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Original Article

PERSONALITY AND MENTAL WELL-BEING IN SPIRITUAL SETTINGS: EVIDENCE FROM SHRINE VISITORS

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the association between HEXACO personality traits and mental well-being among shrine visitors. A convenience sample of 209 participants, including 108 men and 101 women, aged 18–50 years (M = 32, SD = 11), participated in the study. Data were collected using the Urdu versions of the HEXACO Personality Inventory–Revised (HEXACO-PI-R; Ashton & Lee, 2009), the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007), and a demographic questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product–moment correlation, and multiple regression analysis in SPSS version 25. The internal consistency of the study measures was satisfactory. Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive association between honesty-humility and mental well-being (r = .15, p < .05). Multiple regression analysis further showed that honesty-humility was a significant predictor of mental well-being (β = .14, p < .05), accounting for 6% of the variance in mental well-being. The findings suggest that personality characteristics, particularly honesty-humility, may be relevant to understanding mental well-being among individuals visiting spiritual and religious settings. The study contributes to the psychology of religion and has practical implications for psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals working in culturally and spiritually informed settings.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization (2022), mental well-being is widely accepted as an important element of human health, including resilience, effective functioning, positive affect, and absence of illness. With growing global concern about depression, anxiety, and stress, identification of factors that are linked with psychological or mental well-being has become a priority for practitioners and researchers these days. Among these factors, personality traits and culturally originated religious and spiritual practices as resources for adjustment and coping have received considerable attention. (Diener et al., 2018; Koenig, 2012). Personality traits represent a stable structure of feelings, thoughts, and behavior that influence how individuals interpret their life events (Costa & McCrae, 2008). Although the Big Five model traditionally prevailed in personality research, the HEXACO theory provides a broader perspective after the inclusion of six dimensions: Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (Ashton & Lee, 2007). Recent research has further emphasized the relevance of personality characteristics to psychological functioning, particularly in relation to emotional processes, stress, and mental health (Wang et al., 2024; Zhang & Hu, 2024). Likewise, previous empirical literature indicates that these characteristics serve as reliable indicators for mental health outcomes. For example,

honesty-humility and conscientiousness correlate with higher levels of life satisfaction, psychological adjustment, and overall well-being. On the other hand, emotionality is associated with heightened risks of anxiety and stress (Anglim et al., 2020; Steel et al., 2008). Furthermore, personality traits and religious and spiritual activities (such as making vows, praying, participating in *dhamal,* and visiting holy sites) are crucial to enhance the mental health of shrine visitors in collectivist societies (Memon et al., 2025).

In Asian countries, shrines are known as significant spiritual and cultural centers where people visit to heal themselves (psychologically or physically), find purpose in their lives, and seek emotional support (Charan et al., 2020; Iqbal & Farid, 2017; Qahar et al., 2020). Shrines also bring together spiritual, social, cultural, and economic dimensions, as devotees may seek *baraka* (blessing), healing, fulfillment of wishes, and a sense of community connection (Mansoor et al., 2025). Sufi traditions deeply rooted in shrine visitation are associated with resilience, social support, and a sense of belonging (Werbner, 2003; Ewing, 1997). Research in Pakistan further demonstrates that visiting shrines and participating in related rituals may contribute to reduced psychological distress. Resilience, social support, and a sense of belonging are all associated with Sufi traditions, which are deeply originated from shrine visits (Werbner, 2003; Ewing, 1997). Research in Pakistan demonstrates that visiting shrines and performing rituals contribute to reduced psychological distress, improved coping, and higher subjective well-being, especially among marginalized groups (Hassan & Kamal, 2010; Bhatti & Kamal, 2019; Zaman, 2018). Religious involvement at shrines, therefore, functions not only as spiritual devotion but also as a culturally rooted mechanism that enhances mental well-being (Khan & Watson, 2006; Pirutinsky et al., 2011). Although shrines are often characterized as spaces of healing and solace, several studies in Pakistan have also highlighted their problematic aspects. Research demonstrates that trance rituals and the use of intoxicants such as bhang (cannabis) are common at some shrines, often legitimate in the name of spirituality (Charan et al., 2020). Such practices may highlight false beliefs about supernatural healing, diverting individuals from evidence-based medical or psychological care (Jahan & Khan, 2014).

Although evidence exists on the link between both personality traits and mental well-being, there is still a lack of academic focus on their intersection in the context of shrine visitation. Studies on shrine visitors have mainly explored areas like coping strategies, trance practices, rituals, substance misuse, and belief systems (Bhatti & Kamal, 2019), neglecting how persistent personality traits affect the psychological benefits gained from shrine visits. This study aims to address a gap by examining the link between personality traits and the mental well-being of shrine visitors in Multan, Pakistan. By combining the psychology of personality with aspects of shrine visits, the research offers insight into how consistent individual traits relate to shrine visitors and promote psychological health. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to cross-cultural understanding of personality and well-being and provide valuable guidance for creating culturally aware mental health interventions in religious and spiritual settings, such as shrines.

II. METHOD

Participants

A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants from different shrines in Multan, Pakistan. A sample comprised 209 shrine visitors (108 males, 51.7%; 101 females, 48.3%), aged between 18 and 50 years (M = 32; SD = 11). In terms of educational level, 33% were matriculated and below, 19.6% were intermediate, 27.3% were bachelor's, and 20.1% were master's and above. Participants who were able to comprehend and respond to the Urdu language measures used in the present study were eligible to participate according to the inclusion criteria.

Measures

Personality traits were assessed using the 60-item Urdu version of the HEXACO Personality Inventory Revised (HEXACO-PI-R), available through the official HEXACO website (Ashton & Lee, 2009). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The measure consisted of six sub-scales (i.e., *Honesty-Humility*, *Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness*, *Conscientiousness*, and *Openness)*, each consisting of 10 items. Reported internal consistency of the original scale ranged from .77 to .80 (Ashton & Lee, 2009). Mental

well-being was measured using the Urdu version of the 14-item Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWS) (Tennant et al., 2007; Waqas et al., 2015). It assesses the positive aspects of mental health, such as optimism, resilience, and quality of relationships, using a 5-point Likert scale. The Urdu-translated version showed high internal consistency α = .89 (Waqas et al., 2015).

Procedure

After approval from the Institutional Review Board of the Department of Applied Psychology, The Women University, Multan, data were collected from shrine visitors residing in Multan. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and were also assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their data. Their consent was obtained, and the researcher guided the participants with detailed instructions on the questionnaire booklet. Participants were provided with a study booklet containing the study measures along with a demographic questionnaire. One member from each shrine administration assisted the researcher in approaching potential respondents. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 25).

III. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were used to measure the personality traits of shrine visitors, while a t-test was used to analyze the relationship between personality traits and shrine visitors' motivation and monthly visits. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to examine the relationship and predictive power of personality traits for mental health.

Table I: Alpha Reliabilities of Study Measures (N = 209)

Scales	No. of items	α
Honesty-humility	10	.71
Emotionality	10	.70
Extraversion	10	.70
Agreeableness	10	.72
Conscientiousness	10	.66
Openness to Experience	10	.70
Mental Well-Being	14	.86

Table 1 presents the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for each of the personality traits and the mental well-being scale. For HEXACO-PI-R, reliability ranges from .66 to .72, and for the Mental Well-Being scale, the coefficient alpha reliability is .86, that consider to be good reliability.

Table II: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for Study Variables (N = 209)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Honesty-Humility	32.56	5.94	-	.106	.009	.143*	.008	.107	.152*
2. Emotionality	31.68	5.56		-	-.017	.094	.029	-.059	-.098
3. Extraversion	32.66	5.75			-	.195**	.250**	-.035	.133
4. Agreeableness	32.73	5.87				-	.063	.075	.102
5. Conscientiousness	33.76	5.05					-	.078	.059
6. Openness to Experience	32.15	5.33						-	.079
7. Mental Well-Being	48.84	8.17							-

Note. M=mean; SD=Standard Deviation
*p< .05, **p< .01

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics and correlation among study variables. According to the results, conscientiousness and agreeableness show higher mean values (*M*=33.76 & 32.73, respectively), which indicates that visitors are high in conscientiousness and agreeableness. The correlation analysis highlights that Honesty-Humility is significantly and positively related to mental well-being (MWB) among shrine visitors. Traits like

agreeableness, conscientiousness, and Openness show positive but non-significant associations. Emotionality trends negatively with MWB.

Table III: Multiple Regression between Personality Traits and Mental Well-Being of Shrine Visitors (N = 209)

Predictors	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
(Constant)	35.42	6.99	-	5.06	<.001	[21.62,49.21]
Honesty-Humility	.20	.09	.14	2.13	.03	[0.01,0.39]
Emotionality	-.16	.10	-.11	-1.66	.09	[-0.37,0.03]
Extraversion	.16	.10	.11	1.56	.12	[-0.04,0.36]
Agreeableness	.08	.09	.06	.90	.36	[-0.10,0.28]
Conscientiousness	.04	.11	.02	.35	.72	[-0.18,0.26]
Openness to Experience	.08	.10	.05	.77	.44	[-0.12,0.29]

Note. CI = confidence interval; R^2 = .06, adjusted R^2 = −.03, F (6, 202) = 2.18. *p < .05, **p < .01

As per Table 3, honesty-humility is a significant predictor of mental well-being, which indicates that visitors with higher levels of this trait tend to report better mental well-being than others. However, the overall model was statistically significant, F (6, 202) = 2.18, p < .05.

IV.DISCUSSION

In the present study, the personality of the shrine visitors and their mental health were investigated. The results were in line with the previous literature, with shrine visitors indicating higher values of conscientiousness and agreeableness and relatively lower values of openness and extraversion. Moreover, honesty-humility emerged as an important positive factor influencing the mental wellness of the shrine visitors. These findings are consistent with the previous practical and theoretical research in the area of personality, religion, and spirituality. The higher scores on the conscientiousness and agreeableness scales found among the shrine visitors align with the results of previous research suggesting that conscientious individuals show greater involvement in traditional religious practices, where order, discipline, and a sense of moral duties are emphasized (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). The relatively lower scores on openness and extraversion are also considered in relation to the structured and reflective nature of traditional religious practice (Saroglou, 2002). However, these findings should be interpreted as characteristics of the present sample rather than as evidence that shrine visitation produces particular personality traits.

Table 2 indicates the relationship between personality traits and mental well-being. The substantial positive correlation between honesty-humility and mental well-being (r=.15, p<.05) aligns with previous studies demonstrating that honesty-humility is associated with psychological well-being and is relevant to religion and spirituality (Ashton & Lee, 2007; Emmons, 2005). Research based on the HEXACO model has also reported a positive association between honesty-humility and psychological well-being, supporting the relevance of this personality dimension to well-being outcomes. The association between well-being and extraversion was comparatively small (r= .13, p=.05), which is consistent with previous research indicating that extraversion is often positively related to well-being and particularly relevant in social and communal contexts (Koenig, 2012). Whereas agreeableness and conscientiousness were not significant predictors of well-being in the present study, their positive directions are consistent with previous studies suggesting that cooperative behavior and self-discipline are positively associated with life satisfaction and well-being (John & Srivastava, 1999; MacCann et al., 2009). Emotionality, conversely, showed a weak negative relationship with well-being. This finding is consistent with literature suggesting that greater emotional reactivity and sensitivity to stress can be associated with psychological strain (McCrae & Costa, 2008). Openness, which has often been linked with curiosity and openness to spiritual or unconventional experiences, did not show a strong association with well-being in the present study (MacDonald, 2000). One possible explanation is that the structured nature of shrine practices may not necessarily correspond to the forms of novelty or unconventional experience commonly associated with higher openness.

Overall findings indicate that spiritual practices have the potential to impact personality traits such as humility, cooperativeness, and especially moral integrity. The implication of this fact points to the religious coping models previously mentioned (Paragment, 1998), were spirituality and ritual act as ways of coping and growth, especially in the consideration of specific personalities. From this perspective, being in a shrine is not just a religious act but also a way of promoting the psychological well-being of all, especially of those who have personalities that are compatible with spiritual values. Table 3 shows the predictive role of the personality traits in relation to mental well-being. Only honesty-humility had a significant predictive relationship (β =.14; p<.05), which is consistent with earlier research indicating that honesty-humility, sincerity, and moral integrity are important factors in psychological functioning within a religious context (Ashton & Lee, 2007; Davis et al., 2013). This aligns with previous studies that found that individuals engaging in spiritual practices have higher levels of humility and altruism, which are positively associated with life satisfaction and emotional balance (Piedmont, 1999; Saroglou, 2011). If the shrine visit includes prayer, gratitude, and moral reflection, the latter can be significant, especially for those who are high in honest humility, and it can enhance their sense of purpose and well-being. However, less importance may be attached to these more contemplative, solemn contexts for extraversion and openness. Overall, these findings suggest the importance of investigating the interaction of personality and spirituality as predictors of psychological outcomes, and this exploration needs to be done in culturally specific practices.

Implications

This study will contribute to a better understanding of the mental well-being of shrine visitors and highlights the need to promote mental health in religious and spiritual contexts. The findings will also inform policymakers and mental health professionals in developing appropriate screening, counseling, and referral mechanisms for vulnerable individuals.

Limitations and Suggestions

First, the sample was only collected from the visitors of shrines in Multan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should also recruit shrine visitors from other cities of Pakistan to have greater representativeness. Second, the study was cross-sectional, which limits causal interpretation. Future researchers should conduct a longitudinal study to better understand shrine visitors' mental health over time.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the importance of examining personality and mental well-being within spiritual contexts. It suggests that individual differences may shape how people experience and benefit from religious and spiritual environments. Overall, the findings contribute to a better understanding of the psychological dimensions of shrine visitation and provide a basis for further research in this culturally specific context.

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