing the communicative work, are able of joining together devotees and non-believers, having a place to diverse groups and declaring different statements of faith, as well as building up solid ties among the devout organizations for humanistic purposes.

It is critical to emphasize that the both the Christian mysticism and Sufism are deeply linked and to a great extent based on the symbolism and elucidation of their respective sacred texts. In this manner, the mystical thought has developed through the individual and historical experiences sometimes embedded in a framework of images and typical pictures or techniques, each of which has an inner interpretive essence. The imagery and the depth of these various

¹⁵ Hoekx, Claudia. "The Indian and Christian mystic experience, a comparative comparison."

¹⁶ Hoekx, Claudia. "The Indian and Christian mystic experience, a comparative comparison."

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techniques and symbolism still exists and manifests itself through the the social life of those practicing these mystical systems both Islamic and Christian.¹⁷

Psychological research is somehow linked with Sufism as psychology is the science of mind or intellect. It analyzes the inner mental faculty with which man is bested while in Sufism also the inner abilities and strengths are focused. Thus the Intellect and numerous of its other apparatuses are also the common concern of both psychology and mysticism. Though mysticism targets the most profound sense of being by transforming it into a different self guided through a spiritual or otherworldly approach. Thus in Sufism we find a detailed analysis of the stages of soul; Sufis have generally talked about three stages of soul that are Nafs, which is narrow minded and licentious self, while the Qalb is brilliantly and shining self and the third Ruh is otherworldly and intuitional self. This can be related to different psychological perspectives of human psyche; for instance the Nafs is the inner self of Freud which is guided by joy alone; Nafs could be a negative constrain which ties us with the physical presence. Nafs works on two planes one is physical which comprises of our body wants like starvation, consolation, sexual joy etc. And moment is mental plane its consistence of urge for self-preservation and covert itself within the eager spirit with the assistance of two powers of envious and predetermines.¹⁸

In Sufism the fundamental guideline of the soul is that man is composed of two things; matter and the soul thus the body is related to matter and the soul to God. Eventually the association of man and God is as fundamental as is the connection between the body and the soul. The concept of soul is related to the moral chain of command of man. It implies that it is exceptionally critical in making the man an ethical substance and the essential energetic constrain of his thought processes or behaviors. This can be too the way of the improvement of the self or identity. As, a man controls how to take after the proper and how to maintain a strategic distance from the off-base. To numerous Sufis it is called Tazkiyah as the soul is

¹⁷ Kirabaev, Nur, and Olga Chistyakova. "Knowing God in Eastern Christianity and Islamic Tradition: A Comparative Study." *Religions* 11, no. 12 (2020): 675.

¹⁸ Homerin, Th Emil. "Close Encounters of the Sufi Kind: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, 'Umar al-Suhrawardī, and Two Poems by Ibn al-Khiyamī." *Journal of Sufi Studies* 6, no. 1 (2017): 117-132.



filtered through this prepare of self-control. It too implies that the correct in man is swelled excessively to the degree that it overpowers the fiendish strengths which are given impulse by naïfs. Carl Roger calls it the “the getting to be of a person.”¹⁹

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study design was used to collect data in order to estimate the effects of mysticism on personality development. A Sample of 200 participants was extracted from religions like Islam and Christianity in Sialkot city of Pakistan. For data collection the researchers used two scales in order to assess the personality by using PANAS scale and mysticism by Quest scale. Collected data was analyzed by using Statistical Procedures for Social Sciences variant. Different analysis like ANOVA, multiple regression, correlation and frequency distribution were used to assess the different factors. The significant value in each analysis was less than 0.05 which ensures that the significant unique contribution of prediction of dependent variable which is personality.

Ethical Consideration: All ethical guidelines were practiced throughout the research course and progression. Concerned authorities were contacted accordingly for permission to conduct research. Through written consent form, willingness of the participants was obtained to participate in the current study through the specified age range. They were assured their information would be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purpose.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants shows that Greater number of women participants ($n = 148, 71.5\%$) participated in the study compared to men participants ($n = 50, 24.2\%$). Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Co-efficient of Correlations for Study Variables shows that TPANAS has a positive significant relationship with TQUEST ($r=0.175, p<0.05$).

¹⁹ Chaudhry, Haroon Rashid. "Psychiatric care in Asia: Spirituality and religious connotations." *International Review of Psychiatry* 20, no. 5 (2008): 477-483.

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Intercorrelation for Study Variables by Age revealed that only participants belong to 30-37 years ($r=0.06$, $p<0.05$) positive relationship between mysticism and personality development. Regression Coefficients of Mysticism on Personality Development revealed that there is an effect of mysticism on personality development among Christians and Muslims. The R^2 value of 0.03 revealed that the predictor variable explained 0.03% variance in the outcome variable with $F(1, 198) = 6.24$, $p<0.001$.

The findings revealed that mysticism positively predicted personality development ($\beta=0.17$, $p<0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to examine the effects of Mysticism on Personality development among Muslims and Christians. The current study also aimed to explore the predictive variable of mysticism and its direction as well. Moreover, the present study has also explored the relation of socio demographic factors with mysticism and personality. The findings our research suggested that mysticism has an effect on personality development of individuals in both religions i.e., Muslims and Christians. Some of the previous studies also reported that Sufism/ Mysticism has an effect on the development of personalities. These effects somehow take the person close towards God. In both religions the concept of mysticism has its deep roots, both of them have a strong belief in the presence of God and have determined faith on the Holy books i.e., Holy Quran and Bible.

The findings of the current study explained that there is a significant positive relationship of personality with mysticism among Muslims. One of the previous studies also supported the current findings as in a study conducted by Afrianti in 2016 stated that the exercises of the Muslim researchers were exceptionally volunteer in nature. They observed the values of Islam respectfully and with an aim and mission to bring the creation of Allah to the light of true path. Another researcher named, Sedgwick in 2018 suggested that the Sufis taught struggle, brotherhood and regard for other human beings. They attracted numerous individuals who were inspired to learn Islam.



The findings of the current study explained that there is a significant positive relationship of personality with mysticism among Christians as well. Previous studies have also supported the current findings. One of the previous researcher Otto (1928) pointed, that morals in Christianity may be a socially bound ethic. Otto alluded to church father Augustine; one serves God by the social benefit of others. Concepts like elegance and legitimization are common in Christianity. Moreover, the Christian way can be done without the coordinate help of a living ace. In differentiate, to create advance on a Zen, yoga or Sufi way, the direction of a living ace could be a need. Dr. Claudia Hoekx examined, In Christianity, the way is concerned to overcome sin and fiendish. This takes put through the mediation of a mediator, as Christ is. He gives leniency through which man is set free. Morals is social and centered on taking care of important others in society. Supplication may be a prerequisite to proceed and to get ready for another step on otherworldly way.

It is confirmed from current and previous findings that personality has an effect because of mysticism and it is usually common among the individuals of their middle age. the study correlates with some earlier works like ‘The teachings of Christianity and Islam’ by Nur Kirabaev and Olga Chistyakova, in 2020, within the setting of some philosophical speculations on the cognitive and ethical capacities of individuals and that this phenomena can be seen through interreligious, intercultural, and inter-civilizational perspectives. The spiritual values and concepts of Christianity and Islam play a significant role in fostering a relationship between a person and God and these values are profoundly ethical. Thus the Christian mysticism and sufism and may contribute to the advancement of the ethical, social norms manifested through generosity and philanthropy to fortify peace, progress and social harmony. Christianity and Islam, by performing the communicative work, are able of joining together their devotees and other individuals from diverse ethnicities and religions. The Christian mysticism and Sufism can provide a model for cross cultural mutual humanistic values and concerns.

It is critical to emphasize that the information explained by the two devout and social conventions was to a great extent based on the symbolic strategy and symbolic implies of elucidation and clarification of the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. In this manner, the created sacral information of Islam and Christianity, which has experienced a parallel way of

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chronicled improvement, is generally based on a framework of images and typical pictures, each of which has an inner interpretive essence. This imagery and the profundity of significant symbolism still exists nowadays not as it were in adore hone but moreover within the social life of those social orders where Islam and Christianity are declared.

The present study was exclusively conducted on the topic of effects of mysticism on personality development among Muslims and Christians. Although there were previous studies on some relevant topics of the current study that supports the current findings. The current findings support the hypothesis of study which states that there will be a positive effect of mysticism on personality development of individuals. And the current findings also revealed that both Muslims and Christians have a determined faith in God and his Holy books. In the upcoming years this study will serve as an interesting plot for further explorations.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that Mysticism or Tasawwuf/Sufism has an effect on personality development. It's a comparative study of Muslims and Christians individuals who have mystic and sufi tendencies. These Christian individuals share a state of mind where they start believing that they have a direct connection with God developed through sitting and thinking or through meditation. This attitude of God consciousness and other worldliness directly effects the personality development. People with such tendencies and attitude in Islam are also known as with term like Sufi, otherworldly, supernatural etc. Mysticism encourages activities to develop the personalities of people. It also devalues the inappropriate behaviors to encourage the concept of spirituality by promoting education which leads toward a positive change in the society.

RECOMMENDATION

- This is an exceptional study on religion that explains the positive impacts of mysticism on the grooming of personalities. For future researches it is highly recommended to use this study as a plot.
- Future researchers can use the current study to explore different factors like is there any negative impact of mysticism on personalities or what will be the consequences if



illiterate people start following any fake mystics and follow the wrong teachings of religions and so many others.

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