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## **Resolution of Moral Dilemmas: A Cross-religion Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The present study aimed to investigate the pattern of moral judgment competence among people of different religious groups and gender. In this regard, eighty participants of four religious groups (i.e. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian) and two gender groups (N=80) were included in the study via random sampling technique. Religiosity was measured by using religious commitment inventory (RCI 10). Moral judgment competence was measured with the help of moral judgment test (MJT). One way ANOVA and coefficient of correlation were computed. The result has found that the four religious groups have no significant relationship with moral judgment competence and religiosity. The finding of the Analysis of variance reveals that neither the main effect nor the interaction effect of religious groups and gender has reached to the level of significance. The finding of the study ascertained that religiosity and moral competence are not related to each other rather they are two independent variables. And gender differences do not exist in moral judgment competence.*

**KEYWORDS-** *Morality, Religion, Religiosity, moral judgment competence.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is proclaimed that the foundation of all religions is morality. Moral values are narrated in holy books and preaching of religion. If morality declines, humanity will also decline together with the eclipse of religion. But what is the relationship between religion and morality is an intensely complex and controversial topic. It is a most debated issue about the evolutionary origin of religion and how religion facilitated acts that benefit others at a personal cost (Atran, 2002; Henrich et. al, 2010; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2008; Sosis & Alcorta, 2003; Wilson, 2002). Religion aims to promote the harmony of body, intellect, and mind through the right conduct, right conduct in its totality represents morality. In Hindu mythology, it is otherwise known as *Dharma* (Righteousness). It also refers to what is real value in life. When a person follows moral values in every aspect of life, he achieves the most precious things including name, fame, and prosperity, but there are some contradictory experiences when we feel that religiosity sometimes indulges people in immoral acts when people find that their religion is endangered. There are many questions related to religion and morality, for instance, is different religion has a different aspect of moral values? Is one religious value superior to another? Does a highly religious person involve in more moral practices in comparison to a low religious person? Does morality emerge independently of religious intuitions? There are many debated issues which have a different point of views among philosophers and religious reformers. Although religion and morality are the concepts

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that are well-defined in philosophy and both influence the attitude, perception, thought, and judgment style of common people so that it becomes the area of interest for psychologists too.

Saroglou (2011) attempted to identify the fundamental elements of religion. He has put forward a detailed psychological model of the “Big Four religious dimensions,” providing a taxonomy of core components of religiosity that integrates numerous previous formulations in the psychology and sociology of religion. In brief, for Saroglou, to be religious entails, *Belief*: Holding devotion in magnificent entities (e.g., gods, impersonal life forces, karmic principles). *Bond*: Having self-transcendent, emotional experiences, typically through religious rituals (whether private or public, frequent or rare), that connects a person to God and a deeper reality. *Behaving*: following certain moral norms, and using self-control to behave per these norms. *Belonging*: Identifying and affiliating with a certain community or tradition that holds the same idea, rituals, and faith upon similar God.

Whereas, the moral sense exists in the center of the human mind and is crucial to determine human behavior. The concept ‘moral’ defines the pattern of behavior that society wants from people. However, morals are not written in stone, or proclaimed by God, but instead the reflection of local sensibilities. Some acts are universally accepted as moral and some acts like- murder, abuse including incest, and adult-child sexual contact of any sort are universally despised by stable society (Dembeck & Wells-Moran, 2008). Morality incorporates *moral judgment competence* and according to Kohlberg, this is “The capacity to make opinions and judgments which are moral (or based on moral principle) and to act in accordance with such judgment” (Kohlberg, 1964). The definition does not mean that a person must always act under a single particular moral rule in every situation (such behavior would be called ‘rigid’ rather than moral) but that he or she acts integrated and differentiated in accordance with several moral principles and values. People don’t have an innate ability of moral understanding, it develops over time.

The groundwork of moral psychology pivots on the theories proposed by Piaget and Kohlberg. Piaget’s theory assumes that moral stages are universal and developmental stages of moral senses are invariable for all (Piaget 1932). Lawrence Kohlberg, a moral philosopher, and a child development psychologist, was interested to examine the stage-wise developmental pattern of moral thought in a child. His theory has influenced by Jean Piaget’s work on stages of moral and cognitive development among children. In his book “The development of children orientations towards a moral order: sequence in the development of moral thought (1963)”, he defines three levels of moral development. They are, *Pre-Conventional Level* in which, the person’s evaluation of what is right is motivated by obedience to rules and fear of disapproval by authorities in the case of violation of rules. Children have a lack of decision-making ability based on ethical or unethical ways. *At the Conventional Level*, Children develop an interest in social norms and expectations and they try to behave according to social norms. They learn rules and authority. This level is split into two stages: The first stage: Children are interested in pleasing others and securing the favor of others. Second stage: Children expand the principles to cover the whole of their society, believing that morality is what keeps the social order intact. Kohlberg believed that many people stay in this stage of moral reasoning for their whole lives, deriving moral principles from social or religious authority figures, and never thinking about morality for themselves. Lastly at *Post Conventional Level*, children can judge what is right and what is

wrong according to their moral perspective. Moral reasoning, compassion, and care for others become moral concerns.

It has been verified in cross-cultural studies done in Turkey, Taiwan, Yucatan, Honduras, India, the United States, Canada, Britain, and Israel. But a major limitation of this theory was that, in Kohlberg's opinion, morality is universal, equal for men and women, and all cultures (Kohlberg & Higgins, 1984). In fact, he attributed a higher level of moral development to men than to women. Though, He worked only with male participants.

In the present study, the researcher tried to explore the relationship between morality and religiosity as well as to find out the moral judgment competences across gender. It also tried to answer if there is any difference found in moral judgment competence among different religious groups.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the effect of being a part of a religious group on moral judgment competence.
2. To explore the differences in gender in moral competence.
3. To identify the relationship between religiosity and moral competence in different religious groups.

## RESEARCH METHODS

**Research Design:** In the present study, the between-group design was used.

**Population and Sampling-** In this study, the population of relevance was the people of four religious groups i.e. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Christian from the Gorakhpur city, the north-eastern part of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The sample was selected with the help of a random sampling technique. There were eighty participants in this research, their age ranged between 18 to 40 years.

**Tools-** Two measurement tools were used in this research:

**i) The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10):** Hindi version of RCI-10 was used which was developed in 2003 by Worthington et al. It is a brief 10 items screening assessment of the level of one's religious commitment using a 5- point Likert rating scale from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (totally true of me).

**ii) Moral Competence Test (MCT):** Hindi version of the scale was used which was developed by George Lind in 1985 (Lind & Wakenhut, 1985). It has been constructed to assess the subject's moral judgment competence by recording how a subject deals with counterarguments, that is, with arguments that oppose his or her position on a difficult problem. The MCT has some moral tasks in which the subject is confronted with two moral dilemmas which have 26 items with arguments pro and contra the subject's opinion on solving each of them.

**Procedure-** Firstly, a sample of four religious groups of male-female was selected randomly. After establishing a proper rapport with the participants, they were introduced to the purpose and procedure of the study. The participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire honestly

as all data was kept confidential. Thereafter the final data was collected from all of them. Finally, each of them was profoundly thanked for their complete participation in the study.

## RESULTS

The finding of descriptive analysis as well as 4×2 analysis of variance has been presented. Table 1 indicates the mean and S.D. of moral judgment competence in four religious groups and two gender groups.

**Table 1: Mean and S.D. of Moral Judgment Competence as a Function of four Religious and two Gender groups**

S.N.	Religious groups	Gender	Mean	S.D.
1	Hindu	Male	21.90	10.80
		Female	18.90	6.57
2	Muslim	Male	22.40	12.57
		Female	19.40	8.14
3	Sikh	Male	27.10	3.50
		Female	22.60	7.10
4	Christian	Male	25.10	12.00
		Female	18.80	8.56

In table 2 the finding of the Analysis of variance reveals that the main effect of neither religious groups nor gender has reached to the level of significance. It means, religious groups have no difference in their moral judgment competence and male and female do not have any difference in this study. Furthermore, the interaction effects of religious groups and gender are also not found significant.

**Table 2: Summary table of Moral Judgment Competence as a Function of Religious groups and Gender**

Sources	Type III sum of scores	df	Mean	F ratio	Sig.
Factor A	237.85	3	79.28	.75	.52
Factor B	352.80	1	352.80	3.37	.070
Factor A × Factor B	36.90	3	12.30	.118	.94
Error	7522.44	72	104.47		

Table 3 shows that the mean and S.D. of religiosity in four religious groups and two gender groups. In this table we have found that the Mean and S.D. of religiosity score of male and female of all four religious groups are not distinct to each other.

**Table 3: Mean and S.D. of religiosity as a Function of four religious and two gender groups**

S.N.	Religious groups	Gender	Mean	S.D.
1.	Hindu	Male	32.10	5.66
		Female	33.40	8.77
2.	Muslim	Male	35.40	8.26
		Female	31.60	6.09
3.	Sikh	Male	32.70	4.73
		Female	27.80	7.05
4.	Christian	Male	33.50	7.29
		Female	26.00	6.48

**Table 4: Summary table of religiosity as a Function of four religious and two gender groups**

Sources	Type III sum of scores	df	Mean	F ratio	Sig.
Factor A	203.43	3	67.81	1.421	.244
Factor B	277.59	1	277.51	5.81	.018
Factor A × Factor B	204.43	3	68.14	1.42	.24
Error	3436.300	72	47.276		

The findings of the analysis of variance of Table 4 display that the main effect of neither religious groups nor gender has reached to the level of significance. Furthermore, the interaction effects of religious groups and gender are also not significant. It means there is no difference in the level of religiosity in people of different religious groups and gender.

Table 5 shows that the correlation coefficient between Moral Judgment Competence and Religiosity of male has found to be .202 and female has found to be -.211 that is not a significant value. So, it is concluded that moral judgment competence and religiosity are independent variable. They are not correlated to each other.

**Table 5: Coefficient of correlation between religiosity and moral judgment competence in two gender groups**

Gender		Moral judgment competence	Religiosity
Male	Moral judgment competence	-	.202
	Religiosity		-
Female	Moral judgment competence	-	-.211
	Religiosity		-

**Table 6: Coefficient of correlation between religiosity and moral judgment competence in different religious groups**

Religious groups		Moral judgment competence	Religiosity
Hindu	Moral judgment competence	-	-1.59
	Religiosity	-	-
Muslim	Moral judgment competence	-	.005
	Religiosity	-	-
Sikh	Moral judgment competence	-	.244
	Religiosity	-	-
Christian	Moral judgment competence	-	.309
	Religiosity	-	-

Table 6 clearly indicated that in all the four religious groups there was no significant relationship had been found in moral judgment competence and religiosity. These findings suggested that religious rituals had nothing to do with moral competence.

## DISCUSSION

In this research, the objective was to find out the relationship between religiosity and moral judgment competence of male-female in four religious groups. The finding of the study ascertained that religiosity and moral competence are not related to each other rather they are

two independent variables. And participants having faith in different religions have not a different pattern of moral competence but similar to each other. The finding of this study is supported by various previous researches also. In their research Pyysiäinen and Houser (2010) also did not find any differences in moral judgment according to participants' religious affiliation. They argued that moral preferences are deeply driven by our experiences, flourishing quite naturally in the absence of religious propaganda. The role of religiosity in moral judgment has been examined in several studies (Bart Duriez, 2002a; Crabtree, 2014; Ryan & Whitehouse, 2015). In these studies, it has been found that being religious as such was unrelated to both moral attitude and moral competence. Religious and nonreligious people commit a similar number of moral acts. They seemed to feel the same amount of moral as well as immoral acts. In his research Iwuagwu, 2018 also found that there is a lack of evidence that supports the causal relationship between morality and religion, holding a belief that though there may be no definitional connection between them and their concerns and basic elements may differ, morality and religion are complementary in forging a better society. If they synergize their efforts the world will be a better place. In his study, the sociologist Stephen Gaukroger (2012) mentioned that "it was generally assumed in the 17th century that religion provides the unique basis for morality." But this perspective slowly changed overtime. Although many philosophers have argued that without religious faith, there can be no ultimate right and wrong and the society cannot manage without religion, but, in statistics are not in favor of these notions of the moral worth of religious beliefs. The most unstable, vicious, intolerant countries with the worst human rights records are all highly religious and the least religious countries are also those that are performing preeminent in terms of pro-social and moral conducts. In another study, Stenger (2007) found that several countries that have both moderate levels of social and moral development yet are also not particularly religious. These findings support the ideas of Kohlberg (1998) who argued that religiosity and morality are inherently unrelated because they are two distinct areas of human concerns. In a few cases, the majority of atheists have become the most cooperative, peaceful, and prosperous in history (Zuckerman, 2008). Balkrishnan (2009) explained the nature of moral judgment and they explored some basic elements which determined morality. These elements are based on the person's conscience, demand of the situation, advice of authority such as parents and teachers, social values, etc. Gender wise difference in moral judgment was also not found in this research. Mishra (1995) found that moral judgment is independent of gender because judgment is influenced by one's environmental experiences.

Previous researches confirmed that some other relevant factors do influence a person's moral attitudes that are their education, family values, human conscience, social values, etc. Formal education has a significant positive correlation with moral judgment (Izzo, 2000). Formal education is a predictor of multifaceted moral reasoning because individuals who seek higher education tend to be people who enjoy learning, are interested in self-growth, prosper in intellectually and socially stimulating environments, and are more interested and involved in the community and societal issues (Nather, 2013). According to Houser and Singer (2005), the insights into the changing moral landscape [e.g., animal rights, abortion, euthanasia, and international aid] have not come from religion, but from careful reflection on humanity and what we consider a life well-lived.

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## CONCLUSION:

It can be asserted that religion “is neither necessary nor sufficient for morality”. It is true that many people loosely expect that it is important to be religious to maintain morality, but, on the other hand, insist that religion shouldn't get too extremely involved in their behavior or shouldn't challenge their rationalizations for selfish and immoral acts. Religions have been important cultural solutions that contributed to the creation of anonymous, moral communities, but clearly, they are not necessary for morality. In the present study, the researchers only measured the religious rituals of participants, and the religious commitment inventory completely ignored the spiritual aspects of a person's life. So, it would be clearer if future researches would examine the relationship between spirituality and moral competence.

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